



Save the Children

The Wellbeing of Children and Young People

EAST GIPPSLAND REPORT 2018



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FOREWORD

It is with great pleasure that I write the foreword to *The Wellbeing of Children and Young People – East Gippsland Report 2018*.

This report is a follow-up to *State of East Gippsland's Children & Youth Report*, the first snapshot produced in 2013 by Good Beginnings Australia – which Save the Children merged with in 2015.

The first report, developed through a range of consultations across the region, told a local story of wellbeing. It provided a measurement of how children in East Gippsland were faring at the time – where the region was doing well and where it required further attention. It also provided a framework to track progress and a tool for future planning to ensure the best outcomes for the future adults in the region.

The response to the 2013 report was the establishment of the Children's Wellbeing Initiative – East Gippsland, a program using a collective impact framework to improve children's wellbeing. With leadership from the Children's Wellbeing Collective – a partnership of organisations from the community, health and education sectors – the program aims to strengthen and build collaborative community responses to the needs of children and youth in East Gippsland.

Save the Children is extremely proud to lead this work. To harness community resources to improve environments for children and families in the region – so they can grow up healthy, happy and safe with a prosperous future.

The Children's Wellbeing Initiative facilitates community responses in five priority areas. These have been developed based on population level data, feedback from services and families, and research about risk and protective factors for children and young people.

The five priority areas include:

1. Children with additional needs
2. Children's social & emotional wellbeing
3. Family violence prevention
4. Substance abuse prevention
5. Service access.

The Wellbeing of Children and Young People – East Gippsland Report 2018 highlights there are some positive shifts for children in the region. It is promising to see improvements in the areas we are working in, however it would be premature to attribute these changes directly at the Children's Wellbeing Initiative at this point. The outcomes of the Children's Wellbeing Initiative are long-term. The report points to some significant challenges for the community to tackle. These challenges – requiring collaborative action and effort – include school readiness, breastfed babies to six-months and beyond, family violence, and the number of children and young people who experience bullying and are a victim of crime. Whilst there are promising outcomes to date and we have made progress in filling data gaps, we still need to access data at a local level to track intermediate changes.

Every organisation and community member in East Gippsland has a role to play in turning these challenges around – combining efforts to create positive change and really focus on the wellbeing of children and young people. I look forward to seeing what we can achieve together.

Save the Children is committed to producing this report every five years to review progress and to continue to shine a light on the wellbeing of children and young people. I am pleased to present the 2018 report, and look forward to the next one – to reporting on the progress made in improving the wellbeing of children and young people in East Gippsland.

Paul Ronalds
CEO Save the Children Australia

WHY THE CHILDREN'S WELLBEING INITIATIVE?

The Children's Wellbeing Initiative- East Gippsland is the community response to the *State of East Gippsland's Children & Youth Report* (Good Beginnings Australia, 2013). Furthermore, a range of literature highlights the importance of children's wellbeing and has informed the program logic and development of the Children's Wellbeing Initiative. The research focuses on two areas: why efforts are channelled towards children's wellbeing, and how the Children's Wellbeing Initiative is informed by collective impact frameworks (stakeholders working together) and systems thinking (how many parts and issues in the community are linked and influence each other).

Emerging research shows the importance of supportive environments for children from pregnancy to age six to enable wellbeing. Moore (2014) states that a different approach is needed to address early childhood vulnerability due to the complexity of addressing poor outcomes for children. In addition to this, research regarding risk and protective factors for children and young people indicates factors which influence wellbeing at multiple levels: child, family, and the community (Toumbourou, Olsson, Rowland, Renati, & Hallam, 2014).

This research is further reinforced by a body of literature that points to the need and value of early intervention and prevention for improved outcomes for children and young people (Grey, 2014; Moore and West, 2016). This reinforces the ethics of improving environments for children from a human rights perspective and an economic perspective (Bartik, 2011).

