

Children's Arts Network Feasibility Study



This project is supported by



Responsible Officer: Bridget Robertson Arts for Health Officer, Community and Cultural Development Unit

This feasibility study was conducted in response to a Children and The Arts Report council report submitted and accepted by The City of Greater Bendigo in early 2008. The recommendations from that report were for council to:

- provide a 2008-09 budget allocation of \$15,000 to develop a Children's Art Program
- support the investigation of the feasibility of establishing a Children's Art Network with representation from a range of child focused agencies and organisations, art teachers, community artists and children, similar to that of the Bendigo Youth Arts Network

(Please refer to Appendices 4 attached outlining the report)

Feasibility Study RECOMMENDATIONS

- To develop a Children's Arts Network based on the current youth arts network model
- The Bendigo Youth Arts Network adjusts its target age range to align with world health organizations definition of the age range of young people which is 12-25yrs so as to leave no gaps in providing arts opportunities for the City's children and young people

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following City of Greater Bendigo units contributed to this report; Community and Cultural Development, Marketing and Major Events, Children and Family Services, Tourism and Visitor Information, The Bendigo Art Gallery and The Capital Theatre. Managers and Officers representing each unit provided valuable information on current Children's Arts Activities and considerations for the networks development.

INTRODUCTION

The City of Greater Bendigo's Community and Cultural Development and Children and Family Services units have recognised the need to increase opportunities and programs that involve children in the arts and to address a gap in services for children aged 6-12 (primary aged).

Council Officers have also identified a lack of programs to support young people between the ages of 6-12. Children and Family Services provide universal health services and early childhood services for children up to the age of eight years. Youth Services work with young people aged 12yrs-25yrs. The Bendigo Youth Arts Network target age is 16yrs-24yrs.

Creating creative opportunities for all children can provide a range of specific social, developmental and health benefits and will increase the profile of the City as a leader in arts for health through the Child Friendly City initiative. The City of Greater Bendigo has been

named Australia's first Child Friendly City under the UNICEF program. Council has a strong policy commitment to this and actively working to improve the city for children and celebrating valuing their unique contribution to the community life of Bendigo.

The recently developed Arts and Culture strategy recognises the relevance of the Child Friendly City status in developing creative opportunities for the community. The strategies identified under the Community Arts Facilities and Programs section of the strategy recommends the Council develop support and provide increased funding for a diverse range of annual programs linked with children, Neighborhood Houses, schools, and the Indigenous community.

BACKGROUND

The City of Greater Bendigo facilitates and supports a number of arts programs that enable greater access and appreciation for children. Please refer to Appendices 1 for further details of activities supported by The City of Greater Bendigo Community and Cultural Development unit, Marketing and major events unit, The Capital, The Bendigo Art Gallery, Tourism and Children and Family services Units.

Despite existing opportunities there is however a lack of coordination and linkages between programs and activities which limits the ability to provide continuous creative development and diversity of experiences and artistic mediums for the City's children.

An opportunity exists to model a children's arts network similar to the already established Bendigo Youth Arts Network currently supported by the City of Greater Bendigo's Community and Cultural Development Unit and Primary Care Partnerships

Bendigo Youth Arts Network

Established in 2001 The Bendigo Youth Arts Network was conceived by arts and health workers who identified alternative approaches to health promotion and sought to provide opportunities to improve young people's (16-24 years) connectedness and thus sense of control, using the arts as a medium for self-expression. The underlying principle of the Network is that there are significant health benefits for young people who engage in arts practice.

The Network provides a platform for collaborative, co-ordinated approaches to the application of arts in health promotion. This approach provides greater opportunities for young people to explore creative opportunities to develop connections with their community and improve self-confidence and self-worth.

The Network functions as a reference group and support for organisations to engage in arts practice, a forum for sharing ideas and creating links with resources, a forum for promoting art projects and initiatives, and as a vehicle for building capacity of organisations and individuals to engage in arts practice.

