

Child Friendly CB City Report

2019



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“We are not the sources of problems; we are the resources that are needed to solve them.

We are not expenses; we are investments.

We are not just young people; we are people and citizens of this world [...]

You call us the future, but we are also the present.”

Gabriela Azurduy, 13, and Audrey Cheynut, 17.

Message from the United Nations Children’s Forum, 2002.

Dedication

**This report is dedicated
to the children and young
people of the City of
Canterbury Bankstown
– our resources; our
investments; our future
and our present.**



"My child friendly city is a city of colours."
– Zoe, 9.





Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of country and their enduring sovereignty. We bear witness to their diversity, strength and resilience, and we honour the elders past and present.

This report was researched and written on Daruk (Darag, Dharug, Dharuk) and Eora land.

We appreciate the support the following community groups provided in promoting this initiative and encouraging participation:

- Bankstown Child and Family Interagency;
- Canterbury Bankstown Child and Family Reference Group;
- Canterbury Bankstown Domestic Violence Liaison Committee;
- Canterbury Child and Family Interagency;
- Children's Services Network;
- Family Day Care Providers Network;
- The Smith Family Bankstown Communities for Children Facilitating Partner - Community Partners;
- Voice Lab Working Party; and
- Workers with Youth Network.

Thank you to all of Council's departments who contributed their time and knowledge throughout the process.

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Thank you to all of the service providers who work for and with children in Canterbury-Bankstown. We appreciate those who took the time out of their days to complete surveys. In particular, we thank the following services who kindly helped us to facilitate focus groups, participated in interviews, and supported our participation in local festivals:

- Bankstown Community Resource Group;
- Bankstown Police;
- Bankstown Women's Health;
- Belmore Youth Resource Centre (BYRC);
- Canterbury Earlwood Caring Association Ltd;
- Canterbury Hospital Social Work Department;
- Caroline Chisholm School;
- Chester Hill Neighbourhood Cent
- Chullora Primary School;
- Community Minds;
- Creating Links;
- Cub-Bee Early Learning Centre;
- Homecare Heroes;
- Jannawi Family Centre;
- Koorana;
- Panania Public School;
- Punchbowl Children's Centre;
- Riverwood Community Centre;
- Roundabout Youth Centre;
- The Corner;
- Thrive/Lebanese Muslim Association;
- Villawood East Public School;
- Wiley Park Girl's High School; and
- Youth off the Streets

Thank you to all of the parents and carers of our children and young people who provided us with valuable insights through interviews and surveys, and who supported their children to contribute.

Lastly, and most importantly, we thank all of the children and young people that generously gave us their time through surveys, focus groups, emails and suggestion box entries. Thank you for sharing your lived experiences in our City.

We hope you feel valued and heard.

Executive Summary

Canterbury-Bankstown is a city of strong, resilient children and young people who are motivated to see change happen in their community and to be a part of that change.

Throughout this process children and young people have demonstrated they are passionate about a wide range of social issues, which adults may be surprised to learn are akin to the key issues they might identify.

Pollution and global warming; homelessness; financial and physical accessibility; inclusivity and discrimination; leadership and volunteering; road safety; demonstrating pride in culture and community; preparedness for the future; mental health; bullying; domestic and family violence and child protection. These issues were all raised by children and young people throughout the City. Children and young people offered valuable insights and solutions when raising these issues. Despite this, the most consistent message was that children and young people often do not feel their opinions are heard or taken seriously by adults.

If given the opportunity, children and young people could add significant value to planning and decision-making. They are not to be underestimated.

As well as recognising the capabilities of children and young people, we also have a responsibility to ensure they receive the support they need to develop to their maximum potential within a healthy, safe, respectful and engaging environment.

The Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) is extremely important for Council, as it provides us with a process to ensure we are upholding children's rights throughout our City.

Introduction

CFCI is a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) global initiative which encourages local governments around the world to assess how well children's rights are upheld in their cities according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC) (appendices). The UN CRC applies to all children and young people from 0-17 years old. To be a child-friendly city is to be a city in which the voices, needs, priorities and rights of children are an integral part of public policies, programmes and decisions.¹

We want Canterbury-Bankstown to be a child-friendly City.

"The four core principles of the convention are non-discrimination; devotion to the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and respect for the views of the child."²

The responsibility of driving this process and ensuring children's rights are realised lies with government (Article 4: Governments should make these rights available to children, and Article 42: Governments should make the Convention known to all parents and children). It is important for local governments to take ownership of promoting and upholding children's rights, as they know and understand their communities better than any other level of government. Local governments deliver economic, environmental and social outcomes across a range of areas which all affect community cohesion³.

This initiative calls for cooperation across our City to make it a better place for children. All local organisations and businesses that have contact with children (Article 3: All organisations concerned with children should work towards what is best for each child), as well as families and of course children and young people have important roles to play in this process⁴.



The CFCI process will be ongoing, and the overall stages are outlined below:

As shown above, this report is our first step in our CFCI process, and will inform our Action Plan. Our research was centred on six categories of wellbeing, outlined in the Child Friendly South Australia Framework⁵.

These are:

- Health;
- Safety;
- Education;
- Participation;
- Play and Leisure; and
- Belonging.

UNICEF Australia has identified several priority groups of children and young people who are often not consulted or heard, and we have made it a priority to be as inclusive as possible of all of the following groups:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) children;
- Children seeking asylum or with refugee status;
- Children with a disability;
- Children who are or have been in out-of-home-care;
- Children who are or have experienced homelessness;
- Children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds;
- Children living in poverty;
- Children living in single-headed households;
- LGBTIQA children and young people; and
- Children who have contact with child protection and juvenile justice systems.

At the heart of the CFCl is the right for children to be heard and taken seriously. Rather than assuming we know what issues are important to children and young people, this process involved a collaborative approach which allowed us to identify what children and young people like about Canterbury-Bankstown, as well as what needs to change and how.

One thing that has been evident throughout this process is that the children and young people of Canterbury-Bankstown are incredibly resilient, insightful, socially aware, and want to be a part of creating positive change in their community.



"My child friendly city is a worldwide friendly city." - Amelia, 9.

Method

“If we want to improve children’s lives it is important that we routinely include their understandings in what is studied, counted and acted on in policy and practice.”⁶

Our focus

Our focus in implementing the CFCI in Canterbury-Bankstown was by engaging with children and young people and providing them a platform to be heard and to affect change in their city.

How we promoted the project

The CFCI was promoted in a variety of ways including through:

- Presentations at network/interagency meetings, local conferences;
- The online survey on the Have Your Say website;
- Posters around the City (see appendix 1.0);
- Email, social media and a local press release;
- Hardcopies of surveys at every Council Library and Knowledge Centre; and
- Participating in local festivals (Bankstown Children’s Festival, Take it to the Streets and Bankstown Family Showcase).

This report

This report includes secondary data from other research conducted locally, as well as on State, National and International levels. We collected our primary data through surveys, focus groups and interviews.

Care needs to be taken when interpreting and generalising the survey results. Surveys were used as a tool to maximise the amount of community members we were able to consult with, however may not be a statistically reliable representation of the entire City.

Surveys

We conducted three surveys over a period of two months between August and October, 2018. Surveys were based on pre-existing surveys on the UNICEF website (see appendix 1.1) and targeted three groups: children and young people; parents and carers; and service providers. Participation statements written in child-friendly language (see appendix 1.2) were included both in online versions of the surveys and at the front of hardcopy surveys. Three \$100 Westfield vouchers were offered as incentives for completing the surveys.

Overall we received 204 responses, including 89 from children and young people, 83 from parents and carers, and 32 from service providers.

Focus groups and interviews

Nineteen focus groups were conducted with 167 children and young people – 158 of those between 3-17 years of age, and nine participants were between 18- 21. Focus groups were organised through 14 different organisations, and were conducted in 14 different suburbs across Canterbury-Bankstown in environments familiar to the participants (see appendix 1.3). We ensured that we engaged with children and young people from all of the UNICEF priority groups. Participation statements written in child-friendly language (see appendix 1.4) were sent to services to be distributed to children and young people, and parents where necessary prior to the focus group. Best practice approaches were adopted including:

- Verbal explanation of the project and purpose provided, and how/when to access results;
- Consent sought from participants to participate, as well as to record voices (where participants did not consent to recording, consent was sought to take notes);
- Assured participants there were no right or wrong answers, and they would remain anonymous;
- Recordings were deleted once transcribed;
- Youngest participants were engaged where possible in discussion while doing art, craft or playing; and
- The option of interpreter services was made known to service providers, however not required.

We met with a range of parents across Canterbury-Bankstown who have children 0-2 years of age and parents of children with disabilities to speak on behalf of children who could not participate. We also conducted interviews with representatives from 10 different services, including police, education, and health, who work closely with children in the priority groups (see appendix 1.3).



"My child-friendly city: Me and my friends are walking around the world to try and find a child friendly city...and we keep going until we find one with water parks, play grounds, schools, hospitals and little areas with lots of homes and lots of areas to play...oh and so much more. We finally found a place in Australia that is a child-friendly place. When we finish Australia we will make the world a child-friendly place." – Mirabel, 9.

Who are we?



Canterbury-Bankstown is an extraordinarily diverse community. Geographically, it spans 39 suburbs across 11,029 square kilometres of land.



Culturally it is home to people who have identified as being from more than 120 different cultural backgrounds⁷.



It is NSW's largest Council with a population of 346,302 people⁸.



Children and young people between the ages of 0-17 significantly make up almost a quarter of our population at 24.2 % (see appendix 1.5)⁹.

“There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children.”¹⁰

UNICEF priority groups in our community context.

“There are some groups of children and young people with greater challenges to overcome in order to participate and benefit from the CFCI. For this reason, particular, targeted effort is required to ensure the accessible community participation for all children. In turn, there is great opportunity for government and community to benefit from the knowledge, wisdom and strength of children from diverse cultural and social experiences.”¹¹

It was well established in discussions with children, young people, parents, carers and service providers that all of the priority groups would benefit from increased support in our City.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI)

The ATSI community in Canterbury-Bankstown has 2,548 residents, with the largest populations residing in the Padstow, Panania and Revesby areas (see appendix 1.6).¹² Roughly one in three ATSI people are under 15 years.¹³

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

With more than 120 different cultures making up our community, Canterbury-Bankstown is an extremely diverse local government area (LGA). Almost half of our population – 44 per cent - is made up of people who were born overseas, and 60.1 per cent of people reported speaking a language other than English at home.¹⁴

Refugee and Asylum Seeker

Refugees and asylum seekers are forced to leave their homes and seek protection as a result of conflict or persecution. Asylum seekers have sought protection as a refugee, but their claim for refugee status has not yet been assessed.¹⁵ In 2012, 46 per cent of refugees and asylum seekers were children.¹⁶

In 2017, Canterbury-Bankstown had the second-highest number of asylum seekers settled here who had arrived by boat in NSW, with 1,459 people.¹⁷ As of 2018, the suburb with the highest number of people on bridging visas who have come seeking asylum in NSW by boat is Lakemba¹⁸. There is a lack of data available around the overall number of refugees and asylum seekers locally. However, in our discussions with service providers we were consistently informed that Canterbury-Bankstown has a significant population of children from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer or Questioning, and Allied (LGBTIQA)

According to the Aids Council of NSW (ACON), people identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual Transgender, Intersex, Queer or Questioning, and Allied make up approximately 8-10 per cent of the Australian population, while approximately 1-2 per cent of the population have a transgender experience¹⁹. According to ACON, current figures are likely an underestimate as most studies don’t include gender experience in their data. Large number of LGBTIQA people will also hide their sexuality or gender identity, and this is most likely to happen with young people.²⁰

Child Protection and Juvenile Justice

According to Family and Community Services (FACS), in Canterbury-Bankstown in the 2016-17 financial year there was 4,337 Risk of Significant Harm (ROSH) reports received (see appendix 1.7).²¹

Although we were unable to obtain information across the whole area, according to the Bankstown Police Area Command, between October 2017 and September 2018 there were 1,015 incidents recorded where police came into contact with a child under 16, and 211 incidents recorded where a child was the person named.

Out-of-Home Care

Although we do not have access to local statistics, in NSW in 2017 17,879 children were living in out-of-home care due to risk of significant harm. This is 10.3 children for every 1,000 living outside of their home either with relatives or kin (51.4 per cent), in foster care (44.1 per cent), or in group homes, residential care, independent living or other temporary spaces such as hospitals or motels (4.5 per cent). Hypothetically, there could be more than 860 children in the community in out-of-home care in Canterbury-Bankstown.²²

Homelessness

In the 2016 census, 2,582 people in Canterbury-Bankstown reported being homeless. Hypothetically, there could be more than 600 children and young people experiencing homelessness in the City. Nationally, most of the homeless youth aged 12–18 were living in 'severely' crowded dwellings (61 per cent) or in supported accommodation for the homeless (26 per cent).²³

Living in poverty

According to the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) index, Canterbury-Bankstown is in the lowest 17th percentile of relative socioeconomic disadvantage in Australia (see appendix 1.8). Canterbury-Bankstown has a higher proportion of low-income households than the national average with 20.6 per cent of households earning less than \$650 a week.²⁴ According to Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS), the poverty line in Australia for a single adult living alone is \$433 per week, or for a couple with two children is \$909 per week.²⁵

Single-Headed Households

Living in a single-headed household can present a range of complexities including family dynamics and financial stressors. Seven per cent of the total numbers of households with children in Canterbury-Bankstown are single-headed households with children under 15. Almost quarter - 24.8 per cent - of the total number of households with children in Canterbury-Bankstown, including those with children over 18, are single-headed households.²⁶

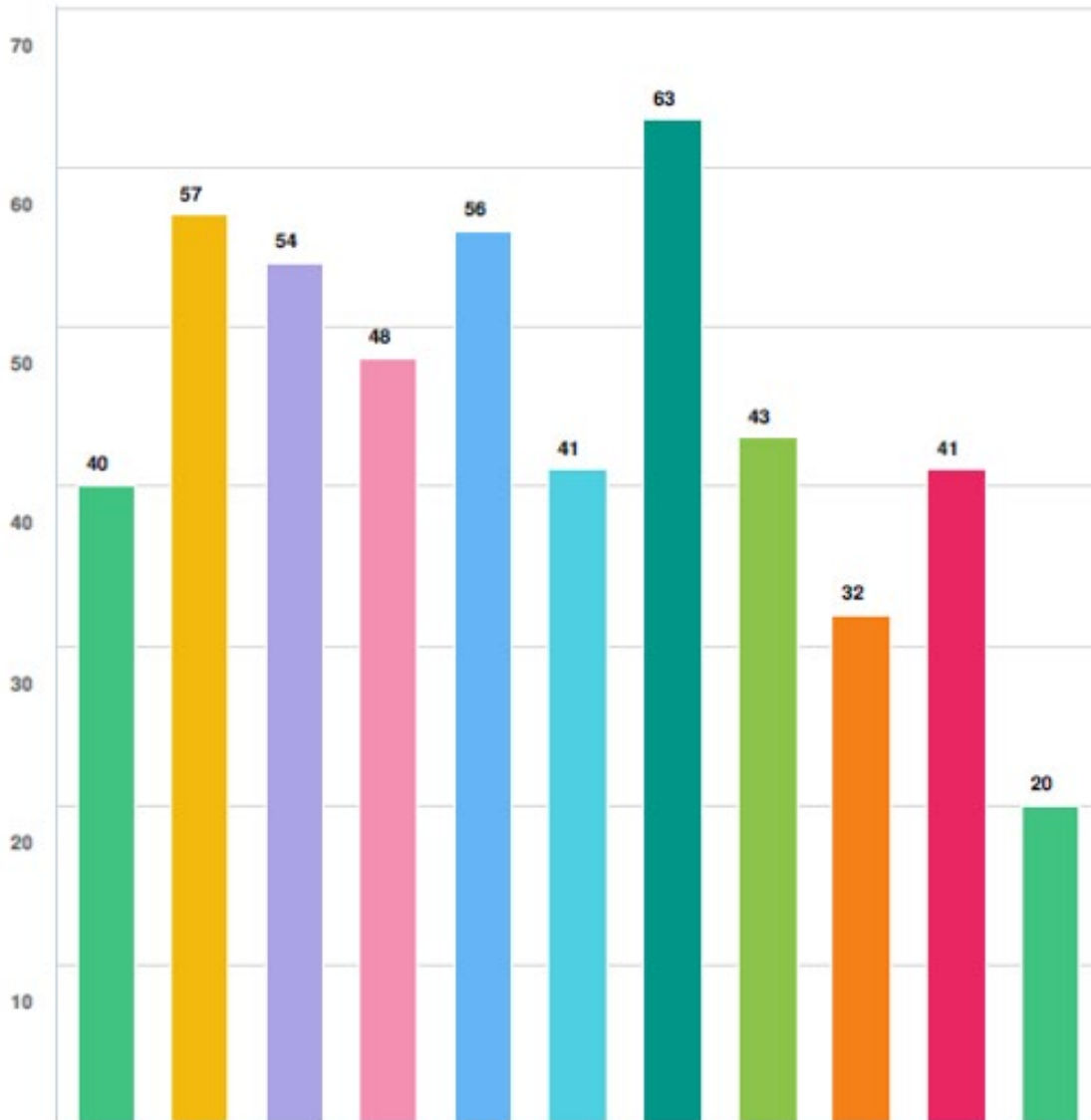
Children with Disabilities

"Disabilities can be very varied. They can be physical, cognitive, intellectual, mental, sensory, or developmental. They can be present at birth or occur during a person's lifetime, and can also be permanent or temporary."²⁷

Around 7 per cent of Australia's children and youth (aged 0-14 years) have a disability with over half having profound or severe core activity limitations.²⁸ According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 1,970 children and young people between 0-19 years old in Canterbury-Bankstown need assistance due to a severe or profound disability.²⁹

Children and young people's survey response:

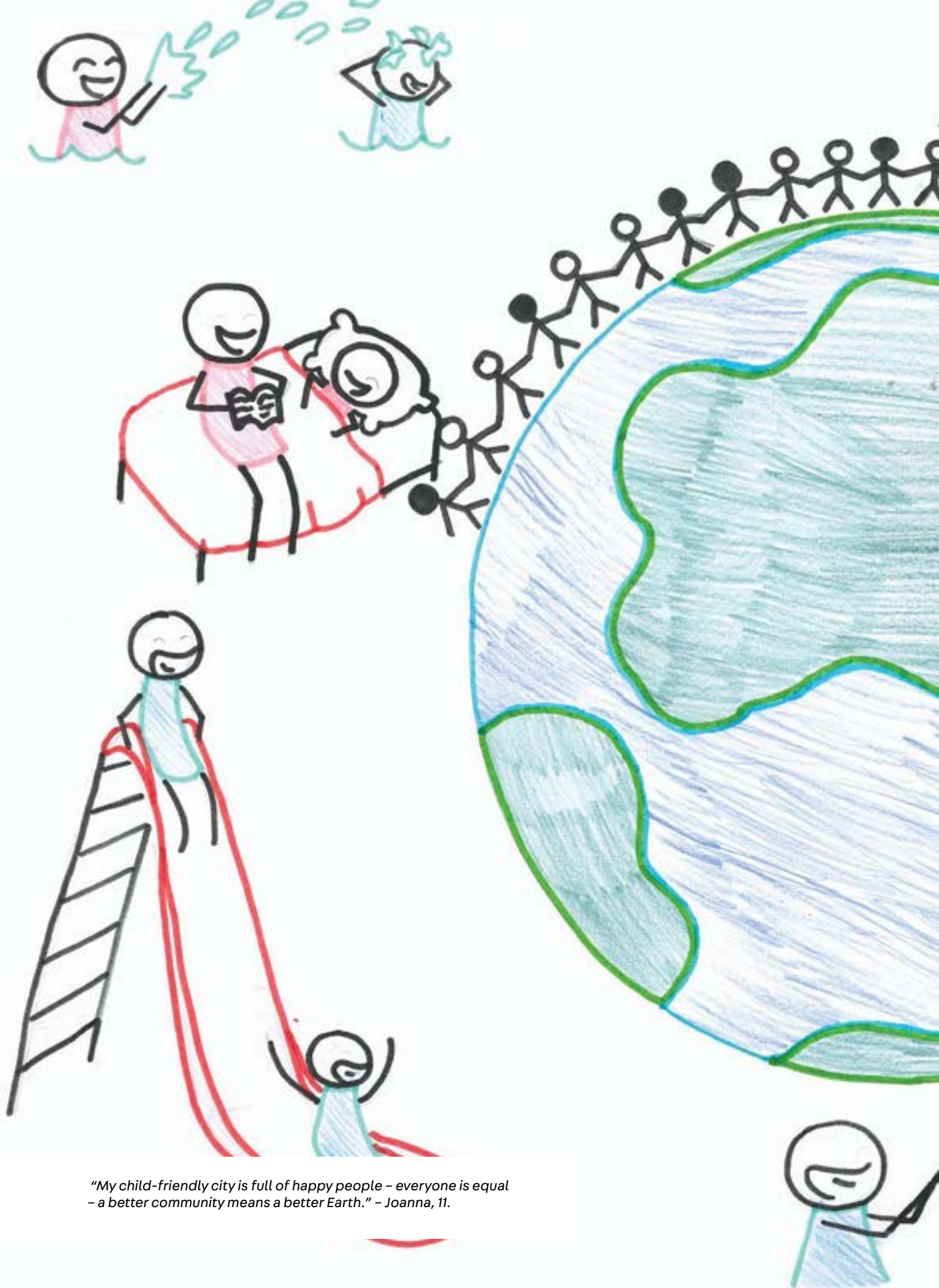
"Which of these groups of children (anyone 0-17) do you think we need to help more in our City?"



Question options

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children
 ● Children with disability
 ● Children seeking asylum or with refugee status
- Children who are or have been in out of home care
 ● Children who have experienced homelessness
- Children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (e.g. children who have a first language other than English)
- Children living in poverty
 ● Children with single parents
 ● LGBTI children
- Children who have contact with the child protection and/or juvenile justice systems
 ● Not sure

(89 responses, 0 skipped)



*"My child-friendly city is full of happy people – everyone is equal
– a better community means a better Earth." – Joanna, 11.*



Health

Children and young people
think health is...

Support networks

Taking medicine if you need it

Building resilience

Spirituality

Healthy environment

Healthy food

Keeping active

Having a home

Playing

Safe spaces

Motivation

Brushing your teeth

Water

Milk

Doctors

Shade

Self esteem

Education

Dentists

Good mental space



“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”³⁰

This holistic definition of health from the World Health Organisation (WHO) has been in place for 70 years, and children’s views of health were certainly in line with it. Children and young people across the City reported they felt they and their peers were generally healthy while there could be improvements in several different areas.

Rights

Article 6: Children have the right to live a full life. Governments should ensure that children survive and develop healthily.

Article 12: Children have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account.

Article 13: Children have the right to get and to share information, as long as the information is not damaging to them or to others.

Article 16: Children have the right to privacy.

Article 22: Children who come into a country as refugees should have the same rights as children who are born in that country.

Article 23: Children who have any kind of disability should receive special care and support so that they can live a full and independent life.

Article 24: Children have the right to good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment so that they will stay healthy.

Article 26: The Government should provide extra money for the children of families in need.

Article 27: Children have the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and mental needs. The Government should help families who cannot afford to provide this.

Article 33: Governments should provide ways of protecting children from dangerous drugs.

Article 36: Children should be protected from any activities that could harm their development.

Physical Health

Physical health is the most commonly understood, researched and funded form of health.³¹

Despite this, many of our priority groups experience poorer physical health outcomes than their peers who do not fall into priority groups. For example:

“The health of people with disabilities is worse than that of their non-disabled peers across a range of health outcomes including obesity, diabetes and oral health”,³²

Children from both lower socio-economic and ATSI backgrounds have significantly poorer health outcomes across all measures;³³ and

Often refugees and asylum seekers have had little or no healthcare access, either in their country of origin or in the country they subsequently fled to; have had limited access to food prior to arrival and as a result have poor nutrition; have limited understanding of our health system and face barriers such as requiring interpreters which all culminates in poorer outcomes.³⁴

Nutrition

“The evidence is clear that early nutrition plays a major part in shaping children’s lifelong health and wellbeing. Nutrition is one the most important and easily modifiable environmental factors in early life”³⁵

“2.5 per cent of children aged 5–14 eat enough fruit and vegetables.”³⁶

Children and young people across the board said nutritious foods were important to their health and wellbeing. Primary school children reported they like the Crunch and Sip program and think it helps kids to be healthier. Children and young people said they would like more access to healthy food options in their canteens and local takeaway shops in Canterbury-Bankstown.

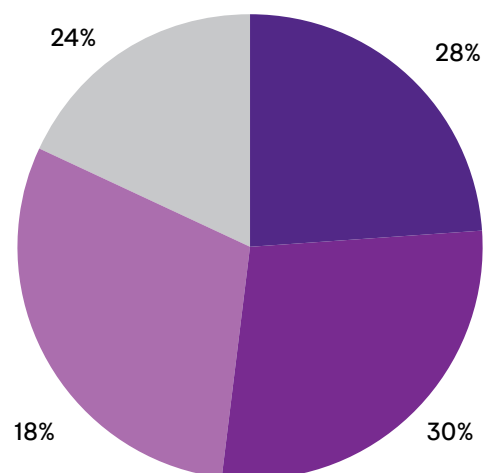
“Poor nutrition due to insufficient, low quality or unreliable food intake leads to ill health. It also contributes to existing inequities in health because inadequate or poor-quality food

intakes are most commonly experienced by people with the worst social and economic status and other forms of individual or environmental disadvantage.”³⁷

Food insecurity for low-income families was raised as an important issue. Service providers reported they often see children and young people locally with poor health outcomes as their families can’t afford enough food or are only able to afford processed foods, which lack nutrition. Attempting to combat this issue locally are programs such as The Staples Bag and Bankstown Women’s Health Centre Food Share.

“Help people with food...help families that use their money for ice and methadone and things that are bad.” – Anonymous, 8.