Secondly, the Children's Wellbeing Initiative is informed by collective impact, systems theory and complexity concepts. Collective impact is a planned development with a central premise of stakeholders pledging to collectively work together in an ongoing way to tackle social problems through changing behaviours (Garber and Adams, 2017). Five elements of collective impact have been identified; "a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and backbone support organisations" (Kania and Kramer in Garber and Adams, 2017). There are examples of collective impact approaches leading to continued improvements. This has seen an increase in the approach being used to address community issues to address community issues (Walzer, Weaver and McGuire, 2016).w

The program logic for the Children's Wellbeing Initiative has been derived from the research regarding the importance of early childhood development and the effectiveness of using a collective impact framework to address complex community issues. Because of the complexity of the issues of addressing children's wellbeing, the Children's Wellbeing Initiative has also drawn on systems theory to assist in engaging community and understanding complex issues, such as family violence.

The Children's Wellbeing Initiative embraces the following practice approaches (principles for Save the Children Australia):

1. Strengths-based;
2. Place-based and locally-led and owned;
3. Sustainable with community capacity building;
4. Child-focussed, family centred;
5. Culturally safe & competent;
6. Trauma informed;
7. Inclusive & collaborative;
8. Evidence-informed & outcomes based.

The following outlines the role Save the Children has in the Children’s Wellbeing Initiative:

- Collecting data and reporting on the wellbeing of children and young people every four years;
- Producing annual reports for the collective, stakeholders and community;
- Coordinating stakeholder engagement and facilitating partnerships;
- Supporting priority areas and actions.

The Children’s Wellbeing Initiative at Save the Children gives leverage to the priorities identified by the Children’s Wellbeing Collective (CWC). The CWC is a partnership of organisations from across the community, health and education sectors working together to build and strengthen collective actions in priority areas. The CWC have updated the East Gippsland Early Years Plan and developed short-term action plans. A review of the work of the CWC found that 80% of actions identified were completed by partners.

The following outlines the long-term, intermediate and short-term outcomes that the Children’s Wellbeing Initiative and the Children’s Wellbeing Collective are working towards

Long-term outcomes (in the East Gippsland Early Years Plan):

1. Our children are healthy, developing well, and safe and secure;
2. Our families are able to meet the needs and promote the development of their children;
3. Our communities are accepting and supportive of all families;
4. Our services are cooperative, integrated, inclusive and deliver high quality.

Intermediate outcomes (in the Children’s Wellbeing Collective Action Plan):

1. Children with additional needs get what they need to support their development;
2. Families are able to support children’s social and emotional wellbeing;
3. Strengthen families to prevent alcohol and drug abuse;
4. Strengthen families to demonstrate respectful relationships;
5. Family Ready Agencies / Organisations improve access and support for families.

Short-term outcomes:

1. Improved capacity to respond to priority areas;
2. Engagement in priority areas by stakeholders;
3. Increased knowledge for improved practice in priority areas;
4. Increased knowledge and information for parents and carers.

INTRODUCTION TO THE DATA

This report presents a snapshot of the Wellbeing of Children and Young People East Gippsland in 2018.

The first report, *State of East Gippsland's Children & Youth Report* (Good Beginnings Australia, 2013) was developed with feedback from the community about what key indicators tell us about the wellbeing of children and young people. These indicators were identified by over 60 key stakeholders and community members from across the region in 2012. From this process, 24 indicators were identified over five domains representing the journey from birth to 24 years. The five wellbeing domains are: 1. *Developing Well*; 2. *Safe and Secure*; 3. *Happy and Healthy*; 4. *Engaged, Learning and Achieving*; and 5. *Active Citizens*. These domains are aligned with The Nest — a national plan for child and youth wellbeing.

The Nest Action Agenda is Australia's first evidence-based framework for national child and youth wellbeing (0-24 years). It focuses across six wellbeing domains: 1) Loved and Safe; 2) Material Basics; 3) Healthy; 4) Learning; 5) Participating; and 6) Positive Sense of Culture & Identity. The Nest aims to align efforts to improve the wellbeing of children and youth aged 0-24 years across Australia. It collectively identifies the outcomes that we want to achieve for children and youth; the most effective prevention-focused and evidence-based ways to achieve these; and how we can best align our collective efforts to achieve them (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, ARACY, 2014).