The key to success is a multi-disciplinary approach combined with the leadership, support and commitment of Bendigo-Loddon Primary Care Partnership and the City of Greater Bendigo, who provide ongoing support and resources to the Network.

The Network has a diverse membership of youth and community focused organisations and individuals who work together towards achieving a range of positive outcomes for young people. It seeks to be inclusive, and works toward ensuring a cross-sectoral representation of our community.

The Youth Arts Network provides a successful example for the Children's Arts Network and is an integral part of The City of Greater Bendigo's commitment to Arts for Health Initiatives.

Literature review

Today there is increasing awareness that the arts play a crucial role in improving the health and social wellbeing of communities.

Over fifty years ago, the World Health Organisation proposed that health is not merely the absence of illness but a complete state of physical, mental and social wellbeing dependent on a range of elements physical, psychological and social. A shift has been taking place in current thinking in healthcare and health promotion. The changing focus is moving from one about managing illness to one that promotes healthy lifestyles

Arts health and wellbeing recognises the value of the arts within a holistic approach to health and wellbeing. It is important to recognize health and cultural disciplines share many characteristics such as concern for wellbeing of individuals and communities and facilitating changes in attitude.

While the Australian 'arts in health' movement grew out of the community arts movement of the 1970s, Australian Network for Arts and Health (ANAH) formally acknowledges that arts and cultural practice has for a long time been integral to health and wellbeing of the Indigenous cultures of Australia.

Arts programs continue to attract interest from practitioners in diverse fields and increasingly arts networks are becoming important vehicles for cross-sectoral partnerships to develop and collaboration to take place. The interest is underpinned by an expanding body of scientific and qualitative evidence that highlights the positive impact that the arts can have on health and wellbeing – both for individuals and within a community setting.

At the heart of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (CYFA) is a unifying set of 'Best Interests principles' to protect children from harm, protect their rights and promote their development in culturally, age and gender appropriate ways. The Best Interests framework for vulnerable children and youth has been developed to support a consistent understanding of these principles promoting positive outcomes for all children

The Best Interests principles of the CYFA build on the foundations of the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act* which provides an overarching framework for promoting positive outcomes for all children, emphasising that:

- All children should be given the opportunity to reach their full potential and participate in society.
- Whilst parents are the primary nurturers of a child, society as a whole shares responsibility for children's wellbeing and safety.
- Planning and delivery of services should focus on sustaining and improving children's outcomes, including their safety, health, development, learning and wellbeing.

ANALYSIS

Meetings with key informants

Meetings were conducted in order to access what activities and programs are currently taking place, with a particular focus on activities currently facilitated and supported by the City of Greater Bendigo. The meetings were an opportunity to discuss the need for a children's arts network similar to the current Youth Arts Network model and gaps in service delivery. All attendees agreed establishing a children's arts network would be a valuable initiative and there was a commitment of support to the development and implementation of the network. Issues for consideration from those attending include

- Recognition of an identified gap in service delivery, activities and programs for young people and children aged 8-14
- Recognizing a different skillset is required when working with children and young people in this age bracket
- A need for the development of quality resources
- Understanding what the role and purpose of the network will be
- Identifying key stakeholders, audience and participants
- Consider that the arts are not always accessible for families who are not engaged in the arts community- finding new ways to engage children and families.
- State and federal governments looking at earlier intervention program especially with vulnerable young people, Refer to Framework for vulnerable children and youth
- Events and activities need to be accessible for children of all abilities
- Consider the legal requirements of working with this age group

Characteristics of an effective network

The literature identified an effective network would:

- Use existing community resources
- Establish partnerships
- Network with community members
- Create a safe environment
- Encourage family involvement
- Offer comprehensive services
- Successfully share information and resources
- Be linked with other relevant networks

The attendees identified the Children's arts network should :