“There are places where families can get food when needed if they do not have it and are hungry” – Parents and Carer’s Survey



Exercise

Physical activity promotes health and wellbeing and prevents chronic disease across all life stages.³⁸ Keeping active was consistently raised across all age groups as a key factor in keeping healthy. Some service providers discussed that young people need more structured fitness programs in the area where nutrition education and leaderships skills are part of the program. Young people discussed wanting more programs in the evenings where they could play sports and keep fit, and mentioned there were some positive programs already in place locally including Twilight Sports and Level Up (see Play and Leisure).

Children and young people from more densely populated areas raised that a lack of safe or accessible spaces to exercise, particularly in the evenings, is seen to be negatively impacting on the health of children in the area (see Safety and Participation).

Sexual health

It was raised by young people that it is important that sexual health education is engaging, and presented to them by people on their level. Specific concerns were raised about the lack of sexual health education in schools for LGBTIQ students.

“The fact that schools don’t teach sex education for the LGBT community is, it’s yeah, it’s terrible. We need that in our schooling.”
- Anonymous, 16.

Young people linked this to the high rates of LGBTIQ young people contracting sexually transmitted infections (STI’s). This is also consistent with findings discussed in the Writing Them In 3 report that same-sex attracted and gender-questioning young

people are at a higher risk of contracting STI’s.³⁹ Another contributing factor that was reported is a lack of health services in the local area that LGBTIQ young people feel safe and welcome attending and asking for help. Young people reported that most safe services are found out of area (see Participation).

Service providers discussed the importance of having safe spaces to engage young people in sexual health education. One service provider suggested pop-up sexual health clinics in existing services, and that young people should not require Medicare cards to be seen. They also suggested wider promotion of initiatives such as the Condom Credit Card.

It was raised by service providers that sex education for young people with disabilities is important, as often education is only provided to their parents or carers. It is equally as important for them to learn about changes in their bodies, consent and boundaries as it is for their peers without disabilities.

Immunisation

Immunisation was not raised however, 93.5 per cent of children under five were fully immunised in 2017, which was above the national average of 93 per cent.⁴⁰ Council is working towards the national target of 95 per cent.⁴¹

Obesity

Obesity was raised as a concern by children across the City. We received a well-researched letter from a young resident outlining their concerns about the link between obesity and a lack of access to spaces for play and exercise for children (see appendix 1.9).⁴²

Other concerns raised were that a lack of affordable, easily accessible healthy foods in the area is contributing to obesity, and also the impact that obesity can have on children and young people's mental health and their experiences of bullying. In Canterbury-Bankstown between 2014-15 it was estimated that 8.8 of every 100 males between ages 2-17, and 11.8 of every 100 females were obese (based on an Age Standardised Rate).⁴²

Program run in the local area: Go 4 Fun

A free 10-week healthy lifestyle program run in the local area for children between seven and 13 years old, who are above a healthy weight.

go4fun.com.au

Oral health

The mean number of decayed, missing or filled teeth for children 5-6 years old in the Sydney Local Health District was 1.16 teeth, and 1.47 teeth in the South West Sydney Local Health District. These figures were both under the NSW mean figure of 1.53 teeth.⁴³

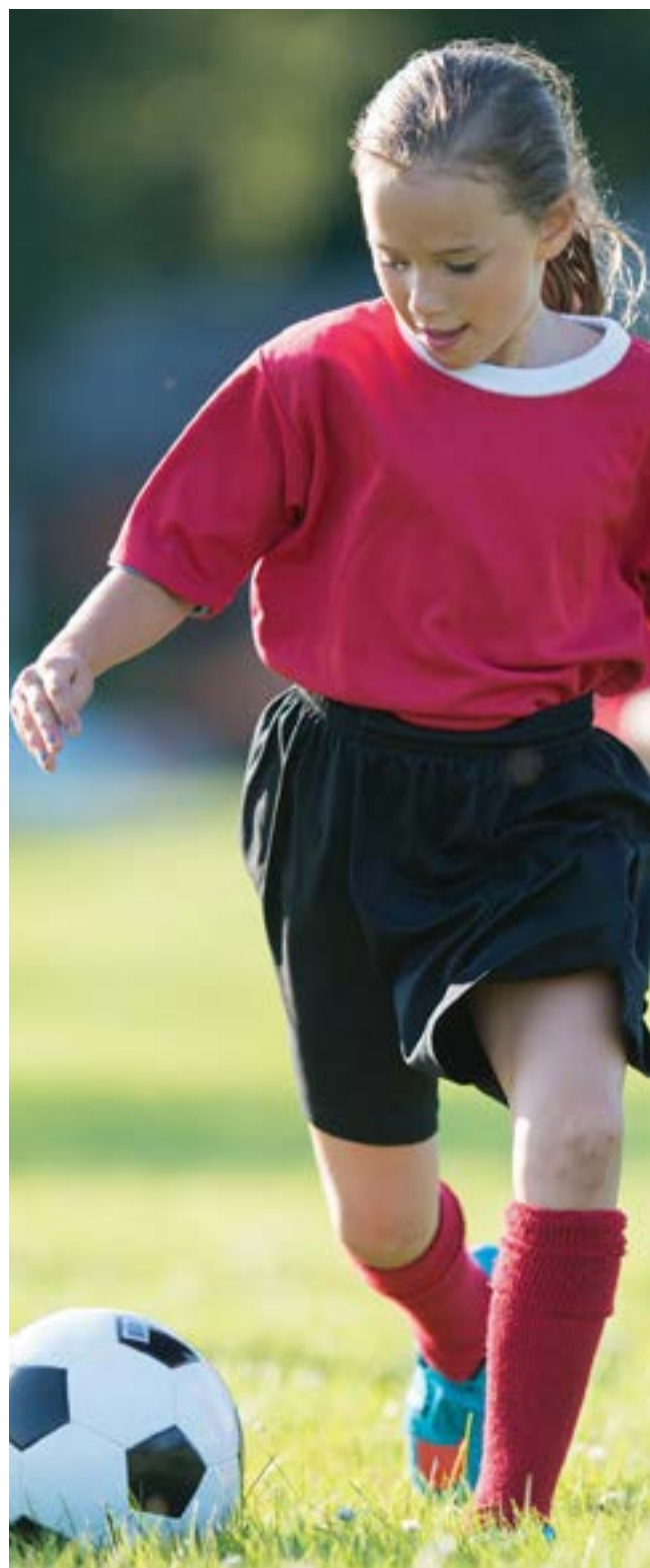
Across the focus groups, oral health was only raised by preschool aged children. They discussed the importance of brushing teeth, drinking milk and going to the dentist to stay healthy.

Healthy Environment

Pollution

Air, land and water pollution has been raised as a key issue for children and young people in Canterbury-Bankstown.

According to the State of the Environment, children are considered particularly susceptible to air pollution, particularly those



with respiratory conditions.⁴⁴ Children and young people suggested more trees could be planted in Canterbury-Bankstown.

“I think we need more trees to combat air pollution...with all the cars and pollution, the more trees we have the more shade; the more birds we have; the more homes for animals; and um it’s taking in the carbon dioxide as well.” – Anonymous, 12.

There were mixed responses about land pollution in Canterbury-Bankstown. In the more densely populated areas – such as Campsie, Lakemba and Bankstown – significant numbers of children, young people and parents raised concerns around garbage being dumped and a lack of bins. However, in the less densely populated suburbs children and young people reported that overall their suburbs were clean and that people looked after the environment, except for areas around train stations and in parks without bins. Suggestions for change from children and young people included starting volunteer clean up groups within local communities and increasing the number of bins.

We have four main waterways in our City. Rubbish being dumped in our waterways was raised as a key concern for children, young people and parents – due to the smell, how it looks, and the effect on local wildlife.

Global warming was also raised in terms of concern for the broader environment, and several children and young people suggested we employ more sustainable solutions such as:

- Using more solar panels throughout our City;
- Encouraging recycling by increasing local initiatives where you get paid to return bottles;
- Investing in sustainable bikes around the City which generate energy when they are pedalled and can charge your phone (such as these: www.abc.net.au/news/2017-02-03/bikes-charge-mobile-phones-before-flights-in-brisbane/8238306); and

- Monitoring people more strictly to prevent over-fishing in our waterways.

Smoking

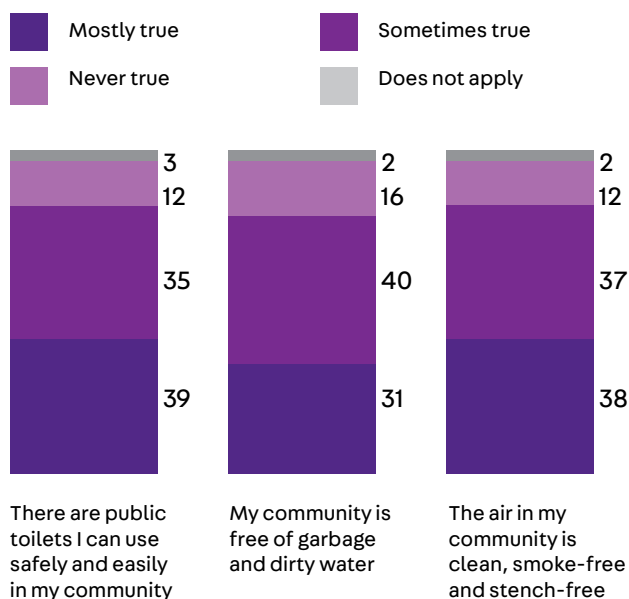
A health behaviours survey of NSW school students in 2014 reported that 17.3 per cent had tried smoking, and 6.7 per cent considered themselves a smoker at the time of the survey.⁴⁵

Concerns regarding passive smoking and the health risks associated with it were raised by children, young people and parents. This related to public places in our community, as well as several concerns raised about passive smoking in the home environment – either due to family members who smoke, or neighbours smoking in high density housing.

“Passive smoking... can get us sick when we’re not doing anything wrong. So, I think we need to work more on having more restricted zones. Like people have the right to do what they want, but it’s also thinking about everyone else, too.” – Anonymous, 12.

“Healthy Environment”

– Children and Young People’s Survey



Built environment

“Children’s health and wellbeing is affected by the quality of their local neighbourhoods and the built environment...lack of green spaces and recreational facilities can have significant negative impacts on social and emotional wellbeing, as well as physical health.”⁴⁶

“I think we need more nature, not more apartments.” – Anonymous, 11.

Between 2011 and 2016 there were an additional 4,829 high-density dwellings and 3,227 medium-density dwellings built in Canterbury-Bankstown. In areas with lots of high-density housing, children and young people have raised they don’t feel the environment is as healthy because there is more pollution and less green space (for green spaces see Play and Leisure). It was also raised that children and young people felt an increase in high-density housing in their local areas was impacting on road safety (for road safety see Safety).

Parents and service providers also raised concerns that in higher-density areas there were not enough health services and programs to cater to the large population of children and young people.

Privacy was also raised as a concern by some children and young people in the context of new buildings having views into their backyards, which makes them feel less comfortable playing there.

“One of the houses that has been built is two storeys and one of the windows looks straight out into their pool. So, they feel unsafe [because] there’s the possibility of them being constantly watched from the people up there,” – Anonymous, 12.

Clean public toilets

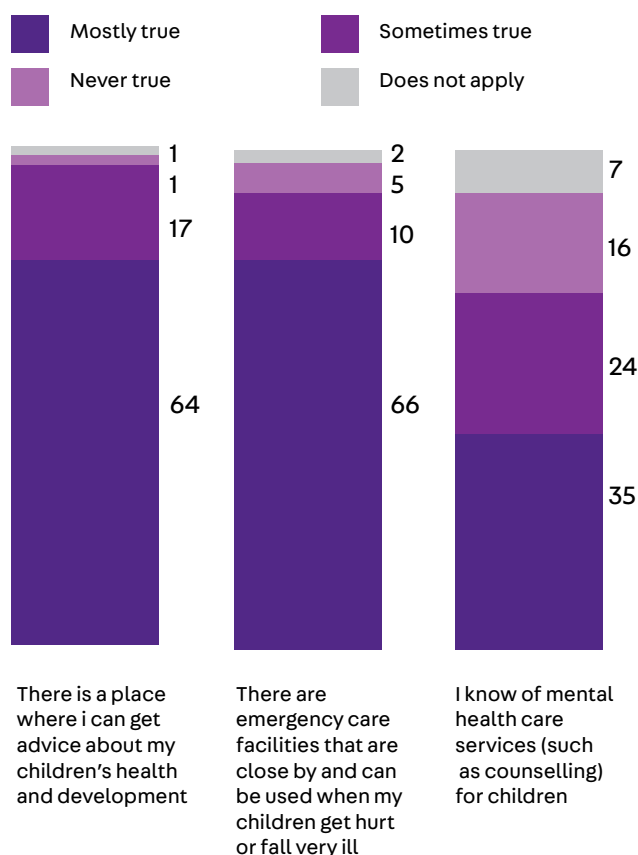
There was a significant number of comments regarding cleanliness of public toilets across

the City, particularly from parents and carers, however this was also raised by children and young people. Less than half of the children and young people in our surveys said it was mostly true that there were safe and easily accessible public toilets in their communities (for physical accessibility see Participation).

Access to health care and information

Overall responses were positive in terms of access to health care, and the quality of healthcare. Some children and young people in the west of our City reported they would like more options for medical care in their own suburbs as their families have difficulty travelling to appointments, however they still advised the care they did get was good.

“Health Access” – Parents and Carer’s Survey



Of the parents surveyed, 77 per cent responded 'Mostly True' to there being a place they can get advice about their children's health and development. According to service providers, the health system is not flexible enough for children whose parents can't get them to appointments, and accessibility could be increased by having services located in schools.

Carer stress and the impact of their wellbeing on children and young people is also an important issue to address. Service providers advised there is a lack of practical support in the area for the health and wellbeing of families with children/parents who have chronic illnesses, disabilities, mental health, particularly those that are also from low-income backgrounds and/or are single parents. Solutions such as more subsidised in-home childcare options or in-home respite were suggested.

Access to health information and health literacy for CALD communities, including refugees and asylum seekers, was raised as an issue by service providers and parents (see Participation).

Mental Health

"In 2013-14, 14 per cent of children and young people 4-17years old had experienced a Mental Health Disorder in the previous 12 months."⁴⁷

"The ABS reports that, in 2016, suicide was the leading cause of death of children between five and 17 years of age."⁴⁸

"Mental health is important to look after, because if children don't look after it you might feel depressed, rejected, sad and upset"
– Anonymous, 13.

Mental health affects children and young people in Australia at startling rates, and it was a commonly raised topic. Key themes will be explored throughout this section.

Adults' attitudes

Children reported across several focus groups that despite their own views of health being holistic, they felt that adults in their lives sometimes lacked an understanding of the importance of mental health, including parents, teachers and other community members.

Some service providers reported a contributing factor to the number of children with mental health disorders in the City is a lack of community awareness. Often parents don't recognise mental health as an issue and 48 per cent of parents and carers responded in the survey that they either didn't know or only sometimes knew of mental health services for children.

It was reported in several focus groups that teachers gave varied responses to students reporting mental health concerns. One participant reported being bullied by their teacher for having panic attacks, while another said teachers, "help you feel better about yourself" – Anonymous, 12 (for mental health in schools see Education).

Overall, children and young people want there to be a more consistent understanding of mental health in our community, and increased support from adults in their lives both in and out of services.

Priority groups

As with physical health outcomes, our priority groups also often have poorer mental health outcomes than their peers who do not fall into priority groups. For example:

- About 30.2 per cent of ATSI young people aged 12-17 years had high to very high levels of psychological stress in 2013-14;⁴⁹
- People with disabilities experience poorer mental health outcomes across their lifespan than their peers without disabilities;⁵⁰
- Children from CALD backgrounds experience poorer mental health outcomes at school entry than their Australian-born, English-speaking peers;⁵¹
- A high number of refugee and asylum seeker children will have experienced mental health issues as a result of trauma and will require support.⁵² Multiple examples were given from service providers of children and young people who had witnessed people known to them being killed prior to seeking protection in Australia, however were not entitled to any subsidised mental health support (see Participation);

“They go through like trauma, through war and stuff, and that can affect their whole life,” – Anonymous, 11; and

- About 55 per cent of LGBT women and 40 per cent of LGBT men aged 16-24 had experienced high/very high levels of psychological distress. The average age of a first suicide attempt is 16 years – often before ‘coming out’. Discrimination and exclusion are reported to be key causal factors⁵³ (For abuse and bullying see Safety).

Strategies to manage stress and emotions

Children and young people spoke about the importance of having strategies to deal with emotions in a healthy way such as boxing if they felt angry, talking to a friend if they felt upset, and self-care activities like watching a movie if they feel stressed.

“People should have to talk to someone (a mental health professional) once a year to check in with them.” – Anonymous, 11.

The importance of checking in with your friends was discussed in a range of focus groups, particularly following R U OK day.

“If they are sad, we can ask ‘are you ok?’” – Anonymous, 4.

The importance of having someone they trust to talk to was raised consistently. Children and young people reported they would talk to their parents, teachers, friends, other family members or a special toy if they felt upset or worried.

Some young people suggested that volunteering locally could have a positive impact on mental health, as it makes you feel good about yourself and helps you form connection to your community.

Playing sport, exercising and eating well were all discussed as factors that had positive impact on mental health, as well as physical health particularly by older children and young people.

Some children and young people reported they had learnt about stress management strategies in school and felt they had enough mental health education, whereas others did not feel it was enough of a focus in their schools. Consistently they all said they felt it was important to learn about.

Existing resources

“Mental health without support can lead to suicide.” – Anonymous, 11.

Those children and young people who reported engagement with or knowledge of mental health services locally largely referred to Headspace. Break Thru was also mentioned. Despite positive reports about existing services, children and young people raised that services don't always have capacity, and there are some that aren't inclusive of them. Young people suggested that for services to be effective they needed to spend time building trust and rapport with young people and “a community identity” – Anonymous, 14; or no one will attend.

Some reported a lack of knowledge of what is available around the area and felt a list of service options locally and help lines would be helpful if it could be distributed to all children in school.

“Kids Helpline recently reported that the largest increase in contact from children and young people seeking mental health support has been within the 10 -14 years age group.”⁵⁴

Some focus groups acknowledged internet and phone line resources as helpful and reassuring, however, there were also people who discussed there being a stigma attached to use of these resources as they did not feel it was normalised in our community. A further concern was that not everyone has internet access at home, or access to a phone in school or at home without adults around. They felt that it would help to have more safe and private spaces around our City to make use of these resources.

Both children and young people and service providers consistently reported that school counsellors are under-resourced (see Education).

In Canterbury-Bankstown during Mental Health Month children, young people and service providers mentioned several initiatives which offered increased support and helped to raise awareness including:

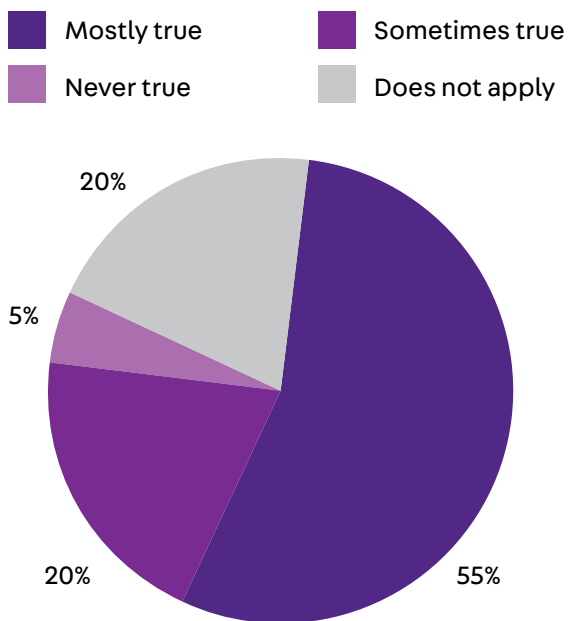
- The Mental Health Film Festival, with movies targeted at different population groups;
- Extended library hours with support services present leading up to the HSC; and
- Sports competitions in schools and in the community.

Causes of stress and mental health

The following causes were identified by children and young people:

- High expectations from parents, teachers and themselves to achieve academically;
- A lack of acceptance of children and young people for who they are;
- A lack of connection to community and feeling excluded;
- Bullying;
- Trouble at home; and
- A loss in the family.

**“I know of mental health care services (such as counselling) I can go to”
- Children and Young People’s Survey**



Service provider perspectives

Service providers who worked in counselling roles reported it is not uncommon to speak with primary and high school students locally who are at risk of or are self-harming, or have suicidal thoughts. It was raised that an increase in children’s mental health services that give children opportunities to connect with each other would be beneficial.

Some reported concerns that a high number of children are medicated based on misdiagnosis of mental health disorders, when their behaviours are a result of trauma and they actually require trauma-informed counselling.

Some also raised concerns about gaming addiction, advising it is a growing issue they have observed within our City which warrants addressing. Gaming Disorder has now been classified as a disease by the WHO.⁵⁵

Rights in our Healthcare System

Service providers from acute healthcare settings identified that children and young people often don’t know their rights in the healthcare system, for example, the age at which a young person can seek treatment without parent or guardian’s consent.

For further information see:

- www.health.nsw.gov.au/kidsfamilies/programs/Pages/rights-child-young-people.aspx
- yla.org.au/nsw/topics/health-love-and-sex/your-rights-at-the-doctor/

They advised this is particularly so for those who have child protection and are in out-of-home care. It was suggested that to address this gap in knowledge it would be beneficial to arrange education sessions from acute health staff to children and young people in services such as youth centres.

Service providers also identified that asylum seeker and refugee children often are not afforded the same rights and entitlements to health care as other children.

Alcohol and other drugs

Concerns regarding the impact of alcohol and other drugs on children and young people were raised by children, young people, parents, carers and service providers.

Witnessing use

Children and young people reported they often saw people under the influence of alcohol or other drugs in their local area. There were mixed responses about this. Some said it made them feel unsafe, and they were concerned about unpredictable behaviour, particularly outside of local pubs and clubs. Some said they felt most people were harmless.



Some older participants discussed their concerns that just witnessing use of alcohol and other drugs normalised it for children and young people. Regardless of their responses, children and young people consistently reported they would like to see an increase in health services to support those dealing with alcohol and other drug use in our community. The importance of those services being culturally appropriate was also raised.

Use by children and young people

According to a NSW Health survey of school students in 2014, 65.1 per cent had consumed alcohol, 14.9 per cent had used marijuana, 15 per cent had used inhalants and 17.7 per cent had used sedatives.⁵⁶

“Afternoon to night, a lot of kids do just wander around for ages with nothing better to do so they end up doing drugs instead.” - Anonymous, 17.

Some young people we spoke with reported having engaged in or witnessed their peers engaging in alcohol and other drug use. Those that did raise it also discussed it in relation to other issues such as disengagement from school, lack of social supports, mental health and bullying. Service providers highlighted the importance of having enough youth services locally to work with young people who may be going through a tough time and dealing with multiple different issues at once, such as drop in services. Some identified that drug dealing within their schools was an issue. Of significant concern are reports from young people that children as young as 11 are being peer-pressured to use drugs and having the process filmed.

“Like seeing young people doing drugs and that...around here they’re kind of like encouraging younger people to do it too, and that’s just really off for me...it’s like 14-year-olds trying to convince like, a younger, like

a 12 or 11-year-old. There are videos on like Instagram and whatever, or Facebook, showing that young people are smoking and that, and it just puts people off.” – Anonymous, 14.

LGBTIQA young people discussed that drug use can be very normalised in the wider LGBTIQA community, and that education sessions around how to be part of the community safely had been beneficial.

Some service providers reported that use of cannabis and steroids are over-represented among young people in the area compared to alcohol and other drugs.

Education

In terms of education programs about the risks of alcohol and other drug use, most young people reported they received this in school through Physical Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE), or through local youth services. Some children reported they had learnt about it from their parents or on TV.

Several young people advised they did not find the education they received engaging or did not find that it dissuaded them from use. They reported it would be more effective to have people speak to them who had life experience of alcohol or drug use and could give them practical examples of how it affected their lives negatively, rather than hearing about theory behind it. Some reported they had been educated about the health and safety risks of alcohol, but drugs had not been discussed in their school despite them being a more prevalent issue amongst their peers.

A health and safety issue reported by both children and parents was the presence of needles in some parks locally. One young person suggested there needs to be a harm minimisation approach locally, with a safe space for people to inject rather than leaving their needles in parks where children might step on them.

Disability

“Children and youth with a disability and their families (including siblings) are a particularly vulnerable group. These young people and their families are at greater risk of experiencing social exclusion, low incomes, bullying, isolation and mental health difficulties.”⁵⁷

In 2016, there were almost 2,000 children and young people between 0-19 years old with a profound or severe disability living in Canterbury-Bankstown.⁵⁸ Through our focus groups we spoke to children and young people with disabilities, children and young people with family members who have disabilities, parents of children with disabilities, and service providers who engage with this group. Some important issues raised included: access and being heard (see Participation); bullying (see Safety); community awareness and acceptance (see Belonging); and hobbies (see Play and Leisure).

Early Intervention

“Early detection and intervention ‘has the potential to significantly reduce disability and its impact on the person’s participation in all aspects of their life, over the life span.”⁵⁹

The importance of early intervention was highlighted by parents and service providers. Firstly, it was discussed in terms of its positive outcomes. One parent discussed a significant difference in the level of function between her adult son with autism who was not able to receive early intervention support, and her 12-year-old son with autism who received early intervention support. The principal of Caroline Chisholm School reported that 70 per cent of their students are non-verbal, and as a result they communicate through their behaviours, which have been overall less extreme since children have begun transferring from early intervention centres.

It was raised by service providers that as well as positive outcomes for children and young people, the other important consideration in favour of early intervention is from the perspective of funding. Investment in early intervention in disability has been shown to have significant cost-savings over the course of a lifetime due to improved outcomes.⁶⁰

As mentioned, children and young people with disabilities are more likely to experience poorer health outcomes than their peers without disabilities. This was raised by parents and service providers in the context of access to services and supports being even more integral.