The majority of data presented in this report is regularly updated data that is readily available in the East Gippsland local government area (LGA). Looking at local data over time paints a picture of what is happening for children and young people. A significant amount of the data is quantitative. Whilst numbers are important, the other aspect to the data is qualitative.

Hearing the stories of families, children and young people helps to present a holistic understanding of what is actually going on. This is something to be considered when looking at the data and we hope that this report can stimulate storytelling in respective communities. This report presents the 'what?' We need to ensure that we also hear the 'why?' when working in East Gippsland's communities. The work of the Children's Wellbeing Initiative and Collective has a focus on moving from the 'what' to the 'why?' We address the the question of 'how' in partnership with communities.

To compare East Gippsland with other communities, we use Victorian State data and Australia-wide. Where we are doing well compared with Victoria or wider Australia there is a blue tick; where we need to improve there is a red cross. We have used blue or red arrows to indicate whether we have improved or declined over time. A yellow equals sign indicates that we have stayed about the same, or the difference is not statistically significant. A number of data gaps identified in the 2013 report have been amended in this report, however some still remain.

The data is reported in figures and also in words. Behind the words and figures are children, young people and families. Each one with their own experience, background, culture and values. Each one equally as important as the other. We need to bear in mind that the measures in this report are part of the story and not the whole story.

The measures used in this report reflect systems developed by Western culture. We need to bear this in mind thinking about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families. Culture is such an important consideration in how our lives operate and how we see the world. We need to think about how we capture the strengths, knowledge and culture of Aboriginal Elders, community and children in this story.

NEED TO IMPROVE	DOING WELL	IMPROVEMENT	DECLINE	ABOUT THE SAME	DATA GAP IDENTIFIED
					



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Wellbeing of Children and Young People East Gippsland Report 2018 highlights that there are some positive shifts in the population level data for children in East Gippsland. It also provides additional data at a Local Government Level (LGA) for East Gippsland which points to challenges for the community to tackle. Changes to data-gathering means making a direct comparison with the previous report is not possible.

Areas in which East Gippsland Children and Young People are doing well, compared to the state average:

DOING WELL

Compared to the Victorian average:

- High percentages of children are having their MCH checks at nearly all ages
- Higher numbers of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children at all ages are having MCH checks
- A high percentage of children in far East Gippsland are receiving their MCH three-years-and-six-months check
- Children's emotional maturity at school entry level has improved
- There is a slightly higher proportion of five to 13-year-old children who did 60 minutes of physical activity every day
- In East Gippsland and Wellington Shires there is a higher proportion of newborn to four-year-old children who are read to by a family member every day
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students in Year Three in East Gippsland are above Victoria's average in numeracy (NAPLAN)
- There are significantly higher rates of young people with an apprenticeship or traineeship
- The rates of young people in employment after Year 12 is double the rate for those State-wide
- The unemployment rates of young people aged 15 to 19 years old are significantly less than Victoria
- There is a higher percentage of residents in East Gippsland who remained at the same address both one year ago and five years ago compared with Victoria-wide

In comparison with the previous report, there have been some statistically significant improvements in the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data for East Gippsland from 2012 to 2015. Significant decreases have occurred in the percentage of children who are developmentally vulnerable in physical health and wellbeing (although still higher than Victoria as a whole) and in terms of emotional maturity. There has also been a significant decrease in the percentage of children from 2012 to 2015 who are developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains (out of five domains) and this is now similar to State-wide figures.