- Be accessible to all community, organisations and individuals
- Be linked with other networks and groups like- The Youth Arts Network, Visual arts teachers network
- Strategically develop pathway opportunities for participation and engagement
- Create a web presence with information regarding arts opportunities for children and an e newsletter promoting activities/opportunities and events, website could potentially link with CFC children's website and develop links with other social networking sites such as twitter and facebook.
- Add value to what is already happening- assisting current programs with funding allocated
- Recognize the opportunity to create cultural community awareness from an early age
- Create opportunities for children to have high quality experiences and interaction with professional artists
- Advocate for a wider acknowledgment of the value of children's art work
- Promote and celebrate the creative talents of Bendigo children through exhibition and performance opportunities
- Support artists wanting to develop their practice working with children and develop examples of good practice, supporting and providing artists with good practice tools
- Develop partnership opportunities with and between network members

Proposed Strategy

It is envisaged a Children's Arts Network will be established in 2009. It will necessitate a partnership approach to its development with key stakeholders identified from City of Greater Bendigo to assist with its implementation.

The Children's for the Arts initiative will support additional children's arts activities and add value to current events and projects with the budget allocation from council in 2008/09.

The projects and activities supported in 2008/09 include

- Hidden Creatures animation workshops -Easter Exhibition and installation in the Fernery gardens
- Cultural Diversity week (in p/ship with Cultural Diversity officer)- busses for schools to attend and supported indigenous hip hop/dance activity and performance
- Reconciliation week(in p/ship with Cultural Diversity officer)- - busses for students to attend activities and supported indigenous music performance/interactive activity
- Kanga Art workshops (in p/ship with Kangaroo Flat Neighborhood Centre) - for primary aged Children,assisting with artist fees and materials
- Surface Jams workshop- hip hop music, dance, graffiti art (in p/ship with Hip hopopportunities) - assisted with materials costs for stencil and graffiti art and artist fees
- Long Gully Surface Jam stencil art, graffiti, dance workshops (in p/ship with Long Gully Neighborhood Centre)- - assisting with materials and artist fees
- Colour the Gully Project- (in p/ship with Long Gully Neighborhood Centre) a Public art project involving large painted panels and a meeting circle- assisting with workshops in the lead up to the project
- Bendigo Chamber choir community concert- assisting with equipment hire to engage local children's choirs
- Seeded postcards project- seeded postcards purchased to be used in conjunction with other events and activities
- National tree day (in p/ship with community environment officer)- Photogram and children's arts activities in conjunction with National Tree Day taking place in one of the fire affected areas of Long Gully
- National Threatened Species week(in p/ship with community environment officer)- - assisting with a colouring competition in the Advertiser children's pages highlighting local endangered species

The Model

It is proposed the Children's Arts Network will be modeled on the Bendigo Youth Arts Network model. The Bendigo Youth Arts Network is based on an art for health model, and is embedded in CCD practice and principles.

Key stakeholders

- Organisation
 - The City of Greater Bendigo:
 - Community and Cultural Development Unit (Arts for Health Initiative, Youth Services, Arts and Community Partnerships team, Community Environment team)
 - Children and Family Services Unit (Kids Character Carnival, Rural Access, Family Wellbeing)
 - Marketing and Major Events (The Capital, Art Gallery, Easter Festival, Major events)
 - Asset Planning and Design unit
- Community
 - Current Youth Arts Network Members who also work with Children aged 6-12yrs
 - Education Sector- Primary schools in The City of Greater Bendigo Municipality
 - Alternative education organizations and groups such as The Discovery Centre
 - Health sector
 - Arts Sector
 - Children and family service organizations

- Participants
 - Children aged 6-12
 - The Children Arts Network like the Youth Arts Network will also be targeting projects and initiatives to engage marginalized and more vulnerable children. Participants will be targeted through Network member organizations, primary schools and children and family services organizations

- Other similar service providers
 - There is not a children's arts network in the region and there is a great need for a more coordinated approach to develop new initiatives, support current ones and promote activities
 - There are a number of activities and initiatives engaging children in arts activities, please refer to appendices 1 outlining the current activities initiated and supported by the City of Greater Bendigo