NDIS

There were mixed responses from parents regarding the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Some parents described having really good outcomes from the scheme, particularly in terms of increased community access for their children. However, even those with positive experiences noted the difficulties other families locally had navigating the system; particularly families from CALD backgrounds. Service providers also raised this as a concern.

Social Determinants of Health and Wellbeing

"Research shows that the lower a person's social standing in life (e.g. persistent unemployment or chronic homelessness), the worse their health and wellbeing outcomes are likely to be. This global phenomenon is referred to as the social gradient in health... It is impossible to effectively address existing social gradients in health without also addressing the social determinants of health. One of the most noteworthy social determinants of child health and wellbeing is poverty."⁶¹

Financial stressors

Financial stressors are shown to negatively impact on health and wellbeing for children and young people. As discussed in the community profile there is a significant amount of low-income families in our City. There are almost double the amount of people in social housing rentals in Canterbury-Bankstown (8.1 per cent) than the NSW average 4.4 per cent. In Villawood alone 701 households are in social housing, which is 55.7 per cent of the population.⁶² According to the Canterbury-Bankstown Youth Summit 2018 report, 40 per cent of students indicated that financial difficulties were their biggest concern.⁶³

There are also links between other priority groups and children living in poverty which should be considered. For example:

- "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are disproportionately affected by poverty and disadvantage. Median incomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households are just 65 per cent of those of non-Indigenous households. Employment rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are lower than for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in all age groups, states and territories and remoteness areas"⁶⁴;
- There are many single-headed families in our City who may be living off one income;
- Families raising a child with a disability may also experience financial stressors and barriers to work due to their roles as carers⁶⁵; and
- Service providers advised refugee and asylum seeker families often experience significant financial hardship due to inability to find work, and not being entitled to Government support.

Aside from concerns around food security which were discussed earlier, it was also raised that there are not enough affordable shops in the City for toys and clothes. Children and young people suggested they would like to see more low-cost or charity-run shops in their local areas. It was also suggested they would like to see an increase in fundraisers to support some of the more disadvantaged people in the local area.

Housing security and homelessness

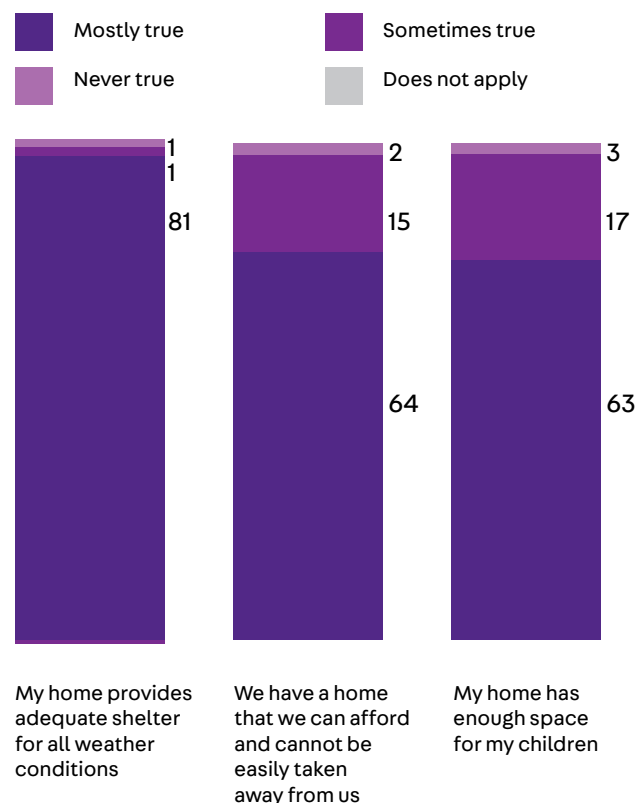
Homelessness is a lack of one or more of the elements that represent 'home', that is, "a sense of security, stability, privacy, safety, and the ability to control living space".⁶⁶ Homelessness does not only refer to those sleeping rough, but also those who don't have a usual place of residence who may be staying in temporary accommodation, or couch-surfing. A key concern for children and young people was that our City needs to increase the amount of support in the area for those experiencing homelessness, both in terms of physical shelter and financial support.

More than 2,500 people in Canterbury-Bankstown reported being homeless in 2016.⁶⁷ Service providers discussed that housing insecurity and homelessness are linked to financial stressors, and impact on the health and wellbeing of children and young people. Concerns about housing security due to increasing rental costs in the area was raised as an issue by parents and young people. Across the City 34.8 per cent of people are in rental properties compared to 30 per cent in NSW.⁶⁸ Children, parents and service providers in Canterbury-Bankstown gave examples of large extended families having to live together in overcrowded rentals.

Issues such as domestic and family violence compounded with financial stressors can also result in children and young people experiencing homelessness (see Safety).

A family who had lost their home raised that it had been extremely difficult trying to manage the cost of public transport to get older children to school. On top of this, they also discussed the extra travel time to take children to and from school and between after school activities from where they were staying, trying to maintain their children's normal routine so they do not feel too disrupted; caring for younger children; and at the same time looking for a new affordable rental in the area.

"Housing" - Parents and carers survey



Maternal and Infant Health

There were 5,234 births in Canterbury-Bankstown in 2017, which is 5.46 per cent of all births in NSW.⁶⁹

Antenatal care

“Central to shifting the current social gradient in health outcomes, and the social and economic burden of chronic diseases, is health equality starting in the first 1,000 days. This can only be done through a coordinated policy approach which addresses the needs of children from conception, thus laying the foundation for their future health and wellbeing.”⁷⁰

About 83.1 per cent of mothers had their first antenatal visit within the first 13 weeks of pregnancy in the Sydney Local Health District (SLHD), 69.8 per cent of mothers in the South West Sydney Local Health District (SWSLHD). Out of those, 96.5 per cent of mothers didn’t smoke any cigarettes in the second half of pregnancy in the SLHD, and 90.4 per cent of mothers in the SWSLHD.⁷¹

Young mums and dads

In NSW in 2016 in the SLHD 0.5 per cent of mothers and in the SWSLHD 2.2 per cent of mothers were 12-19 years old.⁷² Service providers told us there needs to be a different support to antenatal care for young parents. They recommend a more psychosocial approach which includes discussing goal-setting including returning to school or going to university, mental health and practical information as well as providing a time and space for young parents to talk safely and have a voice.

Concerns were raised that young parents often don’t have their voices heard, that they are treated as irresponsible and often decisions

are made for them; particularly if they are involved in the child protection system.

Service providers acknowledged the importance of practical services and home-visiting supports for young parents post-birth, and advised increasing capacity in current services would be helpful.

Neonatal support

Parents told us they would like more information about what reliable supports are available for advice and parenting tips on the phone or the internet. Parents were generally aware of local supports like child and family nurses and Tresillian.

“...the best way to prevent negative outcomes for children is to promote well-being throughout their lives, rather than only responding to vulnerability and crisis.”⁷³

Community recommendations

- Increase the number of sports and nutrition-based health programs, particularly in the evenings and in high-density housing areas.
- Increase programs addressing food insecurity, or promotion/support of existing initiatives.
- Increase the number of child and youth friendly mental health services locally like Headspace and Breakthru, and increase promotion of existing services.
- Create a resource about mental health supports that is distributed to children and young people in all schools locally.
- More initiatives that raise community awareness about mental health (like those in mental health month) and more education for parents and teachers.
- Provide more education for children and young people about their rights in healthcare.

- Increase supports for low-income families, particularly those experiencing housing insecurity or homelessness.
- Increase the number of mothers receiving antenatal care in the first 13 weeks, and improve access to holistic antenatal care for young mothers under 18.
- Increase promotion of existing supports for new parents wanting advice.
- Increase the amount of practical support services available in the home for new parents, single parents, parents of children with disabilities or chronic health conditions, and parents who have disabilities, health or mental health conditions.
- Increase health literacy amongst CALD communities.
- Increase community awareness campaigns around different disabilities.
- Increase promotion of NDIS education and support available for people from CALD communities.
- Adopting a harm-minimisation approach to alcohol and other drug use in the broader community by having an injecting room locally to prevent needles being left in public spaces, and increase alcohol and other drug supports for all ages.
- Improve education around the risks of using alcohol and other drugs, and target this at younger age groups in an early intervention approach.
- Increase trauma-informed practice training to service providers and school staff.
- Increase in education for children and young people about stress and emotion management tools.
- Cleaner public toilets.
- Increase in number of services, or increased capacity in existing services, in areas with lots of high-density dwellings to support a bigger population of children and young people.
- Increase in campaigns against passive smoking, and increase restrictions about where people can smoke.
- Combat land pollution in our City by increasing the number of bins and volunteer clean-up committees, air pollution by planting more trees, and clean up our waterways.
- Encourage use of solar panels, and increase number of initiatives where people get paid to recycle e.g. bottles.
- Improve sexual health education for LGBTIQ children and young people, and review ways to help local sexual health services better engage and support LGBTIQ young people.
- Increase the number of healthy take away options locally, and improve nutrition of school canteen food.



"My child-friendly city has a beautiful field, fireworks, an ice cream shop, a toy shop, a restaurant and a food court. It's friendly because there are fireworks it brings people together and they can buy foods, toys and ice cream and look at the beautiful view." – Rajveer, 6.



Safety

Children and young people
think safety is...

No abuse

Friends

Have a home

Teachers

Parents

Not harming others

Feeling in control

Having a plan

Police

Ambulance

Following rules

Thinking twice

Protection

Seat belts

Fire trucks

Trusted adults

Fences

Supervision

Respecting boundaries

Helmets



“The sense of security that comes from having a safe community, a safe home and safe relationships is an important first and basic step to enable children and young people to develop to their potential. At the same time, risk taking and learning from challenges is an integral part of being a child and young person.”⁷⁴

Children and young people in Canterbury-Bankstown reported generally feeling safe and identified the places and circumstances in which they felt safe. However, a significant number of them identified issues that need to be addressed to improve their sense of safety which we will discuss in this section.

Rights

Article 9: Children should not be separated from their parents unless it is for their own good. For example, if a parent is mistreating or neglecting a child. Children whose parents have separated have the right to stay in contact with both parents, unless this might harm the child.

Article 11: Governments should take steps to stop children being taken out of their own country illegally.

Article 12: Children have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account.

Article 13: Children have the right to get and to share information, as long as the information is not damaging to them or to others.

Article 14: Children have the right to think and believe what they want and to practise their religion, as long as they are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights. Parents should guide children on these matters.

Article 16: Children have the right to privacy. The law should protect them from attacks against their way of life, their good name, their family and their home.

Article 19: Governments should ensure that children are properly cared for and protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents, or anyone else who looks after them.

Article 25: children who are looked after by their local authority rather than their parents should have their situation reviewed regularly.

Article 34: Governments should protect children from sexual abuse.

Article 35: Governments should make sure that children are not abducted or sold.

Article 37: children who break the law should not be treated cruelly.

Article 39: children who have been neglected or abused should receive special help to restore their self-respect.

Article 40: children who are accused of breaking the law should receive legal help.

Bullying

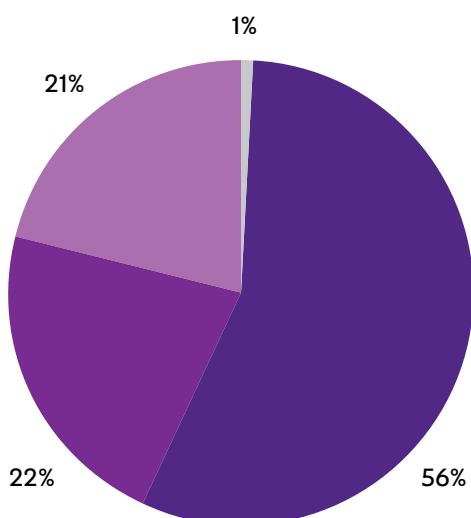
"Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm."⁷⁵

"I get bullied every day and I don't like it."
– Anonymous, 8-12.

Bullying was identified by children, young people and service providers as one of the key safety issues affecting children in our City. Bullying is linked to negative health indicators, and has a significant impact on the wellbeing of children and young people. Bullying was predominantly raised in the context of bullying at school.

"I feel safe from being bullied by other children"
– Children and Young People's Survey

 Mostly true	 Sometimes true
 Never true	 Does not apply



Some children and young people felt that bullying was more common in younger year groups and that people tended to, 'grow out of it', however others reported it was an issue all the way through school. There were mixed responses about how bullying was dealt with in schools. While most people reported that they received support from teachers, there were others who felt they were also bullied by their teachers and relied on support from friends or family to manage the situation.

Children and young people discussed the impact of bullying and the risk of it leading to depression and suicide. The importance of education and awareness around these risks was highlighted by children as young as 10. Some children discussed having been bullies, and the importance of learning to identify their emotions and find healthy outlets for them.

The importance of defining bullying was also raised. Children reported they felt that although bullying in its true form is a very real issue, sometimes people were not differentiating between bullying and expressing opposing views. Children advised they found it helpful to speak with an adult they trusted to help assess the situation.

Overall verbal and cyber bullying were discussed the most, however, the children that did discuss physical bullying said it was common in their area.

The most common forms of verbal bullying raised by children and young people were being called derogatory names, being teased and having rumours spread about them.

In terms of cyber bullying the posting of text messages or photos virally was raised as a key concern, as well as people assuming false identities online (For cyber-crimes see Safety). The use of anonymous posts through apps such as Sarahah was also discussed as a method of bullying. Service providers told us that children

and young people are often afraid to report cyber bullying or to get posts taken down for fear of then being targeted more.

In terms of physical violence, witnessed or experienced hitting, kicking, scratching, pinching and pushing were all raised. Children and young people reported that both threats of violence and actual violence were preventing them from reporting bullying.

“If someone’s getting bullied, they’re scared to say it, to show it and open up, because the bully will full on say, ‘if you tell anyone I’ll bash you.’” – Anonymous, 14.

They felt this was compounded by a lack of trust between students and teachers, and a concern that if they reported the bullying they would not be protected. Some suggested it would be helpful to have a safe space in the school to wait for their parents to collect them if they have been threatened, while others said the focus should be on changing the behaviour of the bullies so victims don’t have to be afraid.

It is also important to note that bullying can be a common experience for those in the UNICEF priority groups. For example:

- About 61 per cent of LGBTIQ young people surveyed across Australia reported verbal homophobic abuse, and 18 per cent reported physical homophobic abuse. About 80 per cent of abuse was reported to occur in schools. A strong relationship was identified between experiencing abuse and reporting higher levels of: thoughts of self-harm, self-harming, having suicidal thoughts and having attempted suicide;⁷⁶
- A survey of secondary students across four states found 80 per cent of students from non-Anglo backgrounds, most of whom were from migrant and refugee backgrounds, reported experiencing racial discrimination and that more than 60 per cent of it occurred in school⁷⁷; and

- In another study, 14 per cent of ATSI students aged 14 years and under were reported by their carers to have been bullied due to their Indigenous status (likely an under representation as it was only reporting incidents the carers knew of that occurred within the previous 12 months).⁷⁸

Safety in schools

Bullying was the most common issue raised that impacted on whether children and young people felt safe at school. Other concerns included:

- The proximity of classrooms to roads in the context of two students who died after a car crashed into their classroom in 2017 in the local area;
- Fire escapes in schools being located too far from classrooms; and
- Schools not being prepared for potential lockdown situations if under threat due to an intruder or an external emergency. Children and young people acknowledged their concerns are mostly about bomb threats or school shootings, and are based on what they have seen on the news occurring in the USA. However, they still feel it needs to be taken seriously in Australian schools so that they feel safe.

Domestic and Family Violence (DFV)

“Children do not need to be the recipient of physical or verbal violence to be affected by it. Overwhelming evidence supports the correlation between children’s exposure to family and domestic violence and the increased likelihood of adverse lifelong outcomes.”⁷⁹

According to White Ribbon, one in four children in Australia are exposed to domestic violence⁸⁰ and children of mothers experiencing domestic violence have higher rates of social and emotional problems than other children.⁸¹

DFV affects people of all backgrounds and social circumstances⁸², however it is important to note that priority groups may experience higher levels of DFV:

- Statistics show that ATSI women experience high levels of violence and abuse. Family violence among ATSI people impacts on the health and social outcomes of women and children⁸³; and
- Young people from CALD backgrounds discussed that in some cultures, violence is 'culturally acceptable'. They reported that children and young people who have migrated to Australia are often stuck in the middle between their parents' culture where violence is normalised, and a new society where it is a criminal act. This can be complicated further by mistrust of authorities, such as police, based on negative experiences in peoples' countries of origin. It has been shown that immigration can cause social and cultural dislocation and can intensify domestic violence.⁸⁴ "If we value cultural interests more highly than the humane treatment of children, we may ignore evidence of child abuse and condone or even justify lower standards of care for children from other cultures."⁸⁵

"I think family safety is a big thing because I have experienced violence at home. I think it's very difficult because a lot of families are big on shame, or they don't want to involve the state. They want to keep everything in the family," – Anonymous, 18.

DFV was raised by children as young as 11, particularly in the context of needing more positive role models in our community for children whose parents, "do the wrong thing, like domestic violence." – Anonymous, 11.

DFV was noted by almost all service providers we interviewed as a key issue in our local area and the biggest safety factor impacting on our children and young people. According to

Bankstown Police, DFV is the biggest issue for children and young people in their area command. Campsie police also reported it is one of the biggest issues in their area command.

Bankstown Police discussed their inclusion of children in follow-up interviews after a reported DFV incident to ensure their voices are heard, in the hope this will increase the number of young people getting the support they need. It was raised by service providers that DFV and the trauma it causes can have a significant impact on mental health, truancy from school, risk-taking behaviours and engagement in crime. To combat this, it was suggested that there should be:

- An increase in community education and more sector discussion about the impact of DFV on children;
- An increase in DFV supports for children and young people as they often aren't included in DFV services; it was suggested by a service provider that there may well be more child victims as for every mother there may be multiple children who are experiencing it too;
- An increase in DFV education for school counsellors locally; and
- An increase in financial aid and accommodation supports for women and their children as DFV is the principal cause of homelessness for women and children.⁸⁶

Local Program: RESPECT project

Funded by The Smith Family Bankstown Communities for Children

The RESPECT project focuses on educating boys and young men in local primary schools about the nature and causes of DFV and how they can lend their voices and lives to being active agents in preventing it. Over 10-12 weeks they create an original song that transforms young men into active agents of social change and role models in their schools.

byds.org.au/profile/respect/

Lighting

Several factors were raised by children and young people in regards to a lack of light in outdoor spaces and how that impacts on their feelings of safety. These included:

- Not being able to see if there is a person who might cause them physical harm;
- An increased risk of being hit by a car; and
- Tripping on uneven footpaths.

Children and young people from across Canterbury-Bankstown advised that poor street lighting was the main issue. Lighting in other public spaces, specifically parks, was also raised consistently in discussions with children and young people who spend time in Bankstown, Belmore and Campsie. Children and young people felt increasing lighting in parks would provide them with a safe space to spend time with friends; make parks more safe to walk through to get to other parts of the City; and a space to exercise and keep fit, particularly for those in high-density dwellings with no backyard.

Service providers discussed several factors that need to be considered if lighting is to be increased, and some reasons why it is not always feasible:

- Activating spaces by lighting them does not necessarily make them more safe; you can have a well-lit park in an isolated spot and crime may still occur;
- There should be a purpose behind activating a new space, for example to run structured, supervised activities there;
- If spaces are activated we also need to address other logistical things like ensuring toilets are available;
- Although the park may be lit children and young people still may have to make their way home in the dark;

- Lighting some spaces is not possible if it causes light spillage into private properties which impacts on sleep for residents; and
- If concerns are raised about walking through parks to get somewhere else, options such as pathway lighting can be considered.

Perceptions of crime and risk

“Fear of crime impacts upon the health and wellbeing of children and young people.”⁸⁷

Parks

There were mixed responses about whether children and young people felt safe going to the park during the day without an adult present. Some advised they felt comfortable doing this, particularly if they had a friend with them; some reported they would do it but described feeling hyper vigilant while they are there; and others said they did not feel safe to go without an adult in case they were kidnapped or attacked in some way. Some have also reported feeling unsafe on the way to their local park due to reckless driving on the roads that they have to cross to get there. Those who were concerned about road safety often had direct experiences that made them feel unsafe, however, the vast majority of those concerned about being attacked or kidnapped had no clear basis for their fears other than being told by adults that it was a risk.

Public transport

Most children and young people reported catching public transport regularly and being with other people were key factors in making them feel safe. Feeling unsafe at stations and on public transport at night was commonly raised; especially when travelling alone. The main perceived risk was being verbally abused because of their culture or their age. A small number of people also felt they were at risk of being physically attacked.

General neighbourhood safety

Most children and young people reported feeling safe walking around their neighbourhoods during the day if they are with other people. Some said they don't feel safe walking around on their own, but think it is not because of how dangerous the City is, but rather because they are not allowed out on their own so they aren't used to it. Aside from being alone, some children also raised that they feel less safe in areas with poor lighting and areas with people that are intoxicated e.g. around pubs and clubs as people's behaviour can be unpredictable. Some young people discussed there are areas locally that don't feel welcoming, but they differentiated this from feeling unsafe or at risk.

A number of children and young people said they feel very conscious of anyone walking behind them if they are alone, and described feeling hyper vigilant.

"It's like you've got this feeling that you're always waiting for someone to come at you"
– Anonymous, 15.

Interestingly, the crimes children were most concerned about were random acts of violence from strangers e.g. being attacked or kidnapped, however, according to police this kind of crime is very uncommon in the City. Service providers raised safety education often focusses on 'stranger danger,' which although important poses a much smaller risk than abuse by a known person which is far more prevalent.

"I don't feel safe, because someone could push you off your bike and kidnap you or steal your bike." – Anonymous, 10.

Police also discussed how public perceptions of safety are impacted by events such as public place shootings. Even if these crimes are targeted and not random attacks it creates trauma for the community and takes time to



recover from. As a result, children and young people often get even more heavily restricted from being out in the community and learning to safely exercise their independence.

Media portrayal of the City further perpetuates the idea that it's unsafe, and it was suggested in order to combat this we need more open community discussions about what our safety issues area, how they will be addressed and also a broader discussion around positives in our community to start shifting the perception of Canterbury-Bankstown as an unsafe City.

"I feel like the media's portrayal of Bankstown is bad, not many people want to go here. Like I work in the City and when people find out I'm from Bankstown they have surprised looks on their faces and they say, 'What! But you're so nice!'...so I feel like the best thing to do is to demystify it." – Anonymous, 14.

Cyber crime

Cybercrime encompasses bullying, intimidation, posting explicit photos and creating fake profiles using someone else's identity.

Primary school children discussed the risk of being groomed online by a predator using a false identity. The importance of cyber safety education for both children and parents was raised, and service providers put a particular focus on early intervention so children formed safe habits early on. Police advised cyber safety presentations were the most requested presentations by schools locally, and that often cybercrimes go unreported. Increased education around how to report and promotion of the e-safety commission was recommended.

Juvenile justice

Police reported there is a low rate of crime committed by children and young people in the local area. Crimes that are committed are usually opportunistic such as stealing, and those who do commit crimes usually have difficult home lives, a lack of good role-modelling and don't see another option for themselves.

The importance of access to affordable co-curricular activities and programs was also raised. As stated by one service provider, "children with co-curriculars like sport or band aren't usually the ones getting into trouble; it's the kids with nothing to do whose parents don't care where they are."

It is important to note that adolescents have a unique capacity to grow and change, and youth diversionary programs (e.g. programs that enhance life skills and positive relationships with peers and facilitate engagement with adult role models) can be very effective for young offenders (reference diversionary programs youth action submission). Service providers told us that engagement in even one diversionary program can completely change the trajectory of a young person's life.

Children and young people understanding their rights in the legal system was also raised as an important point.

"I don't want to go to juvi...so that's why we should get taught so we know the full consequences" – Anonymous, 12.

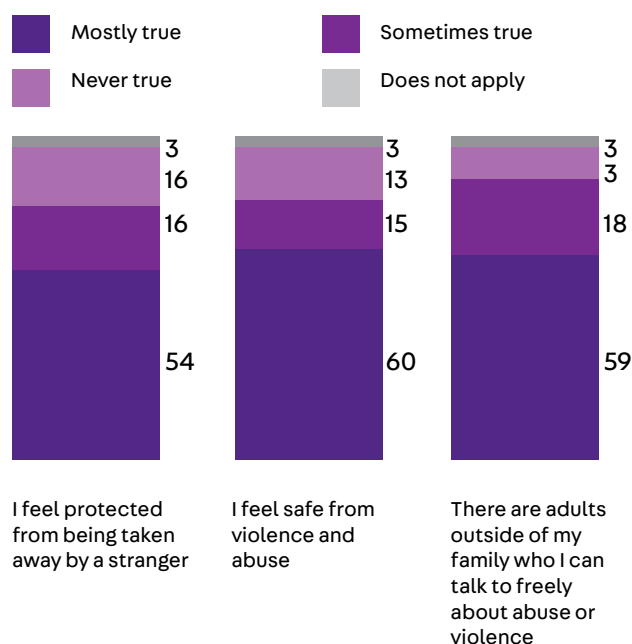
It was suggested that more celebration and showcasing of different kinds of achievements for young people might also demonstrate there are other options than engaging in crime if you aren't confident academically.

“I feel like a lot of young people grow up that feel like, ‘I have to study and I’m not good at study’, and then they look at everyone around them, and like young boys now they tend to go and try and make money the wrong way, because they feel like that’s the easy option to take, or the only option to take. Especially when employment isn’t simple for young people. So, if they don’t want to study it feels like the only option there. So, if we recognise the successes of young people; you know, this person succeeded in sports; this person succeeded in study; this person succeeded in something else or another path that they took. It shows there are other options for you to take, that you know, I don’t need to go that way.” – Anonymous, 19.

Police told us that they run, ‘Where You Fit into The Law’ workshops in schools after identifying common misconceptions children and young people had, such as that criminal records were wiped once you turn 18. For those who do have contact with juvenile justice, increasing education around work and development orders and entitlements to legal support– particularly for children and young people from CALD backgrounds – was identified as a need. ATSI children and young people, and children and young people with disabilities, are more likely to be in detention or prison than their non-Indigenous peers and peers without disabilities.⁸⁸

Child protection

“My Safety and Protection” – Children and Young People’s Survey



“At home [children] should feel safe, as well as with teachers, and with their parents, and with all of their supervisors who are taking care of them.” – Anonymous, 12.

“Sustained exposure to abuse and neglect increases the likelihood of physical and mental health issues and early mortality by disrupting critical developmental processes; by affecting the way children relate to and interpret the world around them; and through increased engagement in adverse health risk behaviours.”⁸⁹



52.3 of every 1,000 children (0-17) in NSW has been involved in a ROSH report to FACS between 2016-17.⁹⁰ According to surveys, and likely an underestimate, approximately:

- 5-10 per cent of children experience physical abuse;
- 12-23 per cent witness DV; and
- 4-5 per cent experience sexual abuse.⁹¹

The importance of feeling safe from abuse and neglect, and having a community approach to child protection was raised consistently.

Service providers discussed people can have preconceived ideas of how a child who is experiencing abuse or neglect will present or act, which may not always be accurate. It is therefore imperative to take disclosures from all children and young people seriously. Another concern raised was that general practice around child protection is not inclusive of children's voices, and that increased efforts should be made within our City to ensure children in this situation are consulted about decisions that will affect them. Service providers reported in their experience the most common reason children are deemed at risk of significant harm in the local area is due to DFV.

According to data provided by FACS (see appendix 1.7) through a Government Information (Public Access) Act (GIPA) Formal Access Application, the five suburbs with the highest numbers of ROSH Reports in Canterbury-Bankstown for 2016-17 were:

- Bankstown (510);
- Punchbowl (343);
- Yagoona (269);
- Greenacre (266); and
- Chester Hill (250).

Several suggestions were made about how to improve our response to child protection in Canterbury-Bankstown:

- Increased training for service providers, including schools, about trauma-informed practice;
- Increasing community awareness of child protection issues and promoting the importance of taking disclosures from a child or young person seriously;
- Continue to provide accredited parenting programs, and increase the number of programs which address protective behaviours; and
- Increased programs about protective behaviours targeted at children from a young age.

Out of home care

Service providers discussed children who have had engagement with the child protection system and are in out of home care need far more support than they receive, as they often experience a high incidence of trauma and it is not appropriately addressed. Service providers reported this group of children and young people need better access to education around health promotion, and most importantly, their rights.

Service providers reported often children in out of home care are informed of decisions that have been made for them; rather than being consulted on those decisions and having decision-making processes transparently explained.

It is also important to note that ATSI children and young people are much more likely to be in care than non-Indigenous children, and children and youth with disability are also more likely to be in care than children without disabilities.⁹² Service providers raised

that relinquishment of care of children with disabilities has increased due to some families not receiving the amount of practical support they require.

Road safety

Children and young people of all ages mentioned road safety as a key concern in our area.

Road rules

Children and young people raised that to qualify for a license people need to prove they understand road rules, so they feel the issue is more arrogance on the road. Children and young people shared their own experiences or those of their peers where they had had near-misses. Speeding, not indicating, not obeying stop signs and texting while driving were all regularly identified as issues in the local area. In terms of addressing this problem, children and young people felt a campaign increasing community awareness about the long-term impact of not following these small rules could have would be beneficial. Older children and young people also discussed wanting more positive adult role models in the community. Several examples were provided from all age groups of parents, other adults, and people in positions of power in the community not following road rules.

“Even something as little as [not indicating] can cause a crash or someone getting really harmed,” – Anonymous, 12.

“No playing on your phone when you drive - my daddy plays on his phone while he’s driving.” – Anonymous, 5.

Crossings

Increasing the number of safe crossings to schools and parks, and the number of bike paths in the City were also raised as suggestions from children, young people, parents and carers – so children and young people feel more safe getting around our community independently and that parents and carers feel more comfortable allowing them to do this.

“We recognise that keeping children safe conversely involves them in taking risks, so that they can learn how to assess and respond to them; children will never understand risk if society prevents them from experiencing it.”⁹³

A 10-year-old and his mother talked about how he was hit by a car while crossing the road, resulting in a lengthy hospital admission and long-term effects on his health and wellbeing. They suggested that for crossings over main roads, the time allowed for pedestrians to cross should take children into account.

Parents of children with disabilities attending Caroline Chisholm discussed their concerns that there is no pedestrian crossing outside the school, despite advocating with the RMS. They reported all of the children and young people there have high needs - whether they need longer to cross the road due to reduced mobility or they are at risk of absconding - and there is nothing that makes it clear to drivers they need to drive slowly and cautiously.

School drop-off

Children and young people reported there is a lack of safe spaces for parents to drop them off at school. Common experiences included seeing parents pulling into bus stops, or stopping in the middle of the road to let their children out due to traffic congestion.

Service providers suggested to prevent such congestion and risk-taking behaviour around schools it should be more encouraged for children to walk to school as the risks to them walking independently are far lower than they are if they are being let out of the car in the middle of the road surrounded by cars.

Safety planning

The importance of having safety plans in place was raised by children and young people of all ages; knowing what to do in a situation if they felt threatened.

Having a safe, trusted person to talk to was most commonly mentioned. Children and young people identified this might be a family member, a teacher, or a friend; and that it should be a person who can help you assess the situation you are in.

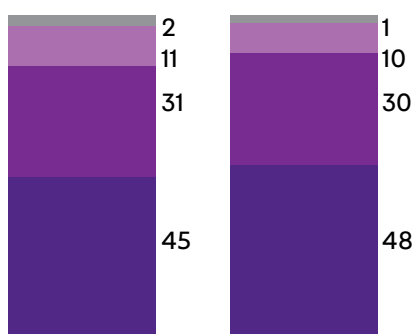
“When you’re around a stranger and you feel early warning signs, you have to go tell a trusted person,” – Anonymous, 8.

Having safe places to go to if they identified an immediate threat was also raised, and the most common safe places identified were home, a friend’s house, school, the local shops, and police stations.

It was also raised that it’s important to know where you can go for help if you don’t have a safe or trusted person to talk to. The most commonly raised suggestion was the kid’s helpline, along with local youth and mental health services.

“If I didn’t have someone close to me that I trust I would call the kids helpline,” – Anonymous, 11.

"My Safety" – Children and Young People's Survey



I feel safe using buses or other public vehicles

It is safe for me to walk and cycle in my community

Perceptions of police and police stations

There were mixed responses from children and young people about their perceptions of police; however, the majority felt police were trustworthy and were there to keep them safe. Some reported that an increased police presence would make them feel safer. Equally, some said they feel nervous that something bad might be happening if they see a lot of police out in the community.

Some young people felt they were discriminated against based on their race or their age, which made them feel as if they could not trust police or go to them for help if they needed it. A small number of children and young people discussed hearing or seeing altercations between police and other people their age and feeling intimidated.

"They're in uniform and it's a bit scary, it would be good if we knew them more like if they came to the school it might feel safer,"
– Anonymous, 15.

Some service providers raised concerns that cyber bullying reports by children and young people had not been taken seriously by police in some instances, whereas others discussed feeling local police were supportive of children and young people.

It was raised by service providers that police stations are intimidating environments for children and young people and this can prevent them making reports. It was suggested police offer to meet in a safe space, such as at school, to make a report or arrange an Apprehended Violence Order (AVO).

Police perception of their relationship with children and young people

Police acknowledged their rapport with children and young people can often be impacted upon by external circumstances, but that overall they felt there was a good rapport in Canterbury-Bankstown which has improved with the introduction of School Liaison Officers. Police reported they want children and young people to feel safe going to them for help.

In response to children and young people feeling targeted, police reported they have an obligation to patrol high-crime areas, so if people are hanging out in the same spots they may be checked repeatedly and feel targeted for who they are, even though it's more likely about where they are.

In terms of ways to break down barriers and improve the relationship in both directions police said that PCYC is an effective tool. Police reported that it is difficult for children from homes where there has been a violent

intervention to build rapport with police – as a child all they can see is police using the same kind of force they are wanting stopped in their own family. Police discussed engaging other services in running programs in areas where this is a recurrent issue so that children are comfortable receiving support.

Police discussed undergoing more training about working with children and young people who have experienced trauma, to increase empathy and understanding they may be acting out because of this.

It was also discussed that some police may need to show more empathy and take a different approach in some cases with children and young people who might be at risk; however, children and young people also need to communicate honestly if they need help.

Positive role-modelling

Wanting more adults to take accountability in our community for the impact their actions can have on children and young people was a common theme.

“Yeah just the people around, it’s just...not something to look up to,” – Anonymous, 16.

Children and young people discussed wanting more positive role models, particularly people in positions of power.

“They’re such big role models...and if they’re doing the wrong thing then we’ll think ‘why can’t we do it?’...People who are higher up need to be watching what they’re doing” – Anonymous, 12.

Community recommendations

- Continue initiatives like RESPECT, and increase awareness-raising and education about DFV, particularly the impact of DFV on children and young people).
- More opportunities to learn self-defence for children and young people of all ages, along with training around identifying risk.
- Increase education about rights within the legal system.
- More road safety campaigns that give people an insight into the long-term impact of small reckless decisions, and why the risks aren’t worth it.
- More education for young drivers about what happens when cars crash and how to provide first aid.
- More anti-bullying education campaigns to increase awareness, targeting all years in schools.
- Safer crossings, especially around schools, parks and main roads.
- More education sessions for children as early intervention initiatives about:
 - Resilience building and social skills;
 - Cyber safety;
 - Protective behaviours; and
 - DFV.
- More Government funding to support children and young people who are at risk.
- Safer, free spaces for young people to spend time in the community – young people identified youth centres and libraries as existing safe, protected spaces – make use of this by:
 - Extending drop in hours;
 - Increasing the frequency of outreach services; and
 - Extending library hours.

- Service providers suggested GLLO's (Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officers) building their relationship with LGBTIQ young people would help them to feel supported, and would encourage them to report abuse.
- Bullying in schools on religious grounds was reported as an issue by LGBTIQ young people, and it was suggested that an increase in public support from religious leaders, and more messages of acceptance would make a difference.
- More protection on transport for LGBTIQ young people, particularly after events like Mardi Gras when they are returning home.
- Combat negative media portrayals and promote positive role modelling through promoting initiatives like Stories of Strength.
- "Have 'safe houses' locally – places where there's a sign on the door that tells you it's somewhere safe children can go for help," – Anonymous, 12. Safety House initiatives were common in NSW up until a few years ago when the program ceased, however they still run in NT and WA⁹⁴.
- Parents suggested regular training being offered through local libraries around child safety and protection in our community held in different languages, so parents and the wider community know what to do to keep children safe and learn about protective behaviours;
- Ensuring secure windows in homes so young children can't fall out.
- Ensure all Council services comply with the Principles for Child Safe Organisations, and encourage other organisations locally to conduct reviews as well.





"My child-friendly city has room for everyone to play – you can eat marshmallows, you can read books as well as ride your bike, scooter or skateboard. You can play with a partner on a seesaw or monkey bars while you play with your friend and you can get free toys; if you get thirsty you can get a drink and when you are hot you can play with a water gun." – Iris, 8.

Bike scoote & statboard land

Bikes , Scooters & Scate board land



water gun



Balance Beam



Monkey Bars



Bubbler



Se-saw



Education

Children and young people
think education is...

Reading
Encouragement
Friends
Motivating
Sport
Games
Culture
No judgment
Supportive teachers
Interesting
A safe place
Creative
Languages
Art
Listening
Music
Working together
Sharing opinions
Patience



**“The more that you read, the more things you will know.
The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.”
– Dr Seuss.**

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”⁹⁵

Children and young people discussed the importance of their education, and wanting to make the most of the opportunities they were afforded. Most children and young people in the City reported they like their school. Most also reported that they have at least one supportive teacher they can go to for help and that they feel well supported by at least some of their peers.

Rights

Article 12: Children have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account.

Article 13: Children have the right to get and to share information, as long as the information is not damaging to them or to others.

Article 19: Governments should ensure that children are properly cared for and protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents, or anyone else who looks after them.

Article 23: Children who have any kind of disability should receive special care and support so that they can live a full and independent life.

Article 28: Children have the right to an education. Discipline in schools should respect children’s human dignity. Primary education should be free.

Article 29: Education should develop each child’s personality and talents to the full. It should encourage children to respect their parents, their cultures and other cultures.

Article 31: Children have the right to relax, play and to join in a wide range of leisure activities.

Article 32: Governments should protect children from work that is dangerous or that might harm their health or education.

What children and young people are interested in learning about at school

“When children and youth are fully engaged with learning their potential can be realised, and academic achievement will follow.”⁹⁶

“More language classes so everyone can get along,” – Anonymous, 9.

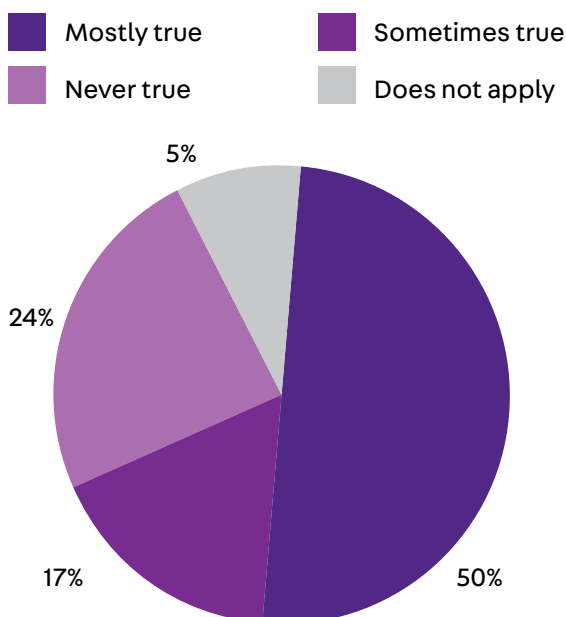
“Reading skills,” – Anonymous, 5.

Children and young people reported that they wanted to learn more about their rights and responsibilities under the CRC. There were mixed responses about whether rights are learned in schools – there were children in early childhood education who had been taught their rights, and young people in high school who

had not heard of the CRC. Some reported they had been taught their rights by teachers, or by police doing presentations at school. Overall, they said the CRC needs to be a more consistent part of the curriculum. As a City we should be aspiring to make sure all children know and understand their rights under the CRC.

“In my school I have been taught about my rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child”

- Children and Young People’s Survey



In the surveys, 80 per cent of children and young people responded that it was mostly true that they learned about being healthy at school, and children and young people generally reported being satisfied with how much they learned.

Children and young people with disabilities discussed the importance of social connection at school, and having opportunities to engage in art, music and sport.

Areas children and young people reported wanting to learn more about in school include:

- About the history and culture of our First Nations People;
- Alcohol and other drugs for younger students as an early intervention initiative;
- Plants, gardening and sustainable living;
- How to address bullying and raise awareness;
- Practical and social life skills in preparation for life after school; and
- Sexuality and sexual health education inclusive of LGBTIQA children and young people.

Students also raised the idea of ‘gendered’ subjects:

“[Woodwork] only happens at mixed schools or boys’ schools, never at girls’ schools. And I’m very interested in that stuff.”
– Anonymous, 15.

“Some guys are interested in textiles...there are these subjects that are just associated with certain genders.” – Anonymous, 16.

How children and young people want to learn

“Teaching, properly conceived, is not a delivery system...great teachers do that, but what great teachers also do is mentor, stimulate, provoke, engage.”⁹⁷

Children and young people raised the positive impact of flexible and creative teaching styles on them. The most common themes were the importance of presenting information visually; being patient with students who work at a slower pace; and using games or real-life examples to demonstrate a point.

“The thing I like about this school is they make education fun, like in maths there’s different maths games we do. Like we learn, but we have fun at the same time.” – Anonymous, 10.

Students who did not feel their learning style or the pace they learn at was supported by their teachers discussed feeling under significant pressure and feeling generally less safe in the classroom. Some described feeling criticised and discouraged for not learning quickly enough, which in turn made them feel uncomfortable asking for help and caused them to struggle more in the long run.

“In class sometimes when we’re asking questions though it doesn’t feel safe... because like not everyone learns the same, not everyone can understand things.” – Anonymous, 16.

Children, young people and service providers reported that more homework help initiatives would be helpful, such as those being run by Chester Hill Neighbourhood Centre and Bankstown Community Resource Group. Some also raised that smaller class sizes would allow teachers more time to support individual students.

Children and young people also raised that they would like more opportunities through schools that broaden their minds, such as volunteering or hearing people speak about different life experiences.

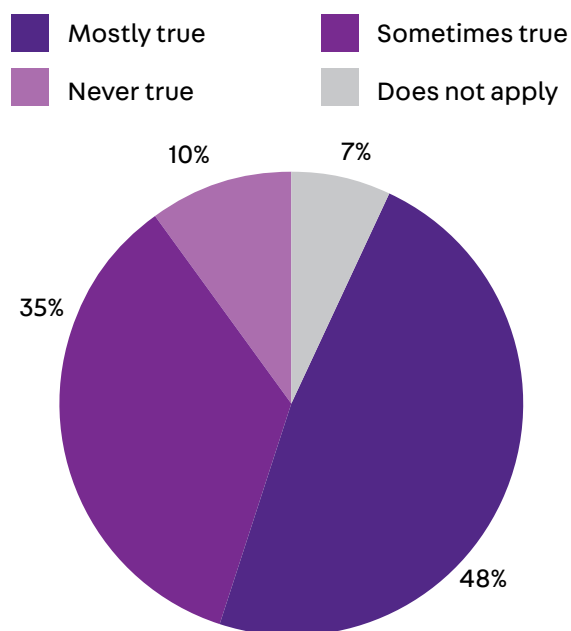
Bullying and safety at school

“NO! I don’t feel safe from being bullied.” – Anonymous, 13-17, survey respondent.

As well as individual or departmental school bullying policies, there is also Commonwealth legislation which is relevant to bullying, harassment, discrimination and violence.⁹⁸ The Department of Education has a website

about bullying that provides resources and information for all students, teachers, parents and carers in NSW.⁹⁹ For bullying and safety at school see Safety.

“Children respect each other at my school without risk of being hassled or bullied” – Children and Young People’s Survey



Funding and financial accessibility

Young people raised concerns about Government funding to public schools being insufficient, and feeling that schools with poor academic outcomes in low-socioeconomic areas had had their funding reduced rather than receiving the extra support they need.

“Schools in areas here get less than outside areas, less funding, and it should be equal” – Anonymous, 15.

Young people who raised concerns their school was underfunded, reported there were very few excursions and programs outside of school, which limited their opportunities to

expand their world view. It was also discussed that technology, such as computers, heating, cooling and other school infrastructure was often outdated or in need of repair. One young person suggested local schools should buddy together to share resources. A small number of young people also raised they felt their school was not using funding in the best interests of students or staff, but for superficial improvements.

Some children and young people said that the financial accessibility of schooling, even in the public system, is an issue for families in Canterbury-Bankstown (see Participation).

Perceptions of teachers

“The teachers are good teachers, and they’re all trying to help you, and if something is going on, they don’t do like unfair treatment,”
– Anonymous, 12.

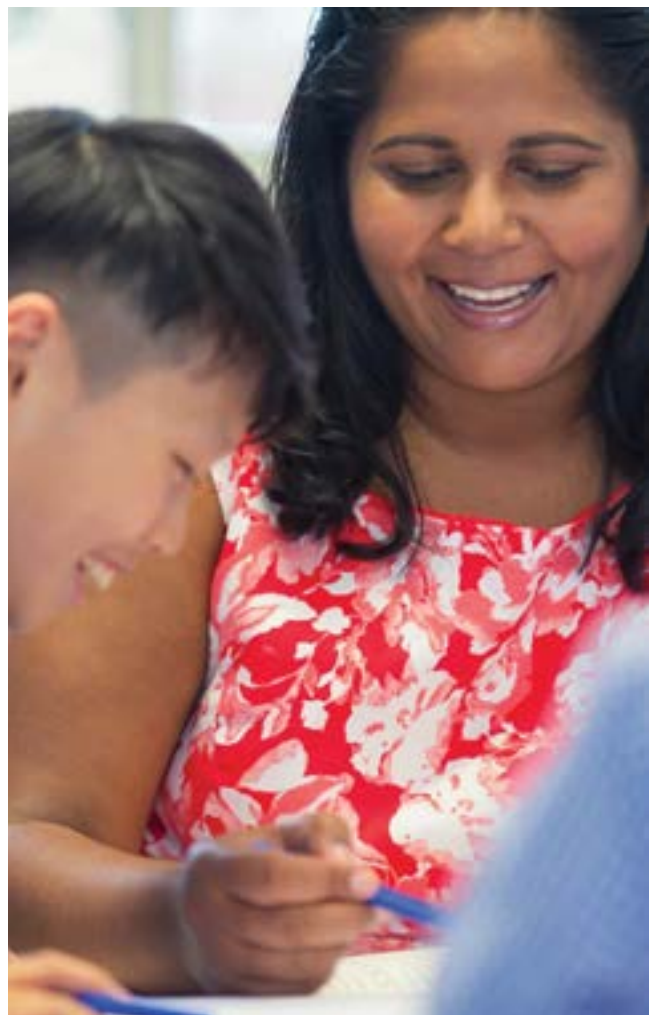
“Teachers treat us well” – Anonymous, 14.

“I think this school cares more about its reputation than what’s actually happening inside the school” – Anonymous, 16.

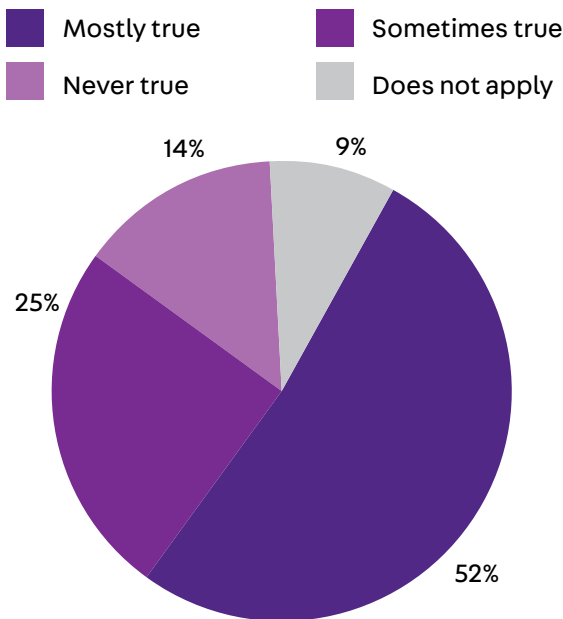
There were mixed responses from children and young people about whether they felt listened to and taken seriously by their teachers. Some reported that most of their teachers were supportive and made them feel heard, unless the teacher was stressed or having a bad day.

“It’s hard, especially if they’ve had a bad day and they take it out on you. If you don’t know what’s happened it makes you feel bad about yourself. It makes you feel like ‘oh, I’ve done something wrong’,” – Anonymous, 12.

Some reported that they have one or two teachers that make them feel heard, however, they would not trust most of their teachers to take them seriously. Some reported they did not feel supported by any teachers in their school.



**“In my school there are adults who I feel safe talking to about my problems and feelings”
- Children and Young People’s Survey**



The benefits of mentorship programs in high school were raised. One young person described that in Years 11 and 12 every student nominates a teacher of their choice to be their mentor, and having that extra support helps them deal with the stress of the HSC.

It was discussed that teachers in their own social conversations sometimes underestimate how much children and young people hear or understand, and don’t consider the impact it can have. For example, using discriminatory language or making inappropriate jokes. Service providers also discussed racism in schools as an issue, and teachers making racist comments normalises it for other children and perpetuates the problem.

“Teachers as well who make us feel bad for being stressed out, because it’s like a normal reaction and them having so many expectations of us; like how can you not be stressed out?” – Anonymous, 16.

Children and young people who reported a lack of rapport and trust with their teachers suggested teachers need to be reminded they have all been children and students. A small number also discussed they felt that teachers did not respect their boundaries; invading personal space when reprimanding them or discussing students’ private information in public spaces. These students discussed the power imbalance in the student-teacher relationship, and that teachers need to be conscious of how their actions affect students.

Young people discussed in some cases they felt their teachers were under significant stress from being overworked and had limited support from executives within their schools. They said unless that changed it was unlikely their teachers could provide them with more support.

Some children and young people discussed unfair treatment. Those from co-educational schools raised that teachers will often give harsher punishments to boys than to girls, even if they had done the same thing. Children and young people discussed that teachers will often pick the same students for opportunities without a transparent process. Others advised teachers only choose high-achieving students. They argued that opportunities like work experience, volunteering and co-curricular programs should be afforded to all students, as it can shape who you become.

**“It shapes things, and [it’s] the period of someone’s life where their perception or like thoughts towards certain things form. So, it’s like, that’s a rich time in someone’s life to start incorporating those kinds of things.”
– Anonymous, 16.**

The hypocrisy of some school rules was also raised. For example, in a discussion about sun safety and role modelling one young person said, “teachers say that we have to wear hats in the playground; but they don’t wear hats.” – Anonymous, 12.

The importance of recognising achievements through initiatives such as “Principal’s Awards” was raised. Some students felt their school had a positive academic focus and this motivated students to work hard. Some students discussed academic achievements aren’t celebrated, rewarded or even acknowledged by staff in their schools, which they felt negatively impacted on the motivation of students.

Discipline in schools

Young people discussed they feel disciplinary actions in their schools are ineffective and need to be reviewed. Some discussed being made to sit in a room for several hours and not being allowed to engage in school work.