IMPROVING

While still below the Victorian average, these areas are showing improvements over time:

- While children's physical health and wellbeing, social competence, communication skills and general knowledge when starting school has improved from 2012-2015, there are still more children in East Gippsland who are developmentally vulnerable than the Victorian average
- The number of 19-year-olds completing Year 12 or equivalent is increasing
- The percentage of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people staying at school from Year Seven to Twelve appears to be increasing and warrants further investigation to confirm this
- More young people who leave school are experiencing a successful transition to education, training or employment

OUR CHALLENGES

Compared to Victorian averages, we face the following challenges for children and young people:

- The percentage of children arriving at school who are developmentally vulnerable in: physical health and wellbeing, language and cognitive skills, communication skills and general knowledge starting school are higher
- The number of babies being breastfed at six-months-old is significantly lower
- The percentage of four-year-olds attending kindergarten has been decreasing since 2011, this requires further exploration as outlined in indicator 16
- The number of family violence incidences are higher, along with a high number of children and young people who are present at family violence incidences
- The number of children and young people who are a victim of crime continues to be much higher
- The rates of children who report being bullied in Year Five to Nine are much higher
- The percentage of children at high risk of emotional and behavioural difficulties is greater
- Parents who have concerns about oral health are higher, children in East Gippsland have higher rates of teeth decayed, missing or filled and the proportion of children who have visited the dentist is now lower than the Victorian average
- There is a higher percentage of children who have additional needs
- The rising number of child protection substantiations needs attention

The following compares a sample of East Gippsland students with Australian students and shows that:

- Year Eight East Gippsland students report a significantly higher level of depressive symptoms compared with the same group Australia-wide
- Students report a decline in coping with stress from Year Six to Ten
- Compared with students across Australia, Year Eight East Gippsland students report significantly lower levels of emotional control
- East Gippsland students report significantly higher rates of lifetime and recent alcohol use

DATA GAPS FILLED

Since the previous report in 2013, data is now available for some of the identified data gaps;

- Children are eating well – data was sourced from the *Victorian Child Health and Wellbeing Survey* (accessed from VCAMS)
- Children who have good oral health – data was sourced from *Bairnsdale Regional Health Service and the School Entrant Health Questionnaire* (accessed from VCAMS) to provide a snapshot
- Number of young people impacted by mental health issues – data was sourced from the *Communities that Care- East Gippsland Youth Survey* (Cooney, Smith & Toumbourou, 2015) and the *Middle Development Index highlighted concerns about coping, emotional control and overall wellbeing*
- Substance misuse – families and young people. Data was sourced from the *Communities that Care- East Gippsland Youth Survey* (Cooney, Smith & Toumbourou, 2015). Data from the *Department of Education (2016, SEHQ)* indicates a percentage of alcohol and drug related problems in families

It has been valuable to have access to the *Communities that Care – East Gippsland Youth Survey* (Cooney, Smith & Toumbourou, 2015) and the *Middle Development Index* trial results. This data helps to tell the story of what is happening for young people as it presents a sample of their experiences living in East Gippsland

- Families support their children's learning

Parents reading to their children for Outer Gippsland (East Gippsland and Wellington Shires) Data was sourced from the *Victorian Child and Adolescent Monitoring System* (VCAMS). Whilst this is broader than East Gippsland it helps to give an idea of how many parents read to children aged under five-year-olds.

OUR DATA GAPS

The following are data gaps that still remain for the twenty-four indicators:

- Parents attending parent education and/or support programs
- East Gippsland residents who remained in public housing
- Number of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children attending four-year-old kindergarten

EAST GIPPSLAND - COMMUNITY PROFILE

The following provides a picture of the community environment in which our children and young people grow up. The environment in which children experience life has a lasting impact on their capacity and wellbeing.

The Landscape

East Gippsland Shire is located in the eastern corner of Victoria, up to 550 kilometres from Melbourne. It covers 21,051 square kilometres and is the second largest municipality in Victoria. The main towns of the Shire are: Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance, Orbost, Paynesville, Omeo and Mallacoota. Bairnsdale has the largest population and is also the regional retail and service centre. The geography of the area is complex, featuring large areas of national park and state forest, an extensive coastline and productive farmland. Mountains, rivers and lakes are barriers to easy travel.

Distance between major towns in kilometres:

	BAIRNSDALE	CANN RIVER	LAKES ENTRANCE	OMEO	ORBOST	SWIFTS CREEK	MALLACOOTA
Bairnsdale	.	174	35	131	97	100	250
Cann River	174	.	139	272	77	241	76
Lakes Entrance	35	139	.	139	62	105	215
Omeo	131	272	136	.	195	31	348
Orbost	97	77	62	195	.	164	153
Swifts Creek	100	241	105	31	164	.	317
Mallacoota	250	76	215	348	153	317	.



The unique geography and overall size of East Gippsland makes transport an on-going issue for families and children to travel easily around the region. This in turn creates challenges in accessibility to critical services such as health care, education and employment. Whilst some improvement to transport access has occurred over the last few years, particularly with extra services per day from Orbost to Bairnsdale, those in remote areas still have limited or no access to public transport.

The Population

In 2016 there were 45,040 people residing in East Gippsland. The population of East Gippsland has increased nearly seven percent between 2011 and 2016 – an increase of 2844 people. Children and young people under 25-years-old make up 25% of the total East Gippsland population in 2016, a two percent decrease. The older cohorts, those over 65, have increased by 4000 people to make-up 45% of the population.

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people make up nearly three percent of the East Gippsland population or 1288 people. This can be compared with the Victoria wide average of nearly one percent. The total Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population is comprised of 54% of children and young people under 25. Those over 65-years-old make up just six percent of the total Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population.

	0 - 4	5-14	15-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-64	65 +	TOTAL
Total population	2228	4924	2292	1822	3817	4278	12978	12697	45040
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population	145	321	131	95	140	113	267	83	1288

Source:ABS Census 2016, East Gippsland Community Profile.

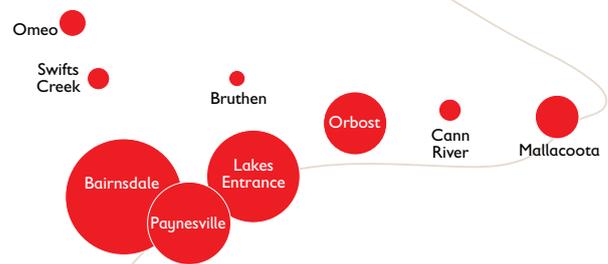


Main Population Centres:

MAIN POPULATION CENTRES BY AGE	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24
Bairnsdale (total population 7580)	447	426	387	431	460
Orbost (total population 2227)	100	152	134	120	76
Lakes Entrance (total population 4810)	220	231	238	242	182
Paynesville (total population 3840)	125	148	137	150	99
Omeo (total population 406)	27	18	23	15	16
Swifts Creek (total population 278)	9	26	17	19	7
Mallacoota (total population 1063)	34	37	55	42	15

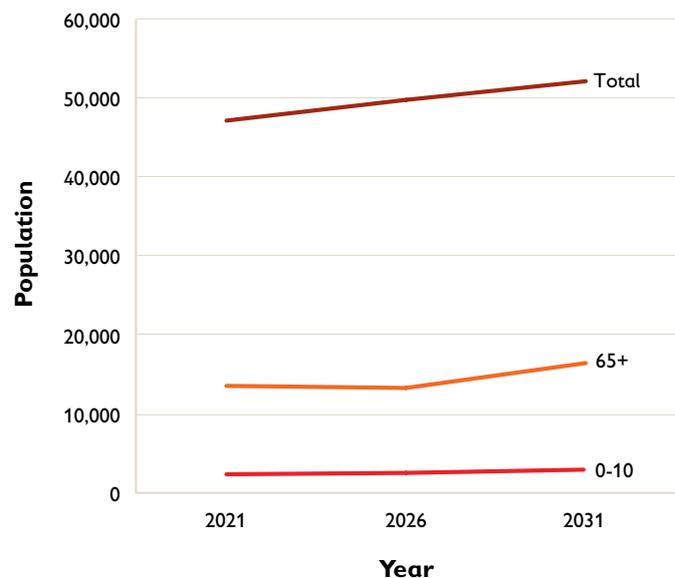
Source: ABS Census 2016, Quick Stats, State Suburbs Collection.

The population in Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance, Paynesville and Mallacoota increased between 2011-2016, while in Omeo, Orbost and Swifts Creek, populations have declined. Major Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population centres are Orbost, Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance, Lake Tyers, Nowa Nowa and Cann River (Source: ABS Census 2016, Quick Stats, State Suburbs Collection).



Projected Population

AGE GROUP	2021	2026	2031
0-4	2179	2324	2445
5-9	2357	2446	2599
10-14	2742	2562	2669
15-19	2563	2697	2520
20-24	2146	2182	2270
25-34	2146	2182	2270
35-44	4084	4460	4852
45-54	5709	5565	5781
55-64	7182	7180	7069
65+	13471	13205	16524
Total	47118	49647	52150



Source: DEWLP, Victoria in Future 2016.

The population projections indicate an increase in the number of newborn to nine-year-olds over the next 15 years, and a significant increase in the number of elderly people 65 and over. The total population of East Gippsland is projected to increase by 16% by 2031.

Socio-Economics

The ABS Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) measure different aspects of social and economic conditions in areas of Australia. Indicators used include low income, low educational attainment, high unemployment, and jobs in relatively unskilled occupations. The lower the index number, the higher the level of disadvantage. Note: At the time of publication, the updated SEIFA index data was not available (due for release March 2018). The following data is from the 2011 Census. The municipality of East Gippsland has an index of 958.2 which places it among the most disadvantaged 21% of municipalities in the state. It ranks it as number 17 in the level of disadvantage among the municipalities of Victoria. As a comparison, Regional Victoria has an index of 977.7, and Victoria as a whole 1009.6. Within the East Gippsland region there are varying levels of SEIFA index figures.

The median household income per week in East Gippsland is \$935, compared with \$1216 for Victoria as a whole. The median individual income per week in East Gippsland is \$506, compared with \$644 across Victoria. The median individual income for Aboriginal and/or Torres Island people in East Gippsland is \$368 (ABS Census 2016).

The unemployment rate in East Gippsland was nearly six-and-a-half percent in 2016, indicating an increase of one percent since 2011. The unemployment rate for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people is 19.5%, an increase of three percent since 2011. There are 17.3% of children under 15 in jobless families, compared to Gippsland at 16.6% and Victoria-wide at 12.7%. Over 10% (10.8%) of people aged 16-64 years receive the disability support pension. This is higher than Gippsland at nearly nine percent and Victoria at just over five percent. (Needs Assessment, PHN, ABS Census 2016, Quick Stats Community Profile East Gippsland LGA and Indigenous Profile, East Gippsland).

Families

In 2016, East Gippsland had 3866 couples with children, and 1721 one-parent families. One-parent families make up 14.5% of families, an increase from just under ten percent in 2011. One-parent families make up 23% of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander households, which has decreased from 29% since 2011. East Gippsland has more than double the teenage fertility rate than the Victorian average (Sources: Need Assessment, PHN, ABS Census 2016 Quick Stats, Community Profile East Gippsland LGA and Indigenous Profile, East Gippsland).

Educational Attainment

Educational attainment is an important social determinant of health and a strong indicator of future economic and social success for both individuals and communities.

In East Gippsland, 50.3% of people aged over 15 years have attained Year 12 or higher, compared with 63.8% across Victoria. In East Gippsland, 36.6% of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people have attained Year 12 or higher, compared with 42.2% across Victoria (ABS Census 2016).



INDICATORS OF WELLBEING FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The following section presents 24 indicators for children and young people across five domains: Developing Well, Safe and Secure, Happy and Healthy, Engaged, Learning and Achieving and Active Citizens.

DOMAIN 1: DEVELOPING WELL

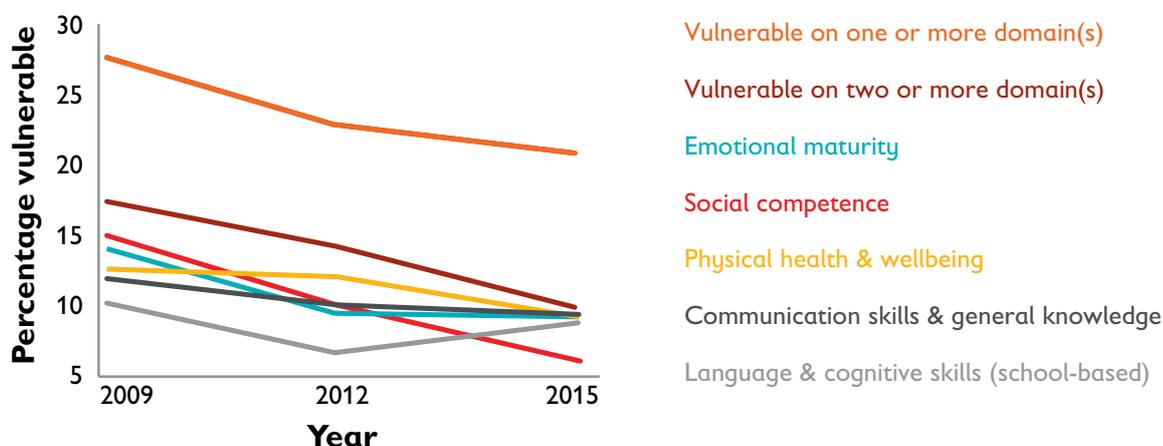
There are four indicators under the domain of developing well:

- 1.1. Children are developing well as they start school;
- 1.2. Children are visiting a Maternal Child Health Nurse;
- 1.3. Parents are attending parent education and/or support program; and
- 1.4. Babies are fully breastfed.

1.1. Children are Developing Well as They Start School

Research tells us clearly that the early years of children's lives are critical for their development and growing up well. The Australian Early Developmental Census (AEDC) is one measure to see how children are growing across five developmental domains in their first year of school.

Emerging trends in developmental vulnerability for East Gippsland, showing change in percentage (2009 to 2015):



Source: AEDC, Department of Education, 2016.

AEDC DOMAIN	2012	2015	STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE	2015 VICTORIA	
Vulnerable on one or more domains(s)	23.3%	21.2%	No significant change	19.9%	✗
Vulnerable on two or more domains	13.6%	10.1%	Significant decrease	9.9%	▬

There has been a significant decrease (from 13.6% to 10.1%) from 2012 to 2015 in the percentage of children who are developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains. There has been a slight reduction in the percentage of children who are vulnerable on one or more domains from 23.3% to 21.2%. Overall this tells us that there are improvements, but there are still over 30% of children that are vulnerable on one, two or more domains and this impacts on how they will do at school (Source: AEDC, Department of Education, 2016).

INDICATORS OF WELLBEING FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Proportion of children in East Gippsland who are 'developmentally vulnerable' in the following domains:

The figures below show each area of the AEDC developmental domains that children are assessed on in their first year of school and the percentage of children that are developmentally vulnerable in each area. This table shows that there has been a statistically significant decrease in two of the five domains: physical health and wellbeing and emotional maturity. Whilst it is promising to see these improvements, the number of children who are developmentally vulnerable or developmentally at risk require continued focus and collective efforts.

AEDC DOMAIN	2009	2012	2015	STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE	2015 VICTORIA	
Physical health and wellbeing <i>Measures children's physical readiness for the school day, physical independence and gross and fine motor skills</i>	12.9%	12.1% ↑	8.8% ↑	Significant decrease	7.9%	✓
Social competence <i>Measure children's overall social competence, responsibility and respect, approach to learning and readiness to explore new things</i>	14.4%	9.0% ↑	8.6% ↑	No significant change	8.7%	=
Emotional maturity <i>Measures children's pro-social and helping behaviours and absence of anxious and fearful behaviour, aggressive behaviour and hyperactivity and inattention</i>	15.5%	9.1% ↑	6.4% ↑	Significant decrease	8.0%	✓
Language and cognitive skills <i>Measures children's basic literacy, interