COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE
REPORT

AGENDA ITEM 5.2

9 September 2008

CHILD FRIENDLY CITY

Division Community and Culture

Presenter Russell Hopkins, Manager Families, Children and Youth

Purpose

1. To provide a framework to guide the City of Melbourne in seeking UNICEF Child Friendly City status.

Recommendation from Management

2. That the Community Services Committee endorses the following actions in order to progress the Council’s future registration as a UNICEF Child Friendly City:

2.1. the development of a children and young people’s charter of rights as part of the subsequent Young People’s Policy and Municipal Early Years Plan;

2.2. write a children’s plan for children by children as part of the next Municipal Early Years Plan;

2.3. work with the University of Melbourne to ensure key Council officers are trained to consult with children ethically and respectfully; and

2.4. produce a “snapshot” report of the state of Melbourne’s children.

Background


4. The City of Melbourne joined the newly established UNICEF Asia-Pacific Child Friendly Cities Network in February 2007. The network provides opportunities to share and learn from regional and international child friendly city sites.

5. The Community Services Committee resolved at its meeting of 13 March 2007 to endorse “the development of a framework and action plan to guide Council’s accreditation as a child friendly city”.

6. UNICEF has developed a Child Friendly Cities Framework (‘CFCF’) that provides a broad approach to developing a system of governance that is committed to children’s rights and tailored to specific local needs and practices. The framework outlines the participatory processes necessary to incorporate the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child into local government processes. Further, it identifies the key ‘building blocks’ required to ensure children’s active involvement, a children’s rights perspective in all relevant decision-making and equal rights of access to basic services.

7. The building blocks that local government needs to incorporate to achieve the desired outcomes for children include:

7.1. children’s participation - promoting children’s active involvement in issues that affect them; listening to their views and taking them into consideration in decision-making processes;

7.2. a child friendly legal framework – ensuring regulatory frameworks and procedures that consistently promote and protect the rights of children;

7.3. a city-wide children’s rights strategy – developing a detailed, comprehensive strategy or agenda for building a child friendly city based on the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child;

7.4. a children’s rights unit or coordinating mechanism – developing permanent structures in local government to ensure consideration of children’s perspectives;

7.5. child impact assessment and evaluation – ensuring that there is a systematic process to assess the impact of the law, policy and practice on children;

7.6. a children’s budget – ensuring adequate resource commitment and budget analysis for children;

7.7. a regular State of the City’s Children Report – ensuring sufficient monitoring and data collection on the state of children and their rights;

7.8. making children’s rights known – ensuring awareness of children’s rights among adults and children; and

7.9. independent advocacy for children – supporting non-governmental organisations and developing independent human rights institutions to promote children’s rights.

8. Melbourne’s status as an exemplary, sustainable world city will be enhanced if it is also a child friendly city in which the rights of children and young people are both recognised and ensured. Council can have a direct impact on improving the lives of the city’s children and young people by ensuring that the interests and needs of children and young people are incorporated into planning the future of Melbourne, its transport system, economic development, cultural development, housing and environmental improvements.

Key Issues

9. In 2007 Council engaged the Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood, University of Melbourne to undertake research that included consultations with children, young people, families and other key stakeholders and consultation with Councillors and Council staff to ascertain the current level of knowledge and engagement in child centred practices and to explore ways in which a whole of child approach could be effectively incorporated into council planning, policies and practice.
10. UNICEF has developed a Child Friendly Cities Framework. While the framework is available to
guide cities in their bid to become child friendly, it falls short of providing a specific accreditation
process. UNICEF and its relevant networks are now reviewing the processes required to formalise
accreditation.

11. The City of Melbourne is a member of the UNICEF Asia-Pacific Child Friendly Cities Network
which is now working towards developing criteria and a process for accreditation as part of the
broader review.

12. The City of Melbourne may undertake the following activities to ensure it will still proceed
towards a child friendly city until such a time as the revised criteria and accreditation process are
more fully developed:

12.1. the development of a children and young people’s charter of rights as part of the subsequent
Young People’s Policy and Municipal Early Years Plan;

12.2. as part of the next Municipal Early Years Plan the City of Melbourne will write a Children’s
plan for children by children;

12.3. work with the University of Melbourne to ensure key Council officers are trained to consult
with children ethically and respectfully; and

12.4. produce a “snapshot” report of the state of Melbourne’s children.

13. The above activities, along with Council’s continued involvement in the UNICEF Asia –Pacific
Child Friendly Cities Network, will ensure that Council will be best placed to consider
accreditation at the time when processes and criterion have been established.

Time Frame


Relation to Council Policy

15. The City of Melbourne – CFC Initiative is supported by Council policies and strategies including:
Melbourne Community Plan also outlines objectives to ensure that children’s interests are
advanced.

Consultation

16. In 2007, the Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood (CEIEC) at Melbourne
University was engaged to undertake a research project and develop an implementation plan to
guide the City to fulfil the UNICEF Child Friendly Cities accreditation requirements. The
achievement of accreditation will require the support and input of the whole of Council.

17. Extensive consultation was undertaken during June 2007 with children, young people, parents,
various child/youth focused services and organisations and City of Melbourne staff. An important
part of the consultation process was discussion with Councillors to outline the project, seek
feedback and input, and discuss, more broadly, ways in which Councillors could contribute to the
development of Melbourne as a CFC.
Government Relations

18. There are many opportunities presented by the City of Melbourne – Municipal Early Years Plan 2005 - 2009 to work with the State and Federal Governments. Council will continue to respond to and influence Federal and State guidelines in relation to children and families as documented in the Children First Policy (and respective state and federal policies for children and families). Relevant State and Federal Government departments will be informed and involved in the development of the City of Melbourne as a Child Friendly City where appropriate.

Finance

19. Funding for the activities has been included within the existing budget for the Families, Children and Youth branch.

Legal

20. No direct legal issues are raised by the recommendations from management.

Sustainability

21. This supports the City of Melbourne’s ongoing commitment to sustainability under the triple bottom line reporting framework. In particular, the development of the City of Melbourne as a Child Friendly City will contribute significantly to the development of social capital through the provision of opportunities to participate in family, community and social life, and opportunities for children and families to influence decisions and express opinions about their city and improving access to essential services.
FINANCE ATTACHMENT

CHILD FRIENDLY CITY

Funding of $9.516 million has been provided for in the 2008/2009 Budget for the activities of the Family, Children & Youth branch.

Joe Groher
Manager Financial Services
LEGAL ATTACHMENT

CHILD FRIENDLY CITY

No direct legal issues are raised by the recommendations from management.

Section 3C of the Local Government Act 1989 (“Act”) provides that:

“The primary objective of a Council is to endeavour to achieve the best outcomes for the local community having regard to the long terms and cumulative effects of decisions.”

Section 3C(2)(c) of the Act states that in seeking to achieve its primary objective, one facilitating objective that Council must have regard to is:

“to improve the overall quality of life of people in the local community.”

Further, Council must also have regard to the following facilitating objective under section 3C(2)(e) of the Act:

“to ensure that services and facilities provided by the Council are accessible and equitable.”

Kim Wood
Manager Legal Services