Resources Required

Network Facilitation- 2 day per week

Project support- an annual budget allocation by council of \$15,000 per annum to add value to current programs and develop new initiatives

Promotional material- approximately \$1000 for design and printing of brochures

Steps in development/implementation

- Establish a steering group with representatives from CoGB units
- Develop a terms of reference
- Develop a plan of action and timeline
- Launch the network and promote to schools, orgs, groups, parents
- Develop web based info listing links to opportunities
- Develop a children's arts code of practice
- Commission the design of promotional material and brochure and publicise the network through an initial launch- possible at the old fire station coinciding with a children's art exhibition and performance?
- Consult with the community on future direction and focus
- Develop survey for children and parents, orgs and groups - what initiatives they would like to see developed, where the gaps are, and how the network can assist

Conclusion

The proposal to develop a Children's Arts Network is recommended as it has a number of advantages

- There is already a successful Youth Arts Network supported by The City of Greater Bendigo
- There is a commitment by The City of Greater Bendigo for its development
- There are cost savings by using the Bendigo Youth Arts network model and mechanisms for its implementation
- A children's arts network is the most effective way to support the community organizations, schools, and parents to increase children's participation in arts activities and celebrate the creation of children's art in The City of Greater Bendigo
- It would allow for early intervention for marginalized children and young people

REFERENCES

Clifford, Sally and Kaspari Jo, Dec 2003, "Australian Arts and Health", Art Work Magazine
Issue 57 pg 10-13

Victorian Government 2007, *The best interests framework for vulnerable children and youth*,
Department of Human Services.

Children's Art Initiative

Notes from Internal Meeting

Friday 31st October

In Attendance: Bridget Robertson, Maree McLachlan, Bridget Keena, Rosalie Rogers, Jenny McQuilkan, Beth Taylor, Leanne Fitzgibbon, Amanda Lonergan, Leanne Rosewall, Margot Feast, Jo McGann

Welcome and introductions

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the new children and the arts initiative adopted by council and the expansion of the youth arts officer position to arts for health officer to incorporate the new direction.

What is the Children's Art Initiative?

Refer to 'Children and the Arts' council report. Copy of the report was disseminated and can be obtained by emailing b.robertson@bendigo.vic.gov.au

Background information – Youth Arts Network. Discuss the potential/possibility to develop a similar model -children's art network

Refer to Youth Arts Network outline brochure for further information. Email Bridget for a copy if required.

It was discussed the potential of developing a Children's Arts Network similar to the youth arts network- everyone agreed this would be worthwhile.

Mapping- what is happening internally/externally in children's arts and other activities?

INTERNALLY (programs facilitated and supported by CoGB)

APPENDICE 1

Unit	Event/Program	Activity	Comments
Community and Cultural Development	Library Gardens Marker	A permanent marker will be placed in the library gardens acknowledging Dja Dja Wurrung people and Jarra Country	The project will engage local indigenous community and children to contribute and participate
	Cultural workshops	5 schools will be potentially involved in cultural workshops including dance/ lantern making/performance	The project is seeking funding at the moment. Project will be facilitated by Soong hi
	Cooking project	Intergenerational project to keep traditional recipes passing down	Initiated by a community member, the project would partner with Kaliaana school
	Out of the Cald	Members of the CALD and indigenous community sharing experiences and knowledge in schools	Project is currently seeking funding

