

# Melton Best Start Early Years Partnerships Team

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# Who are we?



- Playgroups
  - Community
  - Pop up
  - Smalltalk - supported
- Imagination Magic
- Access to Early Learning
- Best Start

# What is Best Start?

Best Start aims to give every child the best start in life. The initiative works towards this by improving children's learning and development and encouraging agencies and services to work together to address challenges faced by families and communities.

Best Start focuses on supporting children and families experiencing vulnerability, and increasing the participation of all First Nations children in universal early childhood services.

[ccch.org.au/our-work/project/best-start/](http://ccch.org.au/our-work/project/best-start/)

# Primary outcomes of Best Start



Children **engage** and **participate** in early childhood education (kindergarten and supported playgroups) and enter school as confident and involved learners

Children and families **actively engage with MCH services**, attending key age and stage visits to optimise health, wellbeing, safety, learning and development

# Why is this issue important?

Every year, about 18.5% of children from Australia's lowest socioeconomic quintile enter school developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains for the [Australian Early Development Census](#).

This is almost three times the rate for children in the highest socioeconomic quintile (6.5%).

In recent years the gap between the poorest and wealthiest communities has increased.

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# Demographic overview

The estimated population of the City of Melton in 2023 was



206,070

The population of the City of Melton is expected to be

288,179 by 2031 & 440,142 by 2051

The City of Melton was the 2nd fastest growing municipality in Victoria, and 4th fastest growing in Australia



1.2%

were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, higher than the Greater Melbourne average of 0.7%

The City of Melton is ranked 8th across Victoria for people seeking asylum



35.7%

of people in the City of Melton were born overseas

Between 2016-2021 this increased by

23,325 people



Top 3 countries of birth outside of Australia



It's estimated that approximately 9.2% are LGBTQIA+



5.3% reported needing assistance in their day-to-day lives due to age or disability

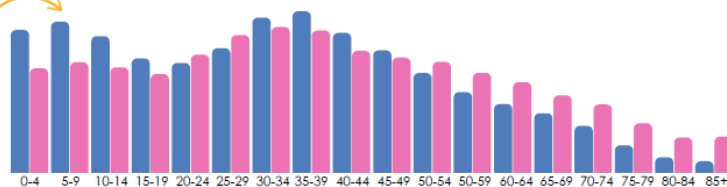


The median age in the City of Melton was

33



64 babies are born in the City of Melton each week



4.7%

did not speak English at all, or don't speak it well

39%

speak a language other than English at home

Punjabi 5.9%  
Filipino/Tagalog 2.9%  
Vietnamese 2.5%



Western (Roman) Catholic

27.3%



Islam

6.4%



Sikhism

5.3%



Hinduism

5.2%



No religion

24.2%



Families

81.5%



Single lone person households

16.5%



Group households

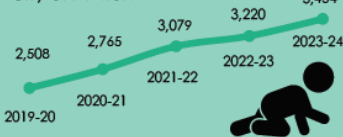
2%

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# Childhood development

New birth notices in the City of Melton



In 2023-24 there were

**1,427**

first-time mothers, up from **972** in 2019-20

**9.3%**

of babies were born prematurely compared to **8.5%** across Victoria



of babies were born with low birthweight, compared to **6.7%** in Greater Melbourne

**96.5%**

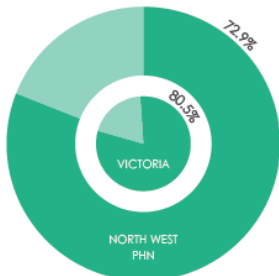
were fully immunised at age one



**92.9%**

were fully immunised at age three

Attendance at at least one antenatal care visit in the first trimester



**37.6%**

of infants were breastfed up to 3 months old, compared to **49.4%** in Victoria.

**2.3%**

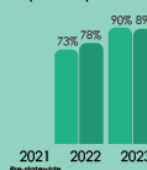
of children aged 0-4 years required assistance due to disability, compared to **1.4%** in Greater Melbourne



**2.7%** of the population was enrolled in pre-school, compared to **2.2%** in Greater Melbourne



3 year old kinder participation

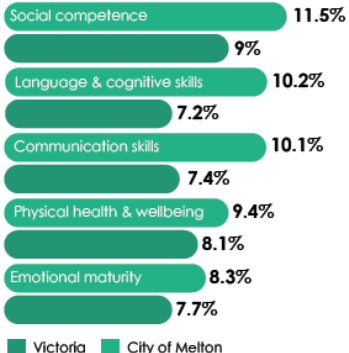


4 year old kinder participation

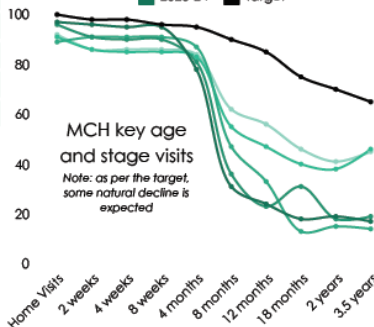


Pre-student roll out  
Victoria City of Melton

Children in the City of Melton were found to be vulnerable in the areas of



2019-20 2020-21 2021-22 2022-23 2023-24 Target



**483**

families were seen as part of the Enhanced MCH Program in 2023-24, up from **451** in 2022-23 but lower than **609** in 2019-20



**17.1%**

of year 5, 8 and 11s in Brimbank Melton reported high levels of psychological distress, higher than **20.4%** across Victoria

**8.5%**

of children at school entry reported emotional or behavioural difficulties, higher than **7.1%** in Victoria



**18.9%**

of year 4-6 students reported being bullied at school, higher than **17.1%** in Victoria.



**63.8%**

of children in Brimbank Melton were read to by a family member every day, compared to **66%** in Victoria

Vulnerable cohorts



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# How does Best Start work in Melton?

Best Start is based on partnerships with local agencies and service providers to improve the outcomes for children.

**The Melton Vulnerable Children Partnership**

**Melton and Moorabool Early Years Aboriginal Cultural Safety Working Group**

Tender enough to feel  
Present enough to witness  
Humble enough to listen  
Courageous enough to act  
Accountable enough to change

@prentishemphill





# 2025 short-term outcomes

## Service Continuity and Collaboration

Encompasses information sharing and communication between services; referral to and from other services; transitions between services, and integrated case planning. Also considers levels of collaboration between partnership members.

## Active Outreach and Engagement

Special efforts, including outreach, are made to reach and engage Aboriginal families and families experiencing vulnerability, e.g., those with limited social networks or limited trust or interaction with child and family services

# Our approach

Best Start partnerships use an improvement science approach to increase participation in universal early years services.

This involves exploring the root causes of low participation, identifying possible solutions and then testing these through multiple Plan-Do-Study Act (PDSA) cycles.

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# Quality improvement

Best Start uses a quality improvement approach to implementation, with rapid cycles to develop, test and measure small practice changes. As changes are shown to be successful, they're applied throughout a site.

Best Start uses evidence and data to more effectively identify and address barriers to participation in services, and to measure the results of the small practice changes.

Facilitators and partners use an online portal with community data dashboards, customisable for each site, intended to help facilitators and advisors to understand progress in their community.

[ccch.org.au/our-work/project/best-start/](http://ccch.org.au/our-work/project/best-start/)

# Examples of improvement trials 2024

- Completed 30 PDSAs in total for 2024 trialling 15 change ideas.
- Connect with local Primary schools to promote and support collaboration with EY services - this change idea was trialled late in the year following work from the kinder engagement team and best start facilitator. The meetings held and connections made will better support transitions and information sharing moving forward.
- Connecting Families to MCH service – this change idea had two very successful PDSA trials run this year. These PDSAs were to connect families in an isolated area with high levels on vulnerabilities and noted family violence. MCH service did not have a presence in the area until new community building was established, and many children were reported by supported playgroups facilitators and kindergarten educators as being behind in KAS visits and presenting with developmental concerns.

# Domains of effective quality improvement

The Best Start Network has identified and co-designed six domains of effective quality improvement:

- 1.Shifting your mindset:** Being curious and open to change and learning.
- 2.Developing technical knowledge and skills:** Using data and quality improvement tools to monitor and support progress.
- 3.Creating buy-in:** Engaging stakeholders to become active participants by enabling them to see 'what's in it for them'.
- 4.Deepening relationships:** Developing and sustaining genuine engagement through communication, acknowledgement and authenticity.
- 5.Building the capacity of others:** Supporting emerging quality improvement practitioners to build their capacity and confidence to do and lead the work.
- 6.Practicing professional self-care:** Being watchful of morale and workload, and using strategies such as reflection to maintain wellbeing.

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# Best Start domains



Source: Best Start

# Wicked problem

## 1. Developing technical knowledge and skills:

Using data and quality improvement tools to monitor and support progress.

## 2. Creating buy-in:

Engaging stakeholders to become active participants by enabling them to see 'what's in it for them'.

Problems whose solution requires a great number of people to change their **mindsets and behavior** is likely to be a wicked problem

# Impacts and achievements

- Best Start understands that improving outcomes requires the provision of support and care to families from a child's birth.
- Best Start works with partners on the ground to ensure children and their families navigate maternal and child health services, supported playgroup, child protection, child health services, early start kindergarten, and 3- and 4-year-old kindergarten in a seamless, supportive and culturally safe way.
- By using quality improvement, Best Start helps local partners to identify, test and scale small changes to their practice, ensuring localised and bespoke solutions to increase kindergarten participation.

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# Join us!

# // **BEST** START

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