“It’s like mental torture.” – Anonymous, 14.

“It’s like making the school a prison... Aren’t we better off in class?” – Anonymous, 15.

Some discussed suspension being more like a holiday, and being a waste of time. The idea of using community service in the local area as a form of discipline was raised. Some younger students discussed success in schools that used a rewards-based approach to good behaviour rather than a punitive approach to bad behaviour.

Mental health in schools

There were mixed responses about how mental health is addressed in schools. Generally speaking children and young people felt that they had good understandings of mental health, but how supported they felt by school staff varied.

“I have a cool down spot if I get angry” – Anonymous, 8.

“Some teachers are more aware, one did a presentation on mental health to students on R U OK Day.” – Anonymous, 16.

“If we ever mention mental health issues, they sort of think we’re making it up.” – Anonymous, 16.

“They think we’re dramatic, but that’s actually how we feel.” – Anonymous, 16.

Young people and service providers identified teachers need increased training on how to identify and respond to mental health. Service providers advised truancy, social withdrawal and escalating behaviours can be misinterpreted by teachers; with children and young people being labelled as “bad kids” rather than kids who might need help. Service providers reported some teachers don’t feel they have a responsibility to understand mental health or trauma, even though it can directly impact on a child’s ability to engage in learning. It was acknowledged by service providers that teachers cannot be experts in everything, however, as children and young people spend so much time in schools observed by teachers it is integral that they have a basic knowledge of what to look for and where to refer on so that children and young people don’t fall through the gaps. It is also important to note that the onus should not only be on teachers:



“Just as individual teachers are well placed to pick up on risk factors, schools collectively have high levels of access to young people. If teachers are not able to individually identify risk factors, then the web of school counsellors, student support officers, wellbeing programs, youth service workers (when able to access schools), administrative staff and executive level staff should be able to.”¹⁰⁰

Service providers and students reported they don’t feel there is enough support in schools from school counsellors, as they are only funded to work one day a week in some schools and often have limits put on them about how much support they can provide individual students.

“You can’t blame her [for not being here], she’s probably at other schools.” – Anonymous, 15.

Both service providers and children and young people advised they would like to see this changed with full-time school counsellors appointed to schools in the City to make mental health support for our children and young people a priority.

“I really didn’t even know we had a counsellor,” – Anonymous, 15.

“I know [the counsellor] exists, but I don’t think she even has an office here,” – Anonymous, 14.

Some children and young people also identified they want to see more effort from school counsellors to build rapport and trust with them, and to explain limits of confidentiality to them.

Service providers identified that engaging children and young people in mental health support in school may lead to better outcomes than having them referred on to external services where there are more barriers to attending, such as travel. They also discussed

school counsellors are often not trained in trauma-informed practice, and need further education about key issues in the local area such as DFV.

School facilities

For primary school students, an increase in challenging play equipment and better access to local pools in summer were consistently raised.

A number of children and young people reported they had concerns about privacy in their school bathrooms; either because bathroom stall doors were low enough for tall people to look over, or the locks were broken and were not replaced. Hygiene of students due to a lack of soap dispensers in some school bathrooms was also raised as a concern.

Transition to high school

“Am I going to make friends?” – Anonymous, 13.

Mixed feelings about transitioning to high school were raised by a number of children in Year six. Adapting to new teachers, new people, new learning and a new environment all at once was discussed as being both intimidating and exciting. Negative stories they had heard about local high schools was one of the contributing factors for those who were feeling intimidated.

Schooling for children and young people with disabilities

“In 2012, there were approximately 295,000 children with disability between the ages of 5-17 attending schools in Australia. Of these, the vast majority (86 per cent) attended mainstream schools while the remainder attended special schools.”¹⁰¹

It was raised by parents and service providers that whether children are in a mainstream class, in a support unit in a mainstream school, or in a special school, it is important for them to have opportunities to engage with peers without disabilities. This was discussed as being beneficial for children with disabilities in terms of generalising behaviour and helping them adapt to variation and change; but also beneficial for their peers without disabilities as they develop an understanding of how to interact and engage with people with disabilities.

“The community as a whole benefits from inclusive arrangements, not just people with disability. In the broadest sense, inclusion can enhance Australia’s ‘social capital’ by engaging more people within the community and, through that, better reflecting the community’s diversity.”¹⁰²

Transition out of school for children with disabilities was also raised as a concern; particularly due to the difficulty families are having with the bureaucratic side of the NDIS at a time when they are also experiencing grief and distress about the transition.

It was also raised by some service providers that refugee and asylum seeker children are not always being appropriately assessed prior to beginning to attend intensive English centres and then schooling. Not only are literacy and numeracy issues (which might underlie a child’s issues grasping a new language) not being screened for, but children with unidentified intellectual disabilities can fall through the gaps and have poor outcomes.

Inequalities in educational outcomes for priority groups

“There are large discrepancies in educational outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous children, between children from high and low socio-economic backgrounds and between children who are in care, homeless or at risk of homelessness and those who are not.”¹⁰³

Service providers raised that children from asylum seeker backgrounds in our City are not able to access early learning, and even in some circumstances primary schooling due to financial hardship (see Participation).

Planning for life after school

There was general consensus amongst young people that school did not prepare them for life after school. Service providers also discussed the importance of life skills and resilience-building in schools; not sheltering children but instead presenting them with challenges so that they can better navigate their lives and cope with challenges as adults.

“You need to teach them how to live life, because I did get shocked...when I turned 18 and I had to pay this, I had to pay that, everything started going. Just sometimes I feel like giving up, just honestly. I think we should be taught how to manage our lives”
– Anonymous, 18.

Young people reported they want to learn more about:

- How to do taxes;
- Organisational skills;
- Parenting skills;
- How to save and budget;
- How to rent a property;

- How to write resumes;
- Communication skills;
- Social skills around relationship building and networking; and
- How to work together and overcome differences as schools can be siloed and don’t represent the rest of the world.

This is also consistent with concerns raised by young people in surveys done by UNICEF on a national level:

“Secondary education in Australia is too focused on training students to pass exams and assignments, rather than teaching knowledge that will be valuable through life, and it is failing to provide the practical life skills students think they will need”¹⁰⁴

Young people discussed students who wanted to drop out of school prior to the HSC were sometimes antagonised rather than supported to make the right decision for them. Most young people did not feel that they received enough information or support about further education or career pathways. Some discussed being excluded from opportunities to learn about university courses despite their interest in attending university, as it was only offered to a limited number of students.

Wanting more vocational support for arts-related careers was raised, for example opportunities to network and get insight from people in industries like design and fashion which often have unclear career pathways. Young people also reported that work experience opportunities were often limited to high-achievers in school, or had not had any disciplinary actions taken against them, which they felt was unfair. Young people with disabilities discussed wanting to be teachers, musicians and office workers; and discussed enjoying the work experience they had had in some of these areas.

It is also important to note that support programs and information about ongoing education, training and employment pathways is particularly important in our City as part of our City falls within a region with one of the highest rates of youth unemployment in the Greater Sydney area:

“In many places in Western Sydney, in particular, falling levels of employment are not accompanied by rising levels of education and training. Instead, there has been an increase in ‘disengaged’ young people and those ‘not earning or learning’.”¹⁰⁵

In the local area there are programs that help to address youth unemployment, such as the state-wide RISEUP employment training program through PCYC and local initiatives like the Riverwood Kickstart Cafe.

School leadership and civic participation

Children and young people discussed the importance of having leadership opportunities in school, and how they felt these opportunities helped them to become better advocates for themselves and their peers. Some people discussed this in terms of school captaincy and student representative councils, while others discussed it in the context of leadership and representation through school sport. Some young people raised concerns that despite good grades, good behaviour and wanting to be in a leadership position they would never be given the opportunity due to their race, or who they were friends with.

Early learning and education

“Many challenges faced by adults, such as mental health issues, obesity, heart disease, criminality, and poor literacy and numeracy, can be traced back to pathways that originated in early childhood.

To ensure positive health and wellbeing for current and future generations, we therefore need to focus on improving the environments and experiences of the earliest stages of development.”¹⁰⁶

Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) 2015, % of children developmentally vulnerable¹⁰⁷

Domain	Canterbury former LGA *	Bankstown former LGA *	NSW
Physical Health and Wellbeing	9.8%	9.7%	8.5%
Social Competence	10.9%	12.8%	8.7%
Emotional Maturity	6.5%	6.4%	6.8%
Language and Cognitive Skills	5.3%	5.5%	4.8%
Communication Skills and General Knowledge	13.7%	11.8%	8.1%
One or more Domains	25.8%	24.9%	20.2%
Two or more Domains	11.7%	12.1%	9.6%

*pre-amalgamation statistics

According to the AEDC results, children in Canterbury-Bankstown are showing higher levels of developmental vulnerability compared to children in NSW in physical health and wellbeing, social competence, language and cognitive skills, and communication skills and general knowledge. Roughly one quarter of children are vulnerable on one or more domains in our City and over 11 per cent are vulnerable on two or more domains.

Service providers reported that in our area children are consistently poor on social skills in the AEDC, and that despite this there is a lack of supports to teach them these skills. It was argued that improving social skills is much more valuable than literacy or numeracy as it has the widest impact on future outcomes; not just employment but also a child's ability to build and sustain relationships. Service providers feel more programs focused on social skills and building resilience are important in terms of early intervention.

"Australia ranks in the bottom three of OECD countries in benchmark standards relating to early childhood education and care; and is near the bottom (30/34) of OECD countries for the percentage of 3-5 year-olds in early learning or preschool."¹⁰⁸

As of 2016 we had 5,680 children in preschool in Canterbury-Bankstown¹⁰⁹. Despite the importance of early childhood education, it remains financially unattainable for many families with limited support provided by the Government.

Council supports early education through provision of long day care in four locations as well as occasional care, and family day care throughout the City. All of Council's early education services have a focus on children's rights.

- Increase opportunities for students with disabilities and students without disabilities locally to engage with each other.
- Improve access to education for asylum seeker children.
- Improve screening for disabilities with asylum seeker and refugee children.

Community recommendations

- Reduce proportion of children who are developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains.
- Increase the number of children in early childhood education.
- Educate every child and young person in Canterbury-Bankstown about the UN CRC.
- Increase learning opportunities about Indigenous culture, alcohol and other drugs, plants, gardening, sustainable living, bullying, sexuality and sexual health.
- Improve preparedness for life after school by providing education sessions about taxes, parenting, financial management, job applications, relationship building, networking and communication skills for young people.
- Increase homework help initiatives.
- Increase opportunities to participate in volunteering.
- Increase local work experience opportunities and support around ongoing education, training and employment pathways.
- Increase inter-school connections and opportunities in the local area.
- Increase training about mental health and trauma for school staff.
- Increase school counsellor hours in local schools.
- Encourage local schools to address privacy and hygiene issues in bathrooms.



"There is a sun, there are lots of flowers, a three storey building with lots of children, there are lots of toys, especially Barbie. Having lots of flowers and sun makes my city friendly." - Jenna, 5.



Participation

Children and young people
think participation is...

Being part of
the community
Volunteering

Respect

Being valued

Support

Helping others

Access

Being heard

Take us seriously

Decision making

Knowing our rights



“The opinion and experiences of young people in Australia are critical to shaping the decisions that impact their lives. Engaging young people and encouraging participation in public dialogue has enormous benefit for individuals and for communities.

Importantly, it enables good decision making that can provide better outcomes on the complex issues young people experience today, as young people are experts in their own experience.”¹¹⁰

Children and young people consistently discussed wanting more opportunities to have their say and contribute to their community. Unfortunately, most children and young people did not feel listened to or taken seriously by adults.

“No one listens to us.” – Anonymous, 12.

“People don’t really care about your ideas.” – Anonymous, 8.

Rights

Article 12: Children have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account

Article 13: Children have the right to get and to share information, as long as the information is not damaging to them or to others.

Article 15: Children have the right to meet with other children and young people and to join groups and organisations

Article 17: Children have the right to reliable information from the media. Mass media such as television, radio and newspapers should provide information that children can understand and should not promote materials that could harm children.

Article 22: children who come into a country as refugees should have the same rights as children born in that country.

Article 23: children with any kind of disability should receive special care and support so that they can live a full and independent life.

Knowledge of rights

“We have the same rights, and we deserve to be treated the same.” – Anonymous, 11.

“We all have a right to a say. We all have a right to have a voice. We all have a right to be listened to. And we should all be given a chance,” – Anonymous, 12.

Children and young people in the City had mixed responses when asked about their knowledge of children's rights. As discussed in the Education section, knowledge of rights and the CRC was inconsistent, and it should be a goal that all children in our City understand their rights. One service provider suggested that the CRC in child friendly language should be distributed to every child locally. Others discussed the importance of having it displayed in local services, including schools.

Access - Financial Barriers

Service providers raised that sometimes, the children who need a service the most are the ones whose access is restricted. Those with stable, supportive families and/or no barriers to participation and inclusion are generally the children our services are built to facilitate. This is something that service providers in Canterbury-Bankstown were acutely aware of and actively trying to change throughout our City.

Research has shown the significant influence on young people of their perceptions of their own community, family and individual contexts, the people they meet in their out-of-school lives and how they understand the possibilities of their own futures. Young people from low-income families who lived in affluent suburbs and have more opportunities to participate in recreational activities were shown to have higher aspirations for their future, compared to young people from low-income families living in disadvantaged suburbs with less opportunity to participate in recreational activities.¹¹¹

Childcare

Service providers raised that the cost of childcare makes it inaccessible for a lot of families, and that aside from the proven importance of early education to health and

wellbeing outcomes a lack of access can also have a negative impact on parents and, consequently, their children. For example, increased access would help:

- Families engaged in the child protection system so that parents can attend; mandated/recommended parenting courses without facing a financial barrier to learn protective behaviours and demonstrate their engagement;
- Parents who need to engage in counselling and emotional support in order to better support their children; and
- Women who have experienced domestic violence and need to attend court.

Recreational activities

The cost of recreational activities was reported to be inaccessible for some low-income families. Solutions to address this suggested by service providers included increasing support locally for those running not-for-profit activities for children and young people, for example by providing more free hire of spaces, and more collaboration and sharing of resources and ideas between service providers.

Restricted entitlements

As touched on in Health and Education, asylum seeker families often have either heavily restricted or no entitlements to Government payments and subsidies, which in turn greatly impacts on the wellbeing of their children. Service providers reported that parents need to balance learning or improving their English, finding work, attending legal and medical appointments, and caring for their children as childcare is unaffordable without the federal childcare subsidy. According to the Asylum Seeker Centre there are 78 children between zero and five years old in Canterbury-

Bankstown whose families are engaged with their service. Council has recently introduced a program to combat this issue, offering free childcare places to a number of asylum seeker families in their Council-owned centres. Canterbury-Bankstown is the first Council in the country to offer this program.¹¹² While supporting parents, this project will also benefit young children by improving their all-round development and ensuring they are more prepared for primary school.

“I am very pleased to hear that CB will be offering free childcare to children of asylum seekers. It is so important and a wonderful thing to do especially when our federal political leaders seem determined to demonise refugees” – Parent, survey response

Families who are seeking asylum can be under significant financial strain and may also be experiencing housing insecurity or homelessness. According to the Refugee Council, people seeking asylum find it difficult to access emergency housing, as services refuse to assist them believing they will be difficult to exit.¹¹³

Service provider reported children also have difficulty accessing mental health supports despite having likely experienced extreme trauma, and having to adjust to a new country, language and customs while their family is under significant stress.

Service providers discussed that fee-free courses are offered at TAFE for refugees and asylum seekers, which young people 15 and over are able to apply for.¹¹⁴ However, they also reported children seeking asylum are not entitled to free public schooling, and consequently there are families with primary school-aged children who aren't attending school as the fees are not affordable, in spite of the fact that free primary schooling is a right under the CRC. Service providers reported

that these children often fall through the gaps and can end up engaged in child protection or juvenile justice systems, which may not have been the case if they were able to attend school.

**“If someone is not permanent resident or citizen from Australia, they are excluded from all the Government benefits for example, student international bridging visa holders' child are excluded from good opportunity which completely not justice for them. This year my child participated in selective high school test but she didn't get because no citizens, permanent residency holder (we were on bridging for protection visa). We feel really unfair for daughter, we are here for better, safer future for our children”
– Parent, survey response**

Children and young people raised that despite attending school in the public system which is meant to be affordable for low income families, their parents are struggling to cover the costs of compulsory uniforms (required for sport and different seasons) and mandatory camps. Co-curricular activities are then a further unattainable cost on top of these things for some families.

The lack of affordability of public transport was raised by children and young people, particularly for children and young people needing to access services outside of Canterbury-Bankstown, and families with low incomes who can't afford Opal cards or ticketed parking in local areas they need to travel to. Young people suggested that a free shuttle bus to some key local areas would be helpful, or free Opal cards for those who need it.

Access - Language Barriers

Programs and education sessions are regularly held in different languages across the City to cater to CALD communities; however it was raised that there is not a simple way to locate these supports and parents often rely on word of mouth which may be ineffective if they are socially isolated.

Parents, carers and service providers raised that more information and support (or more promotion of existing programs) in a variety of languages would be beneficial on the following topics:

- Navigating the NDIS for parents of children with disabilities;
- An overview of services and supports in the area for newly arrived families; and
- Health literacy for parents of young children.

Access - Physical Barriers

Children with Disabilities

"[People with disabilities] generally have poorer health, lower education achievements, fewer economic opportunities and higher rates of poverty. This is largely due to the barriers they face in their everyday lives, rather than their disability."¹¹⁵

Parents and carers reported that community access is key, and impacts on the quality of life of children and young people with disabilities who are otherwise restricted to spending time at home. If community access is restricted for children and young people with disabilities, it is also important to note that in turn it is also usually restricted for their siblings and the rest of their family. Service providers discussed that modifications to allow accessibility can be made at cost-effective rates, and often does not involve getting rid of old infrastructure, but adapting it.



Children and young people with disabilities identified that they like going to the movies, the park, being by the water, and swimming in local pools – just like anyone else their age.

Local project: Zero Barriers

A project recently taken over by Council, which aims to increase accessibility to businesses, services and community groups for people with a disability by providing training to help address barriers that prevent people with a disability from using a service like everyone else.

www.tmnlinks.net.au/zerobarriers/

Parks and playgrounds

Parents suggested that ways to improve access to parks and playgrounds include:

- Not having bark around equipment, which restricts wheelchair access;
- Accessible play equipment;
- Accessible toilets (ideally would like to replicate the toilets in Livvi's playground elsewhere);
- Accessible parking next to ramps up the gutters for wheelchair access; and
- Fenced play areas to keep children at risk of absconding safe.

Children with disabilities said they did not spend time with friends from school on weekends, and in discussions with parents this may be linked to the lack of accessible spaces where children with disabilities and their families can all meet to spend time together socially. As discussed in the Play and Leisure section, there are plans to expand the number of accessible playgrounds in Canterbury-Bankstown, which will help to address this.

Public transport

No lift access at Punchbowl station for those in wheelchairs was raised as a key concern by parents. Service providers said that poor access by public transport from some areas to local hospitals and a lack of parking often results in children missing health appointments.

Parking and street access

"There's some streets that only on one side has a path, but some people have wheelchairs and those sorts of things." – Anonymous, 11

Parents said often there is no ramp access from the road to the footpath for them to safely transition their children from the car to the footpath.

One parent reported her child's wheelchair weighs over 250 kilogram without accounting for the weight of her child, and it physically cannot be lifted up onto the gutter. On top of this, parents may also have other children as well they are trying to manage and keep safe. Therefore, if the only parking spot available is one that requires their child to be pushed in their wheelchair along a potentially busy road to reach a ramp, they often have to turn around and leave because it is too unsafe for their family to navigate this physical barrier. This was also raised by children and young people in the context of issues with both wheelchair and pram accessibility in our community.

"Everyone gets away with it parking in the disabled spots," – Anonymous, 12.

It was raised that often people without Mobility Parking Stickers are parking in disability parking spaces, either out of ignorance or disregard for those who need it. Parents discussed that there is a lack of community awareness about why disability parking spots are so important. Some key points were:

- The width of the spot is required to get a child or young person in a wheelchair in and out of the car along with all of their gear, and it minimises the distance that children have to be pushed through a carpark; and
- It is important for children with behavioural difficulties to generalise their behaviour through community access, however in the case that their behaviour escalates and they are at risk of absconding it is imperative to have the car parked close to the exit so that it minimises the risk of a child absconding through a car park. Children should not be restricted from being in public because of this, they should be supported by the community and by infrastructure.

Access to in-home support and respite/ short-term accommodation

Service providers and parents discussed that the philosophy of the NDIS is excellent, however in practice people are working in the industry with lack of knowledge about disability which can lead to restricted access to much-needed supports, which can lead to negative outcomes such as relinquishment of care for some parents.

Toilets

Service providers said that accessible toilets help children with disabilities and their families to integrate into the community, it lessens their isolation at home and also normalises their presence in the community. It was discussed this not only supports children, but also adults with disabilities and the elderly, improving access for the whole community.

Dignity for older children and young people with severe disabilities when adult-sized change facilities and hoists aren't available was discussed, as parents often have to either change them in the car, or go home. This was

also raised in the context of local shopping centres, libraries, pools and sports clubs.

Wanting more information about how to access a Master Locksmith Access Key (MLAK) was discussed, and families felt it was important that more accessible toilets were locked to the rest of the public so that they can use them when they need to.

A map of the local area showing where accessible toilets are located was suggested by parents as a tool that would help families to plan ahead.

For transgender children and young people, the importance of access to their preferred toilet at school (whether that be male, female or unisex), and being able to use it safely was raised, along with concerns that exclusion and feeling unsafe in the school environment can significantly impact their mental health. This is also an important consideration for local services.

Location of services

"It's just inaccessible and unrealistic that someone should have to wake up that early in the morning just to travel to a service that should be widely known and should be in every town basically." – Anonymous, 17.

Twenty10 was discussed as the preferred support service by LGBTIQA young people, however they reported there is no local branch and it is hard to access both financially and physically from Canterbury-Bankstown.

Children and young people also reported that they would like to see an increase in disability services around the City.

"I think we should have more disability places. Because there is one but it's like 20 mins away in Roselands...but people in the area need more," – Anonymous, 12.



Chronic health

It was reported by a survey respondent that is highly allergic to dogs that they are restricted from safely accessing their local community, particularly parks, due to a risk of anaphylaxis if dogs are off leash or people aren't aware.

Information sources and access to internet and phones

Children and young people discussed where they get information from on topics that are important to them. Their responses were varied and included parents, TV, newspapers, social media, books, school, friends, and through information sessions run in local services. Generally speaking it was reported that they had good access to information.

Consultation with the community about improving navigability of websites for local services, including the Council website, was suggested. Difficulty locating information about what services and supports are available locally was raised, and a centralised online hub was discussed as a solution. It was suggested in discussion with the NSW Advocate for Children and Young that to help address this issue, the community can engage with a new platform they have developed. 'My Local' will be launched in 2019 after being developed in consultation with children and young people in order to better share information about local services with them.

It was raised that often children do not have access to a phone that is in a safe space away from adults if they needed to call the Kids Helpline. Increased promotion of who in the community they could talk to if they needed help confidentially, where there are phones they could safely use, or promotion of the Kids Helpline webchat were other suggestions.

Some have limited internet access and reported they would like more free, public Wi-Fi access across our City. Service providers raised that not only games are dependent on data, but a lot of services and Government departments are trending more towards using apps and online services, for example, Centrelink.

Cultural considerations

A lack of spaces in the local area for the ATSI community to gather and feel welcome was raised by service providers as a key concern. Children and young people discussed the importance of programs like Koori Homework Help and the Black Santa Christmas Party. Service providers suggested a local Aboriginal community centre would be beneficial; a dedicated space for families, elders and community to come together.

Muslim families reported that it would be beneficial to have a prayer room in large shopping centres, so they did not have to restrict their time in centres with their children.

Being listened to and taken seriously

“They’ve got to think about how they were when they were children, and how they were treated. And think about how to make it better, not make other people suffer what you lived in.” – Anonymous, 12.

No child or young person said that they felt listened to, taken seriously or consulted on about decisions affecting them by all adults in their lives. Some felt that it happened consistently with their parents or a teacher, but not other adults. Some felt they were listened to generally by adults, but inconsistently and depending on external circumstances. Some reported they did not think there were any adults in their lives who listened to them or took them seriously (in the context of adults in school see Education).

“[They listen] if it’s important.” – Anonymous, 16. “No, [they listen] if they think it’s important.” – Anonymous, 13.

“It does feel like they aren’t taking us seriously.” – Anonymous, 12.

When asked who listens, parents were the most common answer. Teachers and other family were also raised. Children and young people in the City did not feel that adults who weren’t known to them in the community would listen to them or take them seriously.

“The ones that listen to you are the ones that care about you,” – Anonymous, 14.

“[They listen] if they’re drunk,” – Anonymous, 14.

“[They listen] if it’s an emergency,” – Anonymous, 13.

“[They listen] when they aren’t doing something else,” – Anonymous, 12.

Children and young people discussed how they gauge how to act around adults.

“If [Mum] talks down, then that’s when I have to talk serious.” – Anonymous, 12.

Being worried about adding to adults’ stress was also a factor, “I don’t want to tell mum or dad at home because I don’t want to put more pressure on them,” – Anonymous, 12.

Children and young people discussed the power imbalance between them and adults, and how they often feel disrespected.

“They take things out on you because we’re children, but if an adult were to make a same mistake that we make sometimes another adult wouldn’t say to them like, ‘what are you doing?’” – Anonymous, 12.

“With adults, if they make a joke about you why can’t you make a joke about them? You know what I mean?” – Anonymous, 12.

In terms of how to improve this, children and young people felt adults needed to reflect on their experiences as children and think about what could be improved.

Local initiative: Children’s Voices Out Loud

Taking place in 2019, this project will use Polyglot Voice Lab technology to capture the voices of children. The project will provide children with a platform to discuss their views on transitions in schooling, and how child-friendly Canterbury-Bankstown is. The report from Children’s Voices Out Loud will be launched in May, 2019.

Active civic participation

“Benefits [of active participation] for the individual young person include increased confidence, and self-esteem, an increased capacity to protect themselves and challenge violence and abuse and learning the skills of responsible and active citizenship.”¹⁶

In Canterbury-Bankstown there are some great opportunities for children and young people to participate by contributing to community decision-making, volunteering or providing support to a local cause.

There are locally run programs. PCYC’s Lead the Way program provides young people with leadership skills. There are opportunities to volunteer through local youth centres as part of committees to organise youth-focused events. Council has a Youth Reference Group, whose input is directly fed back to Council. Several young people also discussed community service opportunities being offered through their schools. Also, within schools being part of SRC committees was discussed.

Local program: Community Minded Kids

Community Minded Kids is a primary school based program that aims to foster community minded thinking in children. It fosters collaborative relationships between the student, school, family and community to promote civic participation and community well-being.

communityminds.org.au/community-minded-kids/

Children and young people reported wanting more opportunities such as these locally, particularly children, who felt they had far less opportunities than young people did to participate meaningfully.

“There should a greater number of youth services or programs for the youth to be more involved with the community. There should be ways for the youth in the community to interact and serve the community.” – Anonymous, 13-17, survey response.

“... people might find doing something rewarding good...but it’s only for certain ages, like there shouldn’t be a limit for the ages,” – Anonymous, 14.

“It (volunteering) makes you feel good.” – Anonymous, 13.

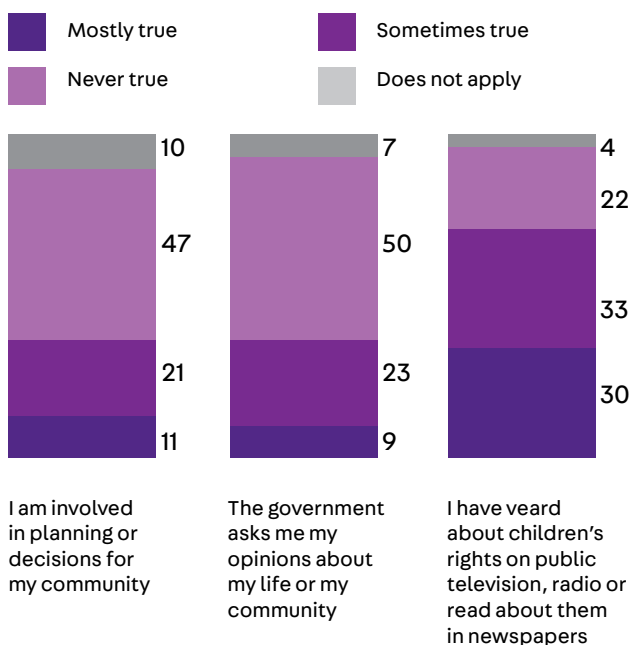
“I want to be asked about my opinions.” – Anonymous, 8-12, survey response

Less than 13 per cent of children and young people in the surveys said it was mostly true they were involved in community planning or decision-making, and only 10 per cent felt it was mostly true that they were consulted by the Government about their life or community. Children and young people reported that the Child Friendly Cities Initiative is helping to address this gap. Children also raised that they

would like more opportunities to consult with Council and whether another avenue could be explored for those who are too young to join Council's Youth Reference Group.

"My Participation"

– Children and Young People's Survey



- Increase child and youth forums through Council such as the 2018 Youth Summit which consulted with x young people from local schools.
- Reduce physical barriers to participation in Canterbury-Bankstown
- Ideally would like a Twenty10 branch in CB for LGBTIQA support.
- Reduce cultural and financial barriers to participation in the City.
- More promotion of Canterbury-Bankstown Youth Awards.
- Increase the number of schools participating in the Community Minded Kids program.
- Increased consultation with children with disabilities and their parents in future planning.
- Work to ensure that every child in Canterbury-Bankstown is aware of their rights.

Community recommendations

- Have a child representative in the Child and Family Reference Group.
- Increase the number of youth-led and driven community projects/activities.
- Increase the number of Council strategies and plans informed by engagement with children and young people.
- Consult with children and young people on development of the action plan following this report.
- Increase in local volunteering and mentoring opportunities.



"My child- friendly city has the right for everyone to have fun. My city has a balloon shop, lolly poppers and lolly show, tree house, fish tank, water gun rack, pool with a pool bar, rocket launcher, band stand and video game parlour." - Tommy, 8.



Play and Leisure

Children and young people
think play and leisure is...

Riding bikes

Gardening

Pools

Running

Libraries

Music

Skating

Sport

Parks

Youth centres

Reading

Nature

Time with friends

Gaming

Toys

History

Art

River



“The benefits of a child-friendly city go beyond children to add value to all citizens’ lives. The amount of time that children spend playing outdoors, their ability to get around independently, and their level of contact with nature are strong indicators of how a city is performing, and not just for children but for all city dwellers.”¹¹⁷

Children and young people in Canterbury-Bankstown generally had positive responses about their opportunities to engage in play and leisure activities. Several suggestions were made for improvements which will be discussed in this section.

Rights

Article 12: Children have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account.

Article 15: Children have the right to meet with other children and young people.

Article 31: Children have the right to relax, play and to join in a wide range of leisure activities.

Green spaces

“Increasingly, evidence shows that access to nature and green spaces provides children with various cognitive, emotional, and physical benefits, including (but not limited to): an increased ability to concentrate, better educational attainment, reduced stress and

aggression, and lower risk of obesity. Green spaces have also been shown to increase social interactions between families and children, promoting social trust and community perceptions of safety.”¹¹⁸

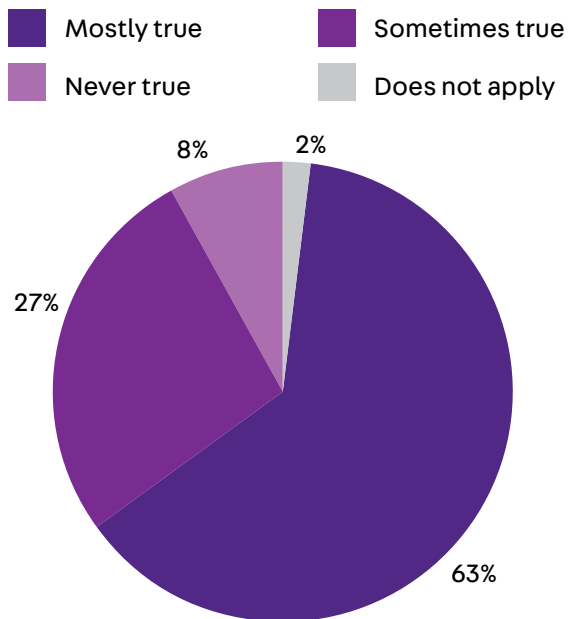
As has already been highlighted in our Health section, children and young people were aware of the importance of trees in our local environment to provide shade, homes for animals and combat air pollution. However, aside from the environmental benefits they also discussed that they enjoy being around nature.

“I would like more nature...I think they should put in more flowers and trees”
– Anonymous, 11

Some felt safety issues restricted their use of green spaces, for example unsafe crossings to parks or a lack of lighting (see Safety).

“Society’s mistake... is that our planning systems are geared around cars, house-building and the economy – rather than the environment, health and quality of life.”¹¹⁹

**“There are places in my community where I can be in contact with nature”
- Children and Young People’s Survey**



There were mixed responses about the cleanliness of parks, some reported they feel their parks are kept clean however others reported that there aren’t bins, or their bins are overflowing. A small number of children, young people and parents also raised concerns about broken glass and needles in parks which poses a risk to health and safety.

Some other suggestions for improvements to local parks from both children and parents were:

- Increasing the number of taps and bubblers;
- Improving access to public toilets; and
- Plant more trees or build more canopies for sun shelter.

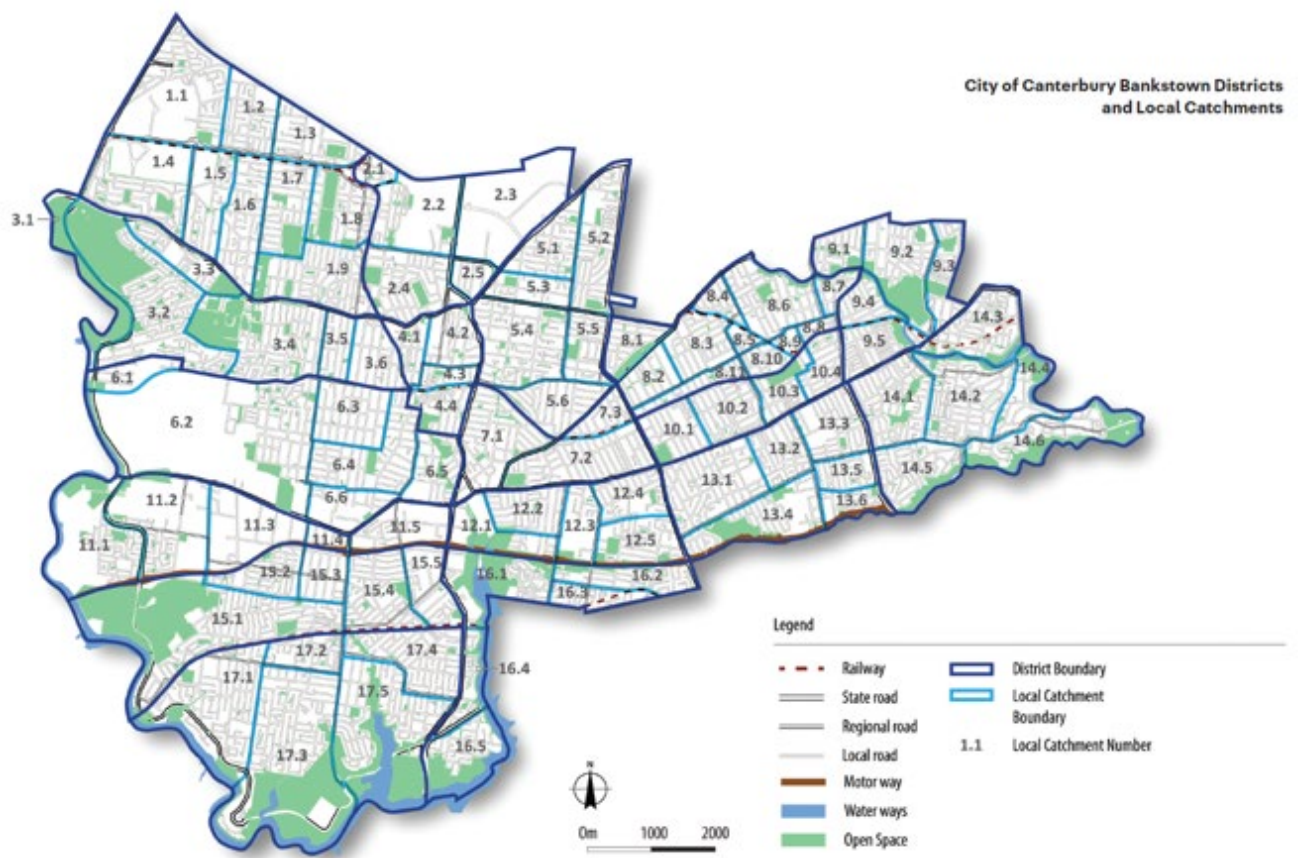
A lack of access to green space or open space to run around was raised by service providers as a hindrance to gross motor development, particularly in high-density housing areas. Some parents suggested increasing access to natural bushland in the local area for children through programs like bush playgroups or bushwalking for children and young people. A plan to increase landscape play spaces (which make use of the natural environment) throughout the Council area is discussed in Council’s Playgrounds and Play Spaces Strategic Plan. Below is a map showing the open spaces across Canterbury-Bankstown.

Time to play and relax

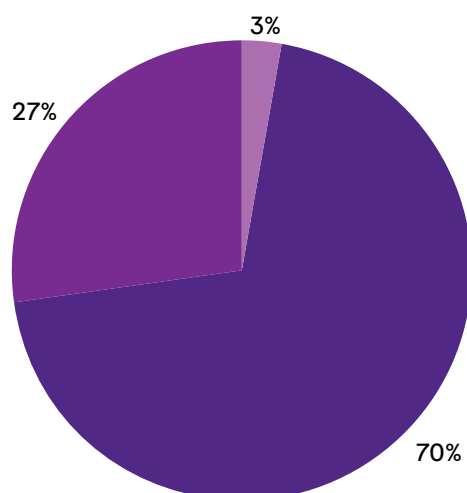
Most children and young people reported they had time to play and relax in our City. Young people towards the end of high school were the least likely to report that they had time for this. It was raised by parents that it is important for those who are young carers to also have spaces where they get their own time to do things like other people their ages.

“[It’s] important for there to be a space and time for older kids to do their own thing; time away from helping to care” – Parent, interview

In terms of our priority groups, it is also important to note that young carers are more likely to live in lone parent, low income households and to be from Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds compared to their peers.¹²⁰



**“I have time to play, rest and enjoy myself”
- Children and Young People’s Survey**



Service providers reported that there is a misconception that the City is unsafe, which restricts children and young people from engaging in independent play – either of their own choice or their parents’. An increase in initiatives that encourage families and children to get out and play and develop more confidence in the local area was suggested. It was also raised as a concern that some parents don’t recognise the importance of play for their children’s development and are purely focused on education. Service providers felt increasing the education around the importance of play could help improve the wellbeing of children in our City.

Playgrounds and other public play facilities

Playgrounds

Playgrounds and parks were identified by children and some young people as their favourite place to play and relax in our City, however they want to see some improvements made. Recurrent themes were wanting more playgrounds closer to home for those in poorly serviced areas; wanting equipment targeted at a bigger age range including toddlers; wanting upgraded equipment and wanting more challenging equipment. More shade and more fencing around playgrounds were also raised by both children and parents.

“Add more playgrounds and make them modern and exciting” - Anonymous, 8-12, survey response.

As of 2017 there were 244 public playgrounds in the City, which represents one playground per 1,419 people based on 2016 census population (reference). According to the Playgrounds and Play Spaces Strategic Plan¹²¹ Canterbury-Bankstown has a reasonable rate of playgrounds for its population, although it also acknowledges that the distribution is uneven and therefore some parts of the community cannot easily access playgrounds. Outlined in the document is the plan to develop 22 new playgrounds in order to address these gaps. It is also planned to replace 19 existing playgrounds; along with upgrading and increasing the scope of several others (e.g. broadening the age range, or all abilities access).

While some parents and carers were concerned about equipment in playgrounds that might cause injury, children consistently mentioned liking more challenging equipment despite acknowledging this involved increased risk. They say they want more equipment such as monkey bars and climbing frames throughout the City.



When discussing playground design and safety initiatives, Tim Gill identifies issues with, “the view that children were essentially vulnerable... [and that] the adult role was to safeguard children from their own shortcomings and from the perceived dangers of the wider world, rather than to help them face those dangers and learn how to overcome them.”¹²²

Other public play facilities

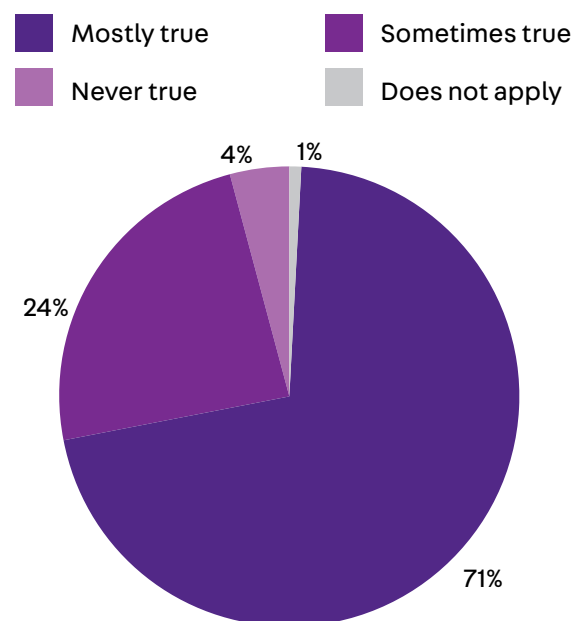
Other public play facilities include exercise equipment, skate parks, bike paths, full and half courts (tennis, volleyball, handball, basketball). According to the Playgrounds and Play Spaces Strategic Plan the number of other public play facilities in the City is low and unevenly distributed. In 2017 in the City there were 19 spaces with exercise equipment; five skate parks; 11 courts and 11 half courts. This doesn't include private courts. According to the strategic plan there is also potential to provide other play facilities such as rope courses and ping pong tables.

Young people reported that they want more outdoor exercise equipment in the east of the City, which is consistent with where there is a lower provision. Some young people advised they were too old to enjoy playgrounds and instead would like to see an increase in free access to tennis courts, more public ping pong tables, rock-climbing and rope courses. Overall children and young people said they did not feel safe riding their bikes or scooters in Canterbury-Bankstown and would like to see an increase in bike tracks/paths.

Access for children with disabilities

Children with disabilities have the same needs to engage in play and activities as other children and have a fundamental right to do this. Members of Caroline Chisholm school council said it would help to increase the number of quality all-abilities playgrounds in the City, and Wiley Park was suggested as a location option. According to the Playgrounds and Play Spaces Strategic Plan there are plans to enhance Wiley Park as an all abilities play space (for access issues see Participation).

Local initiative: Bankstown City Gardens All Abilities Playground



In 2018 Variety Livvi's Place officially opened in Bankstown City Gardens as the first all-abilities playground in Canterbury-Bankstown. Children and young people were engaged in the design process. The playground includes waterplay, sand play, accessible playground equipment and landscape play, as well as accessible bathrooms and a barbeque facility.

Sports

“In my community I have places for play, games and sports”

– Children and Young People’s Survey

Sport was the most commonly raised hobby and was discussed as an important opportunity to keep active and spend time with friends. The most common sports identified were soccer, Oz Tag, and AFL. Overall children and young people reported that they had good access to sports programs throughout the City, and that they were happy with the quality of the programs.

Several children and young people raised that there is inequality between genders in terms of opportunities to play sport. Some young girls advised they have to travel out of area to be able to play Oz Tag and AFL, yet they have brothers or male friends who never have trouble finding programs locally.

Sports which children and young people reported they would like more opportunities to play locally were basketball and hockey. Some reported that outside of formal programs they would like more access to ovals and courts to practice with their friends. Financial access to sports programs was raised as an issue, however it was acknowledged that there are some great free programs locally like Twilight Sports. Increasing the number of accessible programs like this for low-income families in the area was suggested.

Local program: Twilight Sports

A free, seven-week, non-competitive indoor sports program run by Council aimed at encouraging social inclusion and participation for 12 to 18 year-olds in a fun way. The program is entirely free and includes dinner, uniforms and transport home each week. It is also a safe outlet where young people are encouraged to

participate in life skills workshops in order to become more physically, socially and mentally healthy.

cb.city/twilightsports

Pools

Council has six public pools across the City. They are implementing an ‘Every Child Can Swim’ initiative, with the goal of ensuring all children in Canterbury-Bankstown are able to swim. Some children and young people reported they had good access to pools and lessons, while others did not feel confident in their swimming abilities and said that they would like to see an increase in school swimming programs across all age groups. Responses from parents were mixed; while some spoke positively of the local pools and swimming programs, others reported that swimming lessons were not affordable for their family and that more subsidised rates or free lessons would be helpful.

Some children and young people raised that they would like more water slides or waterplay areas in local pools. Parents of children with disabilities raised that an increase in accessible bathrooms in local pools is required (see Participation). It was also raised that children with disabilities might require extra support to learn about water safety.

Arts

Singing, dancing and playing instruments were favourite hobbies in discussions with children with disabilities. As discussed in our Participation section, it was also raised that children with disabilities often were unable to access these hobbies in Canterbury-Bankstown, and that more inclusive programs need to be provided locally. Drawing and



painting at home were identified as favourite hobbies amongst our youngest participants. Some older children said they would like more affordable art classes, both after school and in school holidays. It was raised that children and young people want more opportunities to showcase their art in our City, and also to have more professional street art.

Some children and young people advised they would like more free opportunities to learn an instrument or be part of singing groups which then perform in concerts.

Local Program: TAP (Talent Advancement Program)

A program which identifies, nurtures and promotes young vocalists from within our local schools. As described by a young person, “on Thursdays you don’t go to school.

You get to [go] to this great facility where they teach you about performance and singing and whatnot. Not only does it do that, but it also puts you out there as a musician.

You have to audition, but you go out with this group and you get to perform and make friends and meet famous people.” – Anonymous, 17.

cb.city/TAP

Bankstown Poetry Slam was also raised as a positive program in our City, which people enjoy taking part in and feel proud of, as it is the largest poetry slam in the country.

www.bankstownpoetryslam.com/what-we-do/

Children and young people also advised they wanted more opportunities to do public speaking and debating in our City. Cooking was raised by young people as something they enjoy and would like to have more opportunities to learn about locally.

Libraries

Libraries, along with parks and sportsgrounds and shopping centres were in the top three local spaces used by the most survey respondents. There are nine Council Library and Knowledge Centres across our City. Children and young people described libraries as safe spaces. Children and young people discussed liking a range of programs including story-time and homework help, and wanting to see these programs run more frequently.

“More time for little kids where they read them stories” – Anonymous, 10.

Other suggestions raised by children and young people were:

- More video game consoles;
- More designated quiet reading spaces for different age groups; and
- More reading gardens (like at Bankstown Library and Knowledge Centre).

Some parents suggested more afterschool educational programs on different topics would be beneficial, however overall felt very positively about how child friendly local libraries are.

“The local public libraries play a vital role in my kids’ lives. They love to visit the library” – parent, survey response

One service provider raised in the surveys that it would be helpful for parents and safe for children if children under 12 were allowed to wait unsupervised at libraries to be picked up after school. It has been a common issue across library sites in the past that children were left unsupervised for long periods of time, which places them at risk for some of the following reasons:

- Libraries do not have child-minding staff;
- They may be targeted by predators; and
- Sometimes parents had not arrived to collect children when the library was closed which would leave them waiting alone on the street.

Drop ins and night programs

Young people discussed the value of having drop in services in youth centres after school, and also programs in the evenings like Outreach through Youth Off the Streets or Mission Australia’s Level Up, which both run locally once a week. They reported these programs give them safe spaces to engage in activities like sports, video games, pool and ping pong while listening to music and spending time with friends. Young people overall reported they want extended drop-in hours and more frequent programs at night with organised activities. They reported they have limited safe places where they can spend time in the community in the evenings.

Service providers mentioned some successful initiatives during drop-in had been a Fortnite tournament at BYRC, and Learn to Skate nights at the Roundabout Youth Centre rink. Parents raised the benefits of after school programs through PCYC; “[it’s] very important, good for kids from all over the community to learn about each other and mingle.”

Also noted by service providers and older primary school children was that they feel there is a gap in programs and activities for those too young for youth centres, and too old for early childhood groups and who are from low-income families.

Playgroups

There were positive reports from parents and carers of playgroups across Canterbury-Bankstown. The general sentiment was that playgroups were an important setting for parents and carers to build a local network with other families, with local services, and to develop their understanding of child development, the importance of play, and their relationship with their child.

Parents and carers commented that having free playgroups in easily accessible places such as in shopping centres, like Koorana's Playgroup in the Shops, means that more children in the community are able to engage, and it also allows local services an opportunity to promote themselves to families.

Parents who had children across a broader age range advised they would like to see an increase in playgroups attached to other programs such as homework help for older children, or Drop-in for young people. This is a model Bankstown Community Resource Group use in their Koori Homework Help program which runs concurrently with a playgroup and a space for young people. Families reported it allows the family to be together and the varied needs of different age groups are catered to.

Other programs or activities

Scouts was also raised as a program that children enjoy locally. Go-karting, indoor sky-diving and arcade games were raised as activities people had interest in and would like to see provided in the local area.

Community recommendations

- Increase education to parents about the importance of play for wellbeing and development.
- Improve sense of safety in the local community through initiatives that encourage children and families to spend more time out in their local area.
- More varied and challenging playground equipment for different ages and abilities
- More outdoor exercise equipment.
- Improved access to popular sports programs and spaces to practice with friends.
- More programs for children from low-income families, particularly between seven and 12 years.
- Extended drop in hours and outreach days.
- An increase in playgroups run concurrently with programs for older children.
- More opportunities to engage in arts-related programs.
- Increasing the number of library programs.
- Continue to increase the number of children who are learning to swim as part of the "Every Child Can Swim" initiative.





"My child friendly city is a unicorn world and burger town." – Alexia, 10.



Belonging

Children and young people
think belonging is...

No bullying
No discrimination
Coming together
Respect
Inclusion
Support
No racism
Community
Acceptance
Friends
Pride
Family



“A sense of belonging and connectedness to others is critical to the wellbeing of children and young people. Children and young people told us about the importance of feeling connected to adults as well as to their peers.

Through forming positive relationships with each other and with adults, children and young people gain access to valuable networks that build resilience and provide access to information and opportunities.

Connections with others also help to build cohesive communities and foster an understanding and appreciation for nature, diversity, culture and heritage.”¹²³

Children and young people in Canterbury-Bankstown had a lot of insight into what creates belonging, and what creates discord. Overall, children and young people felt positively about the Council area, but did identify a range of ways to improve social cohesion.

“I think [children] need to be taught from an early age that there are more similarities that we have together than the differences that pull us apart,” – Anonymous, 21.

Rights

Article 7: children have the right to a legally registered name and nationality. Children also have the right to know their parents and, as far as possible, to be cared for by them.

Article 10: families who live in different countries should be allowed to move between

those countries so that parents and children can stay in contact, or get back together as a family.

Article 14: children have the right to think and believe what they want and to practice their religion, as long as they are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights.

Article 15: children have the right to meet with other children and young people and to join groups and organisations, as long as this does not stop other people from enjoying their rights.

Article 20: children who cannot be looked after by their own family must be looked after properly by people who respect their religion, culture and language.

Article 22: children who come into a country as refugees should have the same rights as children who are born in that country.

Social cohesion

"Everyone feels like they're together, it's good," – Anonymous 16.

"It feels very separated in areas, like between suburbs" – Anonymous 14.

"I feel like we belong. Like most of us I think feel like we belong" – Anonymous, 14.

There is a well-known protective effect of social relationships on health and well-being, while social isolation is a known predictor of morbidity and mortality...social cohesion [is] defined as a sense of community, with a focus on trust, shared norms and values, positive and friendly relationships, and feelings of being accepted and belonging.¹²⁴

There were mixed responses from children and young people about whether they felt that Canterbury-Bankstown was socially cohesive. Some felt a strong sense of belonging, and described their community as supportive and a safe space. Others felt that more work needs to be done to make sure everyone in our community feels that they belong, raising concerns about discrimination they have experienced or witnessed. Belonging also ties in strongly with participation and issues such as access and having a voice.

Social cohesion was raised as being important on all different levels of the community; in homes and families, in schools, services and public spaces in individual suburbs, and in the City as a whole.

"Sometimes, if your parents have had a bad day or they've had a fight or something sometimes they take it out on you. And I know that it's not their intention... but it does happen... So I do feel like that should be dealt with. Maybe like some way for parents to express their feelings without having to take it out on anyone." – Anonymous, 12.

Most children and young people reported feeling a sense of belonging at home. Those that discussed issues such as domestic violence and child protection raised the importance of children and young people who aren't safe at home having safe, inclusive spaces in our community through school and local services. The importance of families having places they can go for support was also discussed.

"In inclusive environments people are informed," – Parent, interview.

A lack of inclusive practices can restrict access as people don't feel comfortable attending services because they don't feel welcomed or safe. This is an important consideration for services and schools across the City There are supports available, which provide guides to creating a more inclusive environment, such as Zero Barriers or Rainbow Tick. There are also a large number of local services and community groups in Council, which have expertise on different groups, and could be consulted for advice on increasing inclusivity.

"There is a truckload of ignorance in the community due to a lack of awareness and knowledge," – Service Provider, interview.

"It could be people having cancer, people being more overweight than others. People just make fun of them because of their appearance and what they have," – Anonymous, 12.

The negative impact of discrimination on social cohesion in the community was discussed, and it was raised that children and young people are not inherently discriminatory, but learn this from adults.

"A lot of people around here, especially the older people, are very racist. Going on what x said, people that have a medical condition or disability, they are shadowed out. But um kids

don't care, it's the adults...unless the adults teach them to be like that." – Anonymous, 12.

It was suggested consistently by children, young people, parents, carers and service providers that an increase in education for the whole community about key issues affecting children and young people, and specific issues affecting priority groups, would be beneficial. Suggestions included increasing:

- Awareness-raising initiatives;
- Screenings of informative movies or documentaries;
- Inclusivity training;
- Free education sessions; and
- Festivals and events with important key messages being communicated.

"Don't make [children] change themselves; you like them for who they are, and if you don't like them leave them. Like as in, don't leave them like not be their friend, but if you don't like them leave them be. Don't go up and say, 'I don't like this or I don't like that about you'. Leave them, let them be," – Anonymous, 12.

Age

Children and young people often grow up feeling society's view of them is that they are 'less than' because of their age. Children discussed being belittled or disregarded by adults, and being made to feel as if they weren't valued parts of the community. Young people discussed being dismissed by adults as irrational, or feared as threats. They said feeling disrespected and disregarded makes them feel that they don't belong.

"...when I hang out with my friends, every time we're on the street we get told off...we're just sitting, just talking...and if I'm wearing a hoodie and a hat people look at me and give me dirty looks," – Anonymous, 12.

"It's quite difficult finding somewhere to hang out. Especially young people you can't go to a pub, all the cafes are closed, you have no money to go to a restaurant, facilities like level up only run once a week, there's nowhere for you and your friends to hang out to have a cup of coffee. Because young people to adults are all just hooligans no matter how you dress, no matter how you look." – Anonymous, 17.

"...when they sort of see youth there are sort of these assumptions that like we're jiggling or something, like we can't even go to the shops without them staring at you as if you're doing something wrong." – Anonymous, 16.

Generational gaps were discussed in the context of different cultural groups and religions. Generally speaking, it was discussed younger generations are less traditional and more flexible in their understandings and practices, and this can cause conflict. It was suggested that it would be helpful to have more opportunities in the community for children and young people and older generations to build relationships and understanding.

The approach of service providers to children and young people was discussed, and the positive impact it has when service providers take the time to get to know children and young people in terms of fostering belonging and inclusion.

"...here you walk in and you can see everything, and the workers are hanging out with the kids. They aren't intimidated. They're not hanging out with just workers." – Anonymous, 17.

Service providers referenced a common saying that relationships are about appreciating similarities and respecting differences. Not only does this apply to individual relationships, but also on a community level in terms of improving relationships with between adults and children generally in our community.

All adults have gone through childhood and adolescence, and yet this commonality is often forgotten.

Belonging for Priority Groups

“Relationships engage children in the human community in ways that help them define who they are, what they can become, and how and why they are important to other people.”¹²⁵

Service providers discussed that on top of the typical issues that children and young people are facing - pressure at school, changing roles, adolescence, navigating relationships - those in our priority groups have to deal with added complexities and stressors such as discrimination.

LGBTIQA

“A lot of LGBT members do suffer from depression and anxiety and all that. And um, honestly there’s not much I don’t think people can do about it because it’s pretty much just the negative things that we experience through our lives. People’s ignorance, and yeah. Um I’m not sure if there’s anything that you can do to help that, anything the Council can do to help that? We need more support groups really...I’m already very well aware that I don’t belong and that this isn’t really an area where I can belong completely except for in a group like this. And this group goes for two hours in the entire week and we haven’t had a group like this since last year.” – Anonymous, 16.

“People should be able to love who they want to love without people making jokes about it.” – Anonymous, 12.

A need for an increase in inclusive services and support groups for LGBTIQA children and young people in the community was raised. LGBTIQA young people discussed feeling excluded from



services due to identity, their age, their level of sexual experience, or a combination of these factors. It was raised that word of mouth was the most common and reliable means of finding an inclusive service.

**“It’s a lot worse out west here than it is towards the eastern suburbs and the city,”
– Anonymous, 16.**

In terms of inclusive support groups, young people said that they waited a year for a group to restart after a previous group only ran for one term, which is significant gap in an important support, especially considering the serious impacts that exclusion and bullying has been shown to have on health outcomes (see Community Profile and Health).

“It’s very supportive. It’s great to have this, and it lets us know there are facilities out there for us and it lets us know there are people trying to change the way; that know how hard it is to be a young person and to be gay, trans, lesbian, bi – the whole lot. It’s just a great way of communicating to young people who are queer that they are seen and they are cared for, and they are actually a part of the community... I haven’t seen many [support groups], two this year, but that’s still one more than last year. It’s movement.” – Anonymous, 18.

Local supports include an LGBTIQA group at BYRC, and a same-sex attracted group at The Corner in Bankstown. Council has also recently provided a grant to run pride training through ACON for service providers locally to increase inclusivity of the LGBTIQA community. There have also been several local initiatives to foster inclusivity centred around Wear it Purple Day, including a free coffee give away, a screening of ‘Love, Simon’, and a free arts program for LGBTIQA young people.

Children and young people with disabilities

Children and young people discussed discrimination in the community against people with disabilities, and how it stems from ignorance.

“...when it was done, they said, ‘oh look, it looks like it has Down Syndrome’. And I was like, ‘that’s not funny.’ And they kind of just laughed about it and brushed it off and I said, ‘no, that’s not funny, it’s not the right thing to do,’ and they were like, ‘why do you care?’...it did really get to me, and I got really annoyed, especially since like they didn’t really know what [Down Syndrome] was or what it is and just kind of laughed about it.” – Anonymous female, 12.

Parents of children with disabilities and service providers said they would like to see an increase in community awareness and education about disabilities in Canterbury-Bankstown. They felt the general public do not know how to interact with children with disabilities, and do not understand the different behaviours they might have. This leads to children and young people with disabilities and their families feeling excluded.

An increase in dedicated sensory time in local businesses such as restaurants, and services such as libraries, was suggested by parents and service providers. Rashay’s Punchbowl introducing a ‘Sensory Sensitive Hour’ was discussed as a positive local example of inclusive practice for children with autism.¹²⁶

Lack of access to inclusive sport, dance and music classes in Canterbury-Bankstown was raised by parents of children with disabilities, who mentioned they often have to travel out of area for their children to engage in inclusive programs. These are activities which children with disabilities discussed as their favourite hobbies. Parents reported there needed to be more facilitators who are informed about

how to work with children with disabilities, and can be flexible in their approach. Parents of children with severe disabilities told us that swimming is an important activity which they do have access to in the local area, as some children do not have the cognitive abilities to play other sports. Parents reported they would also like to see an increase in inclusive vacation care programs locally. For physical access see Participation.

Council staff and a group of young people from BYRC recently underwent Auslan training in an endeavour to make Canterbury-Bankstown more inclusive of the deaf community, and Council has invested in two portable hearing loops for each of the Council wards. The audiobook intake for Council libraries has more than tripled in the last two years (from 1545 to 5000) in order to be more inclusive of those who are vision-impaired.

Local program: Bankstown Arts Centre

Bankstown Arts Centre runs classes for children, where they work with parents and carers to make classes as inclusive as possible of children with disabilities. For example, they have run theatre programs in school holidays with low levels of lighting and sound, and with opportunities for children with special needs to come early and spend time adapting to the space and becoming comfortable with the performers.

Children and young people who have contact with Child Protection, Juvenile Justice

"The nurturing and care that a child receives from parents in their first three years of life impacts whether they become resilient and happy citizens or struggle with life's challenges."¹²⁷

Service providers discussed if children and young people are experiencing abuse or neglect and feel they don't belong at home,

this can also impact on whether they feel like they belong in the wider community. The importance of early intervention education programs for both children and parents was raised, as well as the importance of having safe and approachable services in the community for children and young people to go to for help.

The importance of supportive services for children and young people who have had contact with Juvenile Justice was also raised, particularly those that offer diversionary programs which provide a sense of belonging through mentoring and a network of peers.

Out-of-Home Care

"When children are removed from the care of their parents and placed in out-of-home care, it precipitates a number of very significant changes in their lives and their relationships: a new home, the loss of daily interactions with their parents and siblings, and often a change in school, community and neighbourhood. A critical aspect of these changes is the need for children to develop relationships with the people they are now living with, and the other people in their community, with new teachers and with other students. There is the added complexity of dealing with their sense of loss, of missing their parents and siblings, and in some cases, understanding who is in their family."¹²⁸

**"You belong to your parents,"
– Anonymous, 13.**

"I belong at home," – Anonymous, 13.

Service providers discussed the significant impact that removal can have on a child; their health, wellbeing and sense of belonging. It was acknowledged that it is sometimes the only option in the best interest of the child and their safety, however that children and young people should have their opinions considered, and should have the final decision explained to them in a manner appropriate to their age and development.



CALD, Refugee and Asylum Seeker

“Please tell everyone to treat each other equally; no matter where they are from or what nationality they are.” – Anonymous, 11.

“There’s a lot of people in the world and people are different and everybody is making fun of them, and people don’t speak their language, so they’re feeling really sad and some people are not being that nice to them,” – Anonymous, 9.

“Don’t judge people about their colour,” – Anonymous, 12.

Service providers discussed people from a CALD background are often approached from a deficit model, rather than appreciating their resilience and – food aside – how much they can offer to the community if they are given opportunities to contribute.

Service providers discussed the importance of engaging with community representatives or leaders in order to effectively build ties with different cultural groups within our community. It was recommended that doing outreach or running programs in partnership with other services that are already engaging a group could be helpful. Children and young people reported that local service providers generally help to foster a good sense of belonging, and try to build understanding between different cultures.

“They stare, and that makes you insecure” – Anonymous, 14.

“My sister was at the train station and she was screamed at for wearing the scarf. Because there are different portrayals in the media, we sort of get viewed different.” – Anonymous, 15.

‘Racialising’ crime was raised as an issue by young people from a range of cultural backgrounds, and identified as a factor that makes them feel as if they don’t belong.

This was discussed not just in the context of interaction with law enforcement, but the community generally treating young people from certain cultural groups with suspicion. This creates trauma for children and young people who begin to feel persecuted and excluded.

Negative media portrayals of young people from particular cultural backgrounds was raised as a concern by service providers. It has been shown in studies that despite the media portrayal of newly-arrived young people as the main perpetrators of crime, young people born overseas are less than half as likely to be alleged offenders compared with other young people, and young people who spoke another language at home were less likely to be involved in crime than their English-speaking counterparts.¹²⁹

“You want to think it’s not race, but you can feel when it is. You know it is. You just like to pretend it’s not,” – Anonymous, 17.

Local initiative: Stories of Strength

In order to combat negative perceptions and stereotypes in the region, Bankstown Youth Development Service has teamed up with Sydney’s independent youth broadcaster FBI radio’s All the Best and local Western Sydney high schools, to train up young people to collect stories of “strength” from their community.

storiesofstrength.com.au/about/

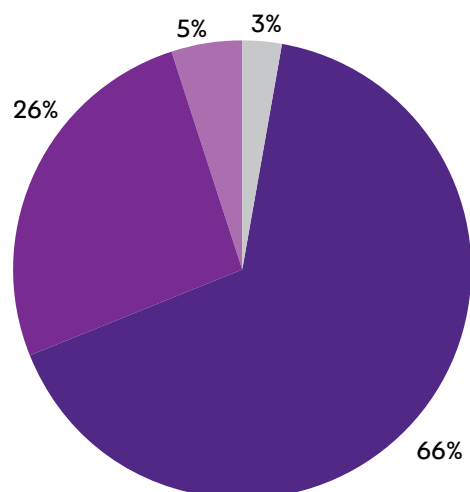
Service providers reported that they have received some feedback from a small number of people in the local community who feel it is ‘disrespectful’ for other cultures to try and maintain their own culture and not assimilate. It was reported that this is not a key issue, but the importance of maintaining culture and language to the wellbeing of children and young people needs to be promoted.

A grandmother who is carer for her young grandson noted that cultural acceptance has grown significantly in the area over the past few decades; more children from different cultures are called by their traditional cultural names rather than anglicised versions; more people are comfortable speaking a different language publicly; there are more festivals and celebrations of different cultures; and there is a general interest to learn and understand other cultures.

“In my community children are respected regardless of their colour, religion, nationality, culture or disabilities”

– Children and Young People’s Survey

Mostly true
 Sometimes true
 Never true
 Does not apply



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

“Connectedness through culture [is] a dominant theme among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.”¹³⁰

Aboriginal children and young people said they feel that increasing education in the area about Aboriginal culture, land and history – particularly the history of the stolen generation – would increase the sense of belonging for Aboriginal people in Canterbury-Bankstown. Children and young people did not feel that this history is acknowledged in our area.

“It’s important because it’s passing on, and families have been screwed up...more people need to be taught about it,” – Anonymous, 10.

Children and young people also reported that they want to hear more positive stories as well, “we don’t learn much about good Aboriginal things happening,” – Anonymous, 10.

Local children and young people reported benefiting from programs such as the Koori Youth Group at The Corner, “we get to learn more things every week...I think it’s important because we get to learn about our culture more,” – Anonymous, 14.

“Effective and appropriate service delivery and engagement models for working with Aboriginal children and their families [identified by children and young people in a national study] include:

- Aboriginal self-determination, realised in part through consultation and participation in the design, development and delivery of services; and
- respect for the unique collective and individual cultural rights of Aboriginal children, through the provision of culturally appropriate programs and services.”¹³¹

Service providers suggested there are also some simple and meaningful solutions such as cultural acknowledgement on local buildings of the land on which it is built, which would make more Aboriginal children, young people and their families feel included and welcome. Increasing the amount of promotion and support from the community around NAIDOC week events was also suggested as an important way to improve the sense of belonging in the community for Aboriginal children and young people.

Homeless or at risk of homelessness

The importance of having safe spaces in the community for children and young people where they felt they belonged was generally raised as important, however, this is particularly important for those that are homeless, and/or feel unsafe at home. Some service providers reported local organisations, such as Barnardos do great outreach work on the streets, however, having a physical safe haven could be really beneficial for those who have nowhere to go. Children and young people described local libraries and youth centres as ‘safe havens’ and ‘protected spaces.’ Service providers discussed that having extended hours for drop in could help.

Poverty

Children and young people discussed the judgement and exclusion they experience from the wider community if they come from a suburb or school that is identified as ‘disadvantaged’.

“It’s hard with our school in the area because there’s lots of stereotypes...we get a bad reputation, lots of people look down on us... the schools in our area [are] looked down on.” – Anonymous, 16.

Some discussed that their schools were excluded from inter-school competitions and events, or that people were shocked when they were included, which all made them feel as if they were not accepted by the wider community. A 10-year-old described how their school organised its own basketball competition because, “no other schools wanted to verse them, so they did it themselves and now people in the school get to be a part of something.”

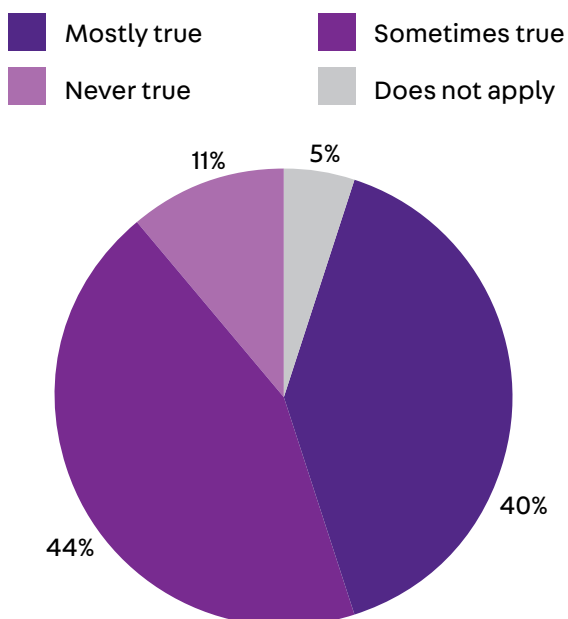
“Different schools have excursions and get different opportunities, and they always get surprised when they see our school there.”
– Anonymous, 15.

Increasing the number of events and competitions between different schools across the local area was suggested as a way to bring people from different areas together, and also an opportunity to learn from each other.

Community recommendations

“I participate in, or observe festivals and events of cultures and religions different from my own”

– Children and Young People’s Survey



Promoting the cultural identity of our City was a key issue raised by children and young people, (also consistent with key themes raised by young people who partook in a Youth Action forum¹³²):

Promote the richness here;

- “There are kids who can speak four languages at five years old.” – Service Provider.
 - More interfaith associations to help the community to focus on commonalities, not differences; and
 - Promote cultural humility; don’t avoid a group because they are unknown, make an effort to learn and ask questions.

Education:

- Disability awareness;
 - Need to increase community awareness and understanding, which will lead to better outcome for children with disabilities if they can be integrated into the community and learn to generalise behaviours.
 - Increase promotion of Zero Barriers to encourage more local businesses to become more accessible.
 - Run educational sessions in libraries, and screenings of educational shows.
- DFV awareness;
 - **“There was the White Ribbon lunch...I really like those kinds of things, it brings the community together,”**
– Anonymous, 15.
 - Continue promotion and support of initiatives such as RESPECT.
- Racism; and
- Increase awareness about racism and its impacts, look at how this has been addressed in other LGA’s.

- 'Behind this Smile' – highlighting local experiences of racism.¹³³
- 'Say No to Racism' – bystander response education.¹³⁴
 - Increase promotion and support of initiatives like, Stories of Strength.
- Increase support and sense of welcoming in our community:
 - "We could help them, like we could teach them stuff, and everybody could get along together," – Anonymous, 9; and
 - More education and support programs for new arrivals, welcome wagons with essentials and welcome packs with guides to the area.

Events:

- "Sports, arts, culture and other activities are a major avenue for promoting connectedness among children and young people;"¹³⁵
 - More festivals to bring the community together and celebrate different cultures, and not just food.
- "More on cultures and cross-cultural networking...and not sort of your generic harmony day thing, just more authentic cultural celebrations and stuff like that... if we can have something that celebrates us and celebrates each and every person, something to look forward to, I guess in living in the community." – Service Provider, interview.
- Bringing back Haldon St festival on a yearly basis was raised, as it was identified as an event that brought together people of all different backgrounds and fostered belonging.
- Performances and story-telling, stalls and activities
- "A festival that represents the Bankstown area, one that's about kids and where people come and have fun and do family things together" – Anonymous, 10.
 - More sports or gaming tournaments, gives people something common to bridge cultural differences and meet people from across the City;
- "I feel like I belong playing games at school," – Anonymous, 8.
- "I like being a part of sport," – Anonymous, 10.
 - Interschool initiatives across Canterbury-Bankstown to bring people together;
- A MasterChef competition with junior judges, competing against other schools.
- "Maybe like having art shows, like with other schools as well, and everyone can come and see their stuff." – Anonymous, 14.
- A pen pal system between different schools across Canterbury-Bankstown
- "Maybe like a program where you get like two people from each school from all different areas so maybe like a Jewish school or an Aussie school or then you have like a conversation about what you think about other cultures and you explain your culture to them." – Anonymous, 15.
 - Celebrate 'Families Day' rather than mother's or father's day to account for non-traditional families, and people who aren't looked after by their parents;
 - More events centred around dance, music, art and sport which are inclusive of children and young people with disabilities;
- E.g. soccer gala days and blue light discos.
- Events that present opportunities to integrate with children without disabilities.
 - Free events with free activities so low-income families aren't excluded;

- Nominate a two week period with lots of events and activities focused on belonging “where everyone has fun” – Anonymous, 10; and
- “When there’s community events you don’t really feel part of the community, because it’s either a religious holiday or a country thing and some countries don’t accept gays, some religions don’t” – Anonymous, 18; and
- Need for more local events and shows of support for LGBTIQ community.
- “Fair Day is kind of like an event that leads up to Mardi Gras. It’s only for a weekend and it’s a couple of weeks before it. It’s basically just a massive market sort of thing. And you just have stall after stall of different queer fundraisers, and activities there, freebies, that sort of stuff,” – Anonymous, 16.

Shifting perceptions of the community:

- “I feel like everyone accepts everyone,” – Anonymous, 11;
- Some felt very safe and comfortable in the area, feel part of a big, accepting; community, however said that their friends from outside of the area aren’t allowed to come to CB because it is perceived as too dangerous;
- “I’ve been in this area for 10 years but I feel really safe, but a lot of my friends from out of the area are terrified of coming to like Bankstown, their parents won’t even let them come.” – Anonymous, 14; and
- Promoting the strengths of our City, more media coverage of positive initiatives and shows of support to foster a bigger sense of pride and unity.

More community spaces:

- Gardens where children and young people can come together and learn about gardening and sustainability, and spend time outdoors; and
- Safe spaces for young people to spend time in the evenings and engage with services who can help them if they are doing it tough.

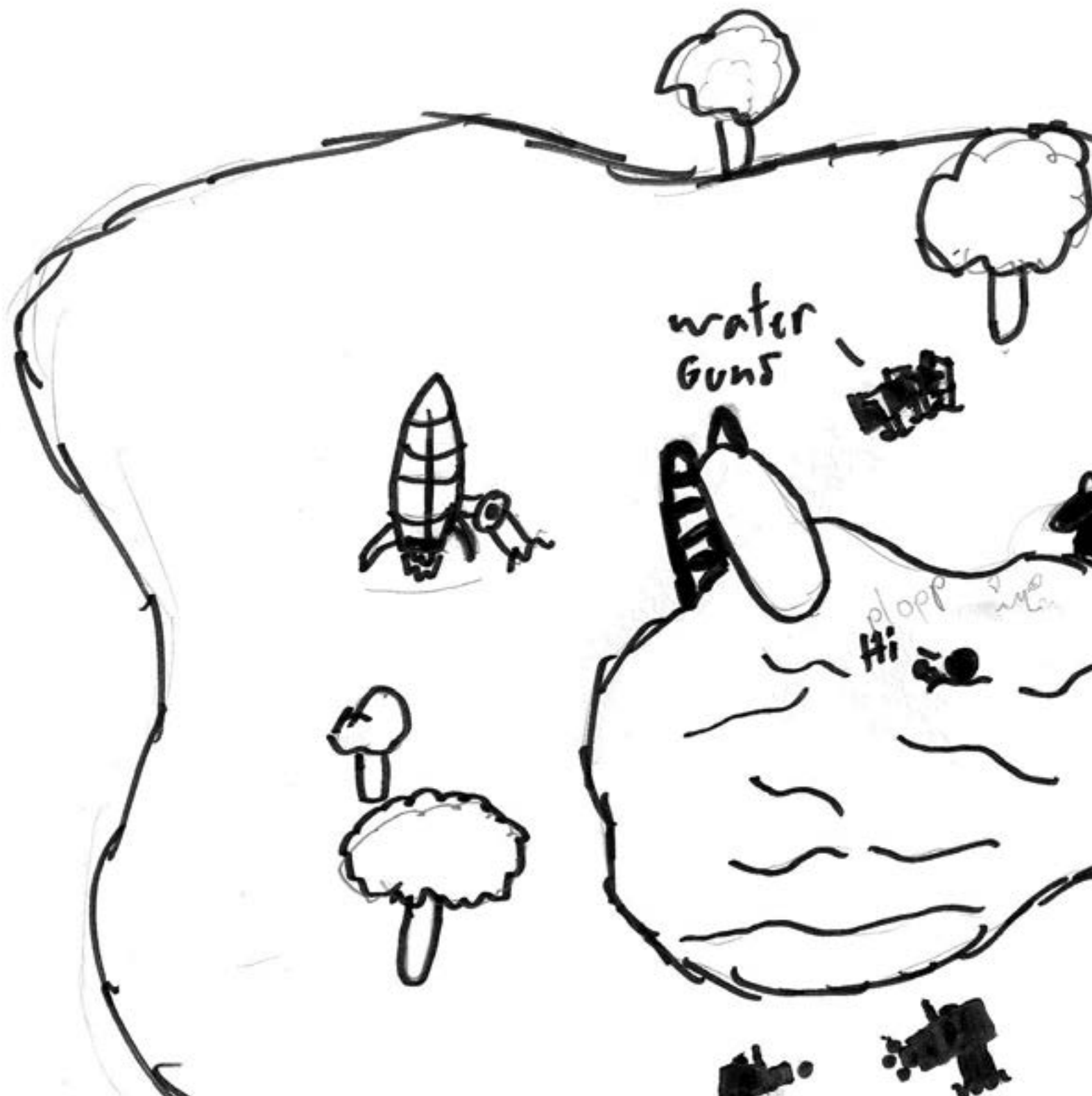
More celebration of achievements:

- Increase public promotion of achievements of children and young people in all different arenas
 - For example, service providers discussed an internationally recognised Arabic reading challenge which some children and young people participate in locally and travel overseas to participate in finals, which boosts the confidence of new arrivals who may have incredible literacy skills in their first language, yet aren’t recognised for this as their English skills are still developing.

Services

- Children and young people said they feel the most comfortable in the services that:
 - provide food.
 - have dedicated spaces just for children and young people to make their own.
 - have staff who show interest in them and mix with them.

(h3)2



"My child-friendly city is a nature only zone. There is a swimming pool with a diving board and the pool and in one area is 2 metres down. There is a cubby with lots of holes that has circles and goes higher up and then there is a house box where two meet - then there is a giant slide that goes back down to the entry. Then there is another tunnel that goes past the pool with glass walls and you can see the water and there is also an aquarium. This then leads to a moving rocket that goes up and down and side to side, and then there is a pet shop, a water gun area - the guns have hoses that fill them up - the guns split into two. There is a Mario course - Giant water guns to sit in and shoot from, one can float, last one has three sprays: these are rideable. As you can see my city is very complex!" - Nicholas, 9

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Recommendations

Category	Recommendation
Health	Increase number of free or affordable programs promoting health and fitness, particularly in high-density housing areas
	Improve access to nutritious foods
	Improve inclusive access to sexual health education and clinics
	Improve the health of our local environment
	Increase local initiatives to combat global warming
	Increase the amount of green spaces in high-density housing areas
	Improve cleanliness of public toilets
	Increase the number of free, practical support services locally for families doing it tough
	Increase health literacy amongst CALD communities
	Increase number of local mental health supports for children and young people/capacity of existing supports
	Increase education and awareness about mental health in our community
	Increase promotion of existing mental health supports
	Increase education for children and young people about stress management
	Increase education about rights of children and young people in the healthcare system
	Increase in alcohol and other drug education and supports for children, young people and general community
	Increase early intervention access for children with disabilities
	Increase number of affordable shops for clothing and toys for low-income families
	Increase support for those at risk of or experiencing homelessness
	Increase percentage of mothers accessing antenatal care within the first 13 weeks
	Increase the percentage of mothers who don't smoke in the second half of pregnancy
	Increase supports for young people who are parents
	Increase promotion of phone/online resources for new parents

Category	Recommendation
Safety	Increase education and awareness about bullying in the community
	Encourage schools to review their safety measures and discuss transparently with students
	Increase DFV education and awareness
	Increase safety on public transport for children and young people
	Increase initiatives to support children and young people to feel safe navigating our City independently
	Increase education around cyber-safety
	Increase supports for those at risk of contact/in contact with Juvenile Justice
	Increase community education, awareness and supports around child protection
	Increase supports for children and young people in out-of-home care
	Increase in road safety campaigns
	Increase safe crossings to parks, schools and across main roads
	Decrease congestion around schools and unsafe drop-off practices
	Encourage and support local services to adopt Child Safe Organisations guidelines

Category	Recommendation
Education	Increase education about CRC in local schools
	Increased consultation with children and young people about what they want to learn and how they learn
	Increase funding to schools in disadvantaged areas
	Review discipline measures in schools
	Encourage mentoring programs within schools
	Increased recognition of achievements in schools
	Improve mental health supports in schools
	Improve school infrastructure
	Increase engagement between students with disabilities and students without disabilities
	Increase in life skills education
	Increased vocational information and support
	Increased civic participation opportunities through schools
	Reduce proportion of children who are developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains
	Increase the number of children in early childhood education
	Increase inter-school connections and opportunities locally
	Improve access to education for asylum seeker children
	Improve screening for disabilities

Category	Recommendation
Participation	Improve access to childcare or child-minding for families needing to access services and supports
	Increase free or low-cost recreational activities locally
	Encourage more children's centres to offer free places to asylum seeker children
	Address asylum seeker children not being engaged in primary school
	Increased support for low-income families to access public transport
	Improve accessibility in parks and playgrounds
	Increase accessible toilets throughout the City
	Improve disability parking and street access
	Ensure all train stations are accessible
	Increased in-home respite and short-term accommodation options for children and young people
	Promote importance of access to chosen toilet for transgender children and young people in local schools and services
	Increase free, public Wi-Fi access
	Encourage community consultation on existing service websites to improve navigability
	Utilise 'My Local' once launched to provide children and young people with a central access point for information about local services
	Consult with Aboriginal community about arranging a dedicated community space
	Increase accessibility in shopping centres
	Promote the importance of listening to children and young people and their opinions, and involving them in decision-making
	Increase volunteering opportunities locally for children and young people
	Increase in local programs that teach leadership skills
	Increase avenues for children to raise concerns and have their say with Council
	Increase the number of youth-led and driven community projects/activities
	Increase the number of Council strategies and plans informed by engagement with children and young people
	Consult with children and young people on the action plan developed from this report
	Increased promotion of Canterbury-Bankstown's Youth Awards
	Increased consultation with children and young people in priority groups and their families throughout our City

Category	Recommendation
Play and Leisure	Improve access to places to play and engage in leisure activities
	Increase access to support and time for play and leisure for young carers
	Increase the number of activities accessible to children and young people with disabilities
	Increase variety in sports programs offered locally, and ensure equal access for all
	Expand play options in local pools
	Increase opportunities to engage with art
	Increase number of library programs and child and youth dedicated spaces within libraries
	Extend drop in hours and frequency of outreach services
	More programs for children 7-11 who are too young for youth centres and too old for early childhood groups
	Increase play groups locally
	Promote to parents the importance of play and leisure to health and wellbeing of children and young people

Category	Recommendation
Belonging	Improve inclusivity in local services and businesses
	Promote the cultural richness of our community
	Increase education and awareness raising about priority groups and key community issues
	Increase the sense of welcome in our community for new residents
	Increase the number of local free events that celebrate our community
	Shift perceptions of our community as unsafe and undesirable
	More community spaces for all people to come together
	More celebrations of the achievements of children and young people

These recommendations will be reviewed with the Child and Family Reference Group, and an Action Plan for Council will be formulated. The Action Plan will determine a strategy not just for Council services, but for all of Canterbury-Bankstown to become a more child-friendly city. As such, the Action Plan will involve roles for Council, as well as other services. Children and young people will be consulted on the Action Plan along with parents and services providers.

Appendix

1.0 Posters



1.1 Children and Young People Survey Questions

My Play and Leisure

1. In my community I have places for play, games and sports
2. I have time to play, rest and enjoy myself
3. The places for play in my community can also be used by children with physical disabilities
4. There are places in my community where I can be in contact with nature
5. I participate in, or observe festivals and events of culture and religions different from my own
6. I participate in projects, programs, groups or activities outside of school

My Participation

1. I help with projects to change my community
2. I am involved in planning or decisions for the community
3. The Government asks me my opinions about my life or my community (Council, Mayor, etc.)
4. I have heard about children's rights on public television, radio, or read about them in newspapers
5. I have access to the Internet and feel connected to what happens beyond my community
6. I give my opinion about the budget for programs and services for children

My Safety

1. I feel safe using buses or other public vehicles
2. It is safe for me to walk and cycle in my community
3. If I feel in danger, I know where to report it and get help
4. If there is a hazard in my community, I know what to do
5. I know about the risks of using the Internet
6. For children NOT living at home or attending school: There are places I can go for schooling in the area
7. Or children NOT living at home or attending school: I know where to go to get food, take a shower and sleep

My Health

1. There is a place in my community I can go for health check-ups and when I am sick
2. Here are public toilets I can use safely and easily in my community
3. My community is free of garbage and dirty water
4. The air in my community is clean, smoke-free and stench free

My Education

1. I go to school
2. Boys and girls are treated the same way in school
3. I can afford paper, pencils, books and other school supplies for school
4. I get enough attention from my teachers when I need it

5. In my school I learn about being healthy
6. In my school I learn how to protect the environment
7. In my school I have been taught about my rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child
8. In school I have been taught about safe sex
9. My ideas are listened to by teachers in my school
10. There is free time in my school to play games and sports, rest and spend time with friends
11. There is enough good water for drinking and washing in my school
12. There is a clean toilet in my school that I can use easily and safely
13. In my school there are adults who I feel safe talking to about my problems and feelings
14. In my school all children are respected no matter what religion, colour, nationality, or culture
15. In my school children with disabilities are respected and given equal treatment
16. In my community or school there is a library I use

My Personal Life – Home

1. I have enough safe water to drink at home
2. I have a clean toilet I can use at home or nearby
3. I have enough water for washing at home
4. The air in my homes is healthy and it is free from smoke and pollution
5. I feel safe at home

My Personal Life – Safety

1. I feel safe from being bullied by other children
2. I am free from drugs in the community
3. I feel protected from gangs/armed groups
4. I feel protected from being taken away by a stranger
5. I feel safe from violence and abuse*
(*abuse could be verbal, physical or sexual)
6. There are adults outside of my family who I can talk to freely about abuse or violence
7. In my community children are respected regardless of their colour, religion, nationality, culture or disabilities
8. If I get in trouble with the law, I have access to a separate justice system from adults
9. The work I do allows me to go to school
10. The work I do is free of health and safety risks

My Personal Life – Health

1. I know of mental health care services (such as counselling) I can go to
2. If needed, I can get support and orientation from professionals about HIV/AIDS and safe sex

1.2 Participation Statement – Survey for Children and Young People



Participation Statement

What is this survey about?

You are invited to do this survey to tell us about what it is like living as a child or young person in the City of Canterbury Bankstown. We are trying to make Canterbury Bankstown a Child Friendly City. To be a Child Friendly City, a city has to uphold all of the rights of children and young people under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (if you would like more information, please go to this link: <https://childfriendlycities.org/>).

We want to hear from children and young people about how you think we can do better. We also want to hear from their parents, families, carers, and the people who work with them. This survey is largely based off the UNICEF-developed self-assessment tools for children and adolescents. We have also included some basic demographic questions.

How does this survey work?

The survey will involve multiple choice questions and will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. There will be space to write comments if you would like to, but you don't have to. This is not a test – there are no right or wrong answers. You don't have to show anyone else your answers. You will stay anonymous and we won't tell anyone you know your answers.

At times during the survey the questions will refer to children - this means children or young people, basically anyone 0-17. The survey was made for people from the age of 8 upwards. If you are younger than 8 years old you can still do the survey. If there are questions you aren't sure how to answer that is ok. You can just tick 'does not apply'.

If you would like to do the survey in a different language you can try using the Google Translate tool on the Have Your Say website. If the translation is not clear and you would like some help from an interpreter, please contact Lucy: Lucy.Stirton@cbc.city.nsw.gov.au

If any part of this survey makes you feel uncomfortable or upset you can call the Kids Helpline 24 hours a day on: 1800 55 1800 or go to kidshelp.com.au for online counselling. It is your choice whether you want to complete this survey or not. You can stop the survey at any time if you change your mind. We will only use your answers for our research if you finish the survey.

Who is running this project?

This project is being run by Lucy Stirton and Karen Roberts. Lucy is a Social Worker, and Karen is the Manager of Children's Services. If you do not need help urgently but need someone to talk to, or you have questions about the survey, you can also email:

Karen.Roberts@cbc.city.nsw.gov.au or Lucy.Stirton@cbc.city.nsw.gov.au

How long will the survey be open?

This survey is open until the 31/10/2018.

When will we see the results of the surveys?

We expect that the report (The State of Canterbury Bankstown's Children Report) from our research will be made available on the council website by early 2019.

1.3 Locations and numbers of children and young people engaged in Focus Groups

Organisation	Suburb	Program	Number engaged
Belmore Youth Resource Centre	Belmore	Drop In	15
Belmore Youth Resource Centre	Belmore	Drop In	3
Belmore Youth Resource Centre	Belmore	LGBTIQA Group for young people	5
Punchbowl Children's Centre	Punchbowl	3-5 year olds	5
Roundabout Youth Centre	Chester Hill	Drop In	4
Youth off the Streets	Bankstown	FAMILY group	10
Cub-Bee Early Learning Centre	Picnic Point	3-5 year olds	20
Chester Hill Neighbourhood Centre	Chester Hill	Homework Help	9
CECAL	Earlwood	Playgroup	2
Jannawi Family Centre	Lakemba	Family Support	4
Wiley Park Girls HS	Wiley Park	SRC Meeting	12
Chullora Public School	Chullora	SRC and Student Leaders Meeting	30
Clemton Park Public School	Clemton Park	OSHC	10
Koorana	Roselands	Playgroup	2
Bankstown Community Resource Group	Revesby	Koori Homework Help	7
Bankstown Community Resource Group	Revesby	Koori Homework Help	5
Caroline Chisholm School	Padstow	Year 5-9 representatives	7
Panania Public School	Panania	SRC Meeting	14
Jannawi Family Centre	Home visit – conducted by Jannawi counsellor	Family Support	3

Locations and numbers engaged in parent, carer and service provider interviews

Organisation	Suburb	Program	Number engaged
Caroline Chisholm School	Padstow	School Council Meeting + interview with Principal	8 (combination of parents and staff)
Koorana	Roselands	Play Group	5 parents/ carers
Bankstown Community Resource Group	Revesby	Koori Homework Help	6 parents and carers, 1 service provider
Chester Hill Neighbourhood Centre	Chester Hill	Homework Help	1 parent
Homecare Heroes	Bankstown	-	1 parent, 1 service provider
CECAL	Earlwood	Play Group	4 parents/ carers
Lebanese Muslim Association	Lakemba	Thrive	2 service providers
Bankstown Police	Bankstown	-	3 service providers
Campsie Police	Campsie	-	2 service providers
Bankstown Women's Health	Bankstown	Domestic Violence and Child Sexual Assault Counselling Service	3 service providers
Canterbury Hospital	Campsie	-	2 service providers
Council	Campsie	Inclusivity	1 service provider
Community Minds	Bankstown	Community Minded Kids	1 service provider
Belmore Youth Resource Centre	Belmore	Drop In	3 service providers
Jannawi Family Centre	Lakemba	Family Support	3 service providers

1.4 Participation Statement – Focus Groups for Children and Young People



Child Friendly Cities Focus Group

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

1) What is this focus group about?

You are invited to participate in a focus group to tell us about **what it is like living as a child or young person in the City of Canterbury-Bankstown**. We are trying to make Canterbury-Bankstown a Child-Friendly City. To be a Child-Friendly City, a city has to be committed to improving the lives of children, and should **uphold all of the rights of children and young people** (that's anyone from 0-17y) under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (if you would like more information, please go to this link: <https://childfriendlycities.org/>).

2) Why are we doing the focus group?

We want to hear from children and young people about **how you think we can do better**. Your ideas, thoughts and the issues you raise will be put together in a report to council to make recommendations on how we can better support children and young people in CB City. We will be making an audio recording of the focus group which will be destroyed once we have written a transcript of the discussion. Anything you say will be kept anonymous in the report that we write. If as a group we do any drawings or mind-maps we will ask you if it's ok to take photos of these as well. We will not take photos of you.

3) How much time will the focus group take?

The focus group will go for between half an hour and an hour.

4) What if I don't want to take part?

It is **your choice** whether you want to take part in the focus group or not. You can leave the discussion at any time if you change your mind, or need a break.

5) Do I need to do any preparation before the focus group?

You don't need to do any preparation for the focus group; we will explain everything on the day. We want to hear your opinions and suggestions, there are no right or wrong answers. If you would like to get any idea of what we'll be talking about beforehand though, you can have a look at the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**:

<https://s25924.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/uncrcchildfriendlylanguage.pdf>

6) Will anyone else know the results?

The results of our research will be written up into a report. What you say will be kept anonymous. This report will be presented to the City of Canterbury Bankstown Council, and will also be available on the council website in **early 2019** if you would like to see the results.

7) Will the research benefit children and young people?

We hope that this research will directly benefit the children and young people in CB City by improving the services provided for them.

8) Can I tell other people about the research?

We encourage you to let other people know about the research. If anyone you know would like to be a part of the research, but they aren't attending the focus group they can still help out. We are **running online surveys until 31/10/2018**. There are three separate surveys; one for children and young people, one for parents and families, and one for service providers. You can do both the focus group and the survey if you would like to.

<https://haveyoursay.cbcity.nsw.gov.au/ChildrenandYoungPeopleFriendlyCitiesSurvey>

9) Who is running this project?

This project is being run by Lucy Stirton and Karen Roberts. Lucy is a Social Worker, and Karen is the Manager of Children's Services. **If you have questions or concerns** about the project, or would like more information, you can email:

Karen.Roberts@cbcity.nsw.gov.au or Lucy.Stirton@cbcity.nsw.gov.au

10) What if I need some help from an interpreter?

If you would like some help from an interpreter, please contact Lucy:

Lucy.Stirton@cbcity.nsw.gov.au

11) Where can I go to get help?

If any part of the focus group makes you feel uncomfortable or upset you can call the Kids Helpline 24 hours a day on: 1800 55 1800 or go to kidshelp.com.au for online counselling.

1.5 Canterbury-Bankstown Population by Service Age Groups

Age Group	# in CB 2016	% of age group in CB Population 2016	% of age group in Greater Sydney population 2016	% of age group in NSW population 2016	% of age group in Australian population 2016
0-4	24,976	7.2%	6.4%	6.2%	6.3%
5-11	33,298	9.6%	8.8%	8.8%	8.9%
12-17	25,698	7.4%	6.9%	7.1%	7.1%
0-17	83,972	24.2%	22.1%	22.1%	22.3%

1.6 Canterbury-Bankstown Population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Residents

Suburb	Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Residents 2016	% of total population 2016
Ashbury	38	1.2%
Bankstown Balance	25	0.2%
Bankstown CBD	73	0.4%
Bass Hill – Lansdowne	75	0.8%
Belfield	31	0.6%
Belmore	108	0.9%
Birrong – Regents Part – Potts Hill	23	0.5%
Campsie – Clemton Park	123	0.5%
Canterbury	59	0.8%
Chester Hill	126	1.0%
Condell Park – Bankstown Aerodrome	77	0.7%
Croydon Park (part)	35	0.8%
Earlwood	116	0.7%
Georges Hall	36	0.4%
Greenacre – Mt Lewis – Chullora	101	0.4%
Hurlstone Park	70	1.6%
Kingsgrove	48	0.8%
Lakemba	47	0.3%
Milperra	92	2.3%
Narwee – Beverly Hills	38	0.7%
Padstow – Padstow Heights	159	0.9%
Panania – East Hills	242	1.5%
Picnic Point	60	1.0%
Punchbowl	81	0.4%
Revesby – Revesby Heights	151	0.9%
Riverwood	64	1.0%
Roselands	81	0.7%
Sefton	6	0.1%
Villawood	64	1.6%
Wiley Park	17	0.2%
Yagoona	137	0.8%
Canterbury-Bankstown	2,548	0.7%

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2016). *Census of Population and Housing*. Retrieved August 20, 2018, from: profile.id.com.au/canterbury-bankstown/

1.7 Number of Risk of Significant Harm reports, by suburb, for the Canterbury Bankstown Local Government Area by financial year

Suburb	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Bankstown	436	538	510
Bass Hill	114	135	131
Belfield	25	20	35
Belmore	103	110	151
Beverly Hills	30	41	37
Birrong	27	20	19
Campsie	130	171	211
Canterbury	48	68	81
Chester Hill	159	166	250
Condell Park	99	145	192
Croydon Park	28	27	25
Earlwood	86	68	90
East Hills	21	73	41
Georges Hall	99	70	95
Greenacre	308	250	266
Hurlstone Park	22	28	37
Kingsgrove	33	39	69
Lakemba	151	217	213
Milperra	15	38	21
Narwee	10	18	15
Padstow	60	143	165
Padstow Heights	19	29	56
Panania	122	105	131
Picnic Point	50	57	47
Punchbowl	258	270	343

Suburb	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Regents Park	25	20	27
Revesby	243	199	242
Riverwood	32	34	37
Roselands	86	168	248
Sefton	44	65	81
Villawood	58	84	52
Wiley Park	106	104	125
Yagoona	275	303	269
Remaining suburbs *	28	21	25
Total	3350	3844	4337

Family and Community Services (FACS). (2018). Number of Risk of Significant Harm reports, by suburb, for the Canterbury Bankstown Local Government Area by financial year. Accessed November 14, 2018 through a Government Information (Public Access) Act (GIPA) Formal Access Application.

*due to the low number of reports the following suburbs have been presented together to avoid the identification of children: Ashbury, Chullora, Clemton Park, Lansdowne, Mount Lewis, Potts Hill, Revesby Heights.

1.8 Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage

City of Canterbury Bankstown's small areas and benchmark areas		
Area	2016 index	Percentile
Ashbury	1,080.2	91
Picnic Point	1,078.4	90
Milperra	1,060.8	82
Earlwood	1,028.8	63
Hurlstone Park	1,024.4	60
SSROC	1,023.7	60
Greater Sydney	1,018.0	56
Panania - East Hills	1,009.8	51
Padstow - Padstow Heights	1,007.4	50
Revesby Ward	1,006.4	49
Croydon Park (part)	1,004.2	48
Australia	1,001.9	46
Kingsgrove	1,001.6	46
Georges Hall	1,001.0	45
New South Wales	1,001.0	45
Belfield	995.7	43
Canterbury	993.0	41
Revesby - Revesby Heights	988.8	39
Canterbury Ward	982.9	35
Roselands	971.3	30
Narwee - Beverley Hills	956.1	24
Birrong - Regents Park - Potts Hill	945.1	20
Condell Park - Bankstown Aerodrome	941.8	19
City of Canterbury Bankstown	935.0	17

Area	2016 index	Percentile
Campsie - Clemton Park	921.3	14
Belmore	914.8	12
Greenacre - Mount Lewis - Chullora	914.2	12
Bass Hill - Lansdowne	913.3	12
Sefton	904.9	10
Bass Hill Ward	904.6	10
Yagoona	901.9	10
Bankstown Balance	900.6	10
Bankstown Ward	894.2	9
Roselands Ward	893.3	9
Punchbowl	879.8	7
Wiley Park	874.9	7
Chester Hill	871.3	7
Bankstown CBD	856.1	6
Lakemba	851.9	5
Riverwood	799.0	3
Villawood	669.4	2

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2016a). *Census of Population and Housing*. Retrieved November 18, 2018, from: profile.id.com.au/canterbury-bankstown/

1.8 Letter received from a 12-year-old resident

Dear Lucy,

My email is regarding the lights at Tasker Park. The lights there are only on when the soccer clubs meet. The soccer clubs are only on during weekdays which means that on weekends, the lights are off and it gets dark very quickly. This is not convenient for most students because they have got after school activities and their parents have to go to work and don't get back until 5-6pm in the evening. The parents have to go and make food for dinner and so no one is available to take the child to the park. They are only free on the weekends and even so, in most cases, it is not to the late afternoon in which case it is too dark without the lights on. It makes it even worse that many Australians are already obese.

Statistics already show that almost 2 in 3 Australian adults are overweight and 1 in 4 Australian children aged 2 - 17 are obese. This being the case, the lights at Tasker Park are not helping the situation as stated before. Obese children go through a lot of bullying at school because of their size. They also feel embarrassed at sporting carnivals because they are so slow compared to their other fellow peers. Besides that, they go through a lot of medical treatment, which takes me on to my next point.

The cost for turning on the lights at the park are nothing compared to the amount of medical treatment of obese children. Altogether, Australia spends approximately \$14.5 billion on the treatment of obesity. Compared to the cost of turning on the lights at a park, I am pretty sure that there is simply no comparison between the two. Turning on the lights may not seem such a big thing, but in the long run, it will help reduce the cost of obesity treatments. Turning on the lights will enable that more families can go to the park on weekends and that overweight people can still access the park after the whole week of work or school.

In conclusion, I believe that turning on the lights every day of the week will be a great improvement that can be made for residents who go and visit Tasker Park on the weekends. It will also reduce the alarming number of overweight and obese children in the Canterbury Bankstown area. You may ask how that helps Australia, and the answer is, if every council in Sydney take this small step forward, hopefully everyone else will follow the example and soon, we will reduce the obesity rate of Australia.

Your sincerely,

J

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The cover was designed by Molly. This is her depiction of her child-friendly city:

"My child-friendly city has a park with a pat-a-pet. And so children don't get hurt by cars there is a bridge over all of the roads connecting all of the parks together. Across the road from the pat-a-pet is a play place and a café – the café will sell things that children can eat and drink, for example it won't sell coffee.

There are safe houses – all balconies are strong with high fences so children don't fall over. If you go to a shop there is a limit on the amount of lollies children can have – a maximum of five lollies each.

For every pool, you need to get a special app on a grownup's phone with an image, so you can open the gate to the pool. The rollercoaster has magnetic wheels. It doesn't go as fast as other rollercoasters, so children don't get scared. The magnetic wheels can't fall off the tracks.

I want everything in my city to be safe and fun at the same time. There is a no dog policy in the play place so no children get bitten."

- Molly, age 8



This report was prepared by Lucy Stirton and Karen Roberts
from City of Canterbury Bankstown.