	Hidden Creatures interactive exhibition (Easter)	An interactive exhibition of animated and sculptural creatures hidden in the Rosalind Park Fernery.	Held for the first time in 2008, would like to potentially include a workshop component for next year
	Youth Arts Network	A variety of arts based projects including Growing a Fringe Youth Arts Festival	
	Karen Community	new community, opportunity to work with	
	Arts and Cultural Strategy	A variety of arts Initiatives and programs identified	
	Temporary Public Art program-	- Screen art - Sculpture shows	White Hills gardens revamp – Kevin Walsh
	RAW Youth Art Awards	Annual awards held annually in youth week	
	Reconciliation Week	A program of performances/activities including the creation of a banner	
	NAIDOC Week	Range of activities including Poster Comp,	
	International Women's day	A day of cultural activities including arts and crafts held at Lake Weeroona	
	Cultural Diversity week	A week of performances and activities celebrating cultural diversity including decorating trams	
	Sister Cities +25 welcoming place	Youth Committee and developing relationship with primary schools	
	Neighborhood Houses and small towns	Supported through neighborhood liason officer (List of activities on table below of external activities)	
	Australia Day	Australia day flags project	
	Cultural Grants and Events Funding Program	Funds a number of arts and cultural activities in the community	
	Summer in the Parks	Movie and music nights Performances in small towns Workshops and initiatives by other orgs included in program	
Marketing and Major Events	Easter Festival	A range of activities over Easter Weekend	Potential to develop arts programming

	Bendigo Fashion Week	A range of activities	Bendigo Fashion week engages B.R.I.T and Bendigo Senior Secondary students
	Christmas in Bendigo	Range of activities including Carols and event in Rosalind park	10 primary schools engage with Christmas in Bendigo
	Events funding	Commercial Sponsorship funding focusing on regional prosperity growth and development of new events with specific guidelines and outcomes	
Tourism/Visitor Information Centre	School Holiday Program	Promoting local activities and events taking place during the school holidays	The program promotes local activities- ie Bendigo Pottery classes, discovery centre activities etc
	Visitor Information Centre Events	-Quirky Tales - One off workshops - Morse code permanent exhibition	A focus on promoting external events and activities catering for children of all ages Pod cast tours
	Post Office Gallery	Temporary and permanent displays/interactive	
	Tours	The Visitor Information Centre provides Town Hall tours and making a nation tours tailored to each groups specific needs	
Children and Family Services	Kids Character Carnival	free day of activities in the civic gardens for children including arts and crafts activities	Held during children's week. Would like to engage with artists to include more arts related activities
	Child friendly City initiative	Also includes Development of a children's website	will include interactive tools and information for children to access
	COGB Childcare Centre's	A range of activities take place daily in the centre's	
Youth Services	Youth Links	Recreational activities for young people aged 11-16 activities includes street surfer bus	
	First Base	First time young offenders program	linking YP's with activities in the community, working with police
	Freeza	Youth music initiative	Age 12-25
Art Gallery	School tours	Visits to gallery by schools including	

		workshops/tours	
	Young researches	4 week program for YP's aged 10-12 parents often become involved as well The program offers opportunity for schools to nominate children to become involved . Often children are mixing with other from different schools	
	Get into Art Day Art activities for ages 4-7yrs 7-14yrs	Range of free arts activities for ages 5-14 For Some participants it is there first visit to the art gallery	
	Visual Art Teachers network	A network established by Margot at the Gallery for primary teachers to share knowledge and skills	An important network with many opportunities for children's arts initiative
	Sunday family tours/Sunday Stories	Usually held on a Sunday afternoon including tour/workshops for children and families	
	Art Trail		
	Arty possum	Ages 4-8	
	Special tours workshops as part of temporary exhibition program	Specialised workshops are offered to various groups including young people of varying abilities	
The Capital	First Stages	A growing program of performances for children- family friendly	
	School engagement/education		
	Citizen of the year		

EXTERNAL ACTIVITES (the ones mentioned)

Appendice 2

Group/Organisation	Event/Activity	Comments
Agricultural Show	Bendigo/Heathcote Includes art and craft comps and displays	Many schools are involved in submitting and showing work particularly in regional/rural areas
Long Gully Neighborhood House	-After school program - School holiday program	Community development worker is youth focused
Mclvor Neighborhood House Heathcote-	Art and craft classes	Funding received has allowed classes to take place for children and young people late primary age
Eaglehawk Neighborhood House	-On going art activities -Art Comp	Recently held an art competition have a number of art activities that take place
Bendigo Neighborhood	Art and craft groups for an older	These groups potentially could mentor/introduce workshops for younger

House	demographic	participants
Kangaroo Flat Neighborhood House	Occasional activities taking place	Great need for further activities in the Kangaroo Flat area
Elevate	After school program run through the school	
Neighborhood renewal		
Golden Dragon Museum and Chinese Precinct	Various activities throughout the year. Finalizing program for the next 2 years	
Star Cinema	Holiday program and other activities including little big shots	
Eaglehawk Festival	Currently in hiatus could possible become part of Dahlia and Arts Festival	
Elmore Field days ag art	Wearable art outfits are made by rural communities- often receive entries by young people	
Mclvor Health	Youth worker supporting initiatives through Mclvor Neighborhood house	
Heathcote	Mud Brick Motely drama group	

Other organizations and groups of interest YMCA, YWCA, Art Teachers Network, LCMS, BDAC, Star Cinema, Education System, Centre Vic ESL, Fusion, Heathcote artists inc, Loddon Mallee womens health, Doxa School, Ease

Where are the gaps/issues?

- There is an identified gap in service delivery and activities and programs for young people aged 8-14
- Value seen in the need to share information and promotion of activities and events
- There is no family publication in Bendigo
- Development of quality resources important
- There are gaps in performing arts opportunities for this age group
- School holiday programs cut off age is usually grade 6. There exists a gap in providing school holiday program for those aged 12 and up
- The age group we have identified for the children's art network will have additional needs and these will need to be identified and considered
- Will the network be Advocating?
- Arts often operate in isolation
- Network needs an audience and identifying that audience
- Is Children's art limiting? Or are we talking about creativity
- Promotion and marketing of events important. How do people find out what is happening- school newsletters, library notice board, email, website, focus mag insert in Bendigo Addy, through services linked to info,
- The arts are not always accessible for families who are not engaged in the arts community- finding new ways to engage children and families.
- Younger people need a different approach to working
- State and federal governments looking at earlier intervention program especially with vulnerable young people
- Refer to Framework for vulnerable children and youth

- Easier access to children of this age group 8-14yrs
- A different and appropriate skillset is required working with this age group
- Internally there is a big gap regarding skillset to work with age group 8-14. Children and family services work with children aged 0-6yrs. Youth Services 12-26yrs and Youth Arts Network 16-26yrs
- Events and activities accessible for children of all abilities
- The need to develop adult resources for parents to access arts activities
- Travel is an issue particularly for young people
- Consider the legalities of working with this age group
- Who are the key stakeholders

Gathering Ideas/opportunities

- Information sharing and finding ways to share- ie facebook, twitter, myspace
- Library is a great resource for the community, could become a partnering organization
- Important to offer and continue to offer free events for children and families
- link with Margot and Art Gallery- children's art exhibition , develop young friends of the gallery, new visual arts teachers network
- Link into connecting communities +25 welcoming place
- Cyber presence- Website- potential opportunity exists to link with CFC children's website-
- On line generation- what opportunities exist
- Strategically develop pathway opportunities
- A web directory could be beneficial
- Creativity assists learning with No boundaries
- Link to child friendly cities initiative and assisting community to adopt
- Adding value to what is already happening- assisting current programs with funding allocated
- Schools are looking for opportunities to connect with the children with the greater community
- Hidden Creatures Easter exhibition project would like to include a workshop program for children in the lead up to Easter.
- Margot at The Art Gallery would like to stage a children's art exhibition
- Opportunity to create cultural community awareness from an early age and
- Extending creativity from the classroom- taking skills back to the school
- ABC website is a great resource for parents
- Developing an events calendar for children
- Resourced around families
- Many artists working with this group have an educational background
- Great age to work with – they are open, important to feel good about themselves
- Survey groups about what they want
- Artist in schools program important

The budget allocation- what would be the best ways to use the additional funding

It was identified in the meeting that there are a number of opportunities to add value to activities that are already taking place such as Hidden Creatures exhibition, children's art exhibition, children's website developed by CFC initiative

APPENDICE 3



OUTLINE BROCHURE

Bendigo Youth Arts Network aims to provide a platform for a coordinated approach to the development and delivery of arts projects for young people.

“Participation in creative activities can contribute to building healthier stronger communities”. Vic Health 02

FUNDAMENTALS & GOALS

The Network is committed to:

- Creative engagement of young people
- Fostering social connectedness and increased feelings of well being
- Integrating arts practice & health promotion into youth service delivery
- Strengthening capacity of organisations & community to engage in arts practice

PURPOSE & ROLE

- A reference group/support for organisations to engage in arts practice
- A forum for sharing ideas and creating links with resources
- A forum for promoting art projects and initiatives
- A vehicle for building capacity of organisations and individuals to engage in arts practice

MEMBERSHIP & BENEFITS

The Network seeks to be inclusive and works toward ensuring a cross-sectoral representation of our community.

Benefits for members include;

- Shared information
- Support for programs
- Sharing resources
- Peer support
- Opportunity to network
- Professional development
- Increased access to arts programs

How to get involved

Contact Arts for Health Officer

Bridget Robertson

City of Greater Bendigo 54346464

b.robertson@bendigo.vic.gov.au



APPENDICE 4

CHILDREN AND THE ARTS REPORT

This report was submitted and accepted by council in 2008

Author: Maree McLachlan

Responsible Director: Barry Secombe

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is for Council to consider options to strengthen and promote Bendigo as a child-friendly community through the development of initiatives that aim to provide greater opportunities for children to engage in the arts.

POLICY CONTEXT:

- *Being a child-friendly community by considering the needs of children*
- *We will create a great place and will do this by building creative communities and economies. Providing a diverse and vibrant arts and cultural program that challenges community thinking and encourages appreciation and participation.*
- *Respect and value the contribution of young people*

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The City of Greater Bendigo has been named Australia's first Child Friendly City under the UNICEF program. Council has a strong policy commitment to this and actively working to improve the city for children.

Arts programs that enable greater access and appreciation for children especially for the Indigenous community and disadvantaged youth are some of those being delivered across Greater Bendigo to meet current needs. There is also a wide range of programs for children on offer at the Bendigo Art Gallery, Discovery Science & Technology Centre, Central Deborah Gold Mine and Bendigo Pottery including a plethora of community events for children to enjoy.

The strong arts focus in Bendigo, the range of community events, and our Child Friendly City status provide an opportunity for the City to actively encourage, celebrate and acknowledge the creative talents of younger citizen.

The recently developed Arts and Culture strategy recognises the relevance of the Child Friendly City status in developing creative opportunities for the community,

The strategies identified under the Community Arts Facilities and Programs section of the strategy recommends the Council develop support and provide increased funding for a diverse range of annual programs linked with children, Neighbourhood Houses, schools, and the Indigenous community.

REPORT:

It is widely acknowledged that involvement in arts and cultural activities has a positive impact on the well being of individuals and the health of communities.

“One of the arts’ most powerful contributions to health is that they reflect and create an inclusive sense of community. There is now considerable evidence that the stronger people feel this sense of belonging, the healthier they are. (Vic Health)

“An active engagement with the arts, whether as a participant, or as a viewer, is an effective way for individuals and communities to address issues of public health, experience has shown that in supportive community projects that the arts are effective in health promotion”. (Sarah Chilvers, Program Director of Health and Social Development at the Vancouver Foundation)

An example of these principles in action is that of the Bendigo Youth Arts Network. The Network model has been successful in developing partnerships across the health and education sector, and in delivering an integrated, sustainable arts program for the community.

YOUTH ARTS NETWORK

The Network was conceived by arts and health workers who identified alternative approaches to health promotion and sought to provide opportunities to improve young people’s (16-24 years) connectedness and thus sense of control, using the arts as a medium for self-expression. The underlying principle of the Network is that there are significant health benefits for young people who engage in arts practice.

The Network provides a platform for collaborative, co-ordinated approaches to the application of arts in health promotion. This approach provides greater opportunities for young people to explore creative opportunities to develop connections with their community and improve self-confidence and self-worth.

The Network functions as a reference group and support for organisations to engage in arts practice, a forum for sharing ideas and creating links with resources, a forum for promoting art projects and initiatives, and as a vehicle for building capacity of organisations and individuals to engage in arts practice.

The key to success is a multi-disciplinary approach combined with the leadership, support and commitment of Bendigo-Loddon Primary Care Partnership and the City of Greater Bendigo, who provide ongoing support and resources to the Network.

The Network has a diverse membership of youth and community focused organisations and individuals who work together towards achieving a range of positive outcomes for young people. It seeks to be inclusive, and work toward ensuring a cross-sectoral representation of our community.

ISSUES

City of Greater Bendigo's Community and Cultural Development and Children and Family Services units have recognised the need to increase opportunities and programs that involve children in the arts.

Despite existing opportunities there is however a lack of coordination and linkages between programs which limits our ability to provide continuous creative development and diversity of experiences and artistic mediums for the City's children.

Council Officers have also identified a lack of programs to support young people between the ages of 8-12. Children and Family Services provide universal health services and early childhood services for children up to the age of eight years and target ages for Youth Services are 12-25.

Creating creative opportunities for all children can provide a range of specific social, developmental and health benefits and will increase the profile of the City as a leader in arts for health through the Child Friendly City initiative.

Over the past few years, The City of Greater Bendigo has strengthened its relationship with the small townships and rural communities within the municipality. Whilst we are working to engage the adults through the district planning process, small township meetings, community grant programs etc, there have been no specific programs developed to engage with children living outside the urban area. Art provides a universal medium which rural children can engage just as fully as city based children.

Events in the city provide many potential opportunities for participation in, and demonstration of, children's art. Some events that could be enriched through the increased participation of children include the Easter Festival, Summer in the Parks and the Kids Character Carnival.

SUMMARY

There is real potential to increase health and wellbeing outcomes for children living within the municipality through increased collaboration across various units of City of Greater Bendigo and through the development of a network (similar to the Youth Arts Network model) to bring together all those agencies with an interest in the creative development of children.

Council officers also propose the following initiatives for consideration;

- Develop and implement a new Children's Art Program for children aged between 8-12 years of age. This would be a joint initiative between Family and Children's Services, Youth Services, Community and Cultural Development and Marketing and Major Events (specifically the Art Gallery and Capital Theatre).
- Explore the feasibility and community interest in establishing a Children's Arts Network comprising representation from a range of agencies and organisations, art teachers and community artists using a model similar to that of the Bendigo Youth Arts Network.
- Promote and celebrate the creative talents of Bendigo children through the hosting of an annual Children's Art exhibition at Dudley House or in Hargreaves Mall. Children's performing art could also be showcased through venues such as the Old Fire Station and through the City's iconic events.

- Promote Health and Wellbeing outcomes associated with increased participation in the Arts and Children Friendly City Initiative.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

A City of Greater Bendigo Children's Art Program would be established for 2008-09 and would require a budget of \$15,000.

The use of Dudley House and or Fire Station for a two week exhibition or performance program would normally incur a hire fee. Council could waive the hire fees for use of these facilities.

The development of a Children's Art Network would require allocated staff time from the Community and Cultural Development, Children and Family Services, Youth Services, and Marketing and Major Events Units.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Council

- provide a 2008-09 budget allocation of \$15,000 to develop a Children's Art Program
- support the investigation of the feasibility of establishing a Children's Art Network with representation from a range of child focused agencies and organisations, art teachers, community artists and children, similar to that of the Bendigo Youth Arts Network
- agree to waive the usual hire fees for Dudley House and the Old Fire Station for annual exhibition or performance to showcase children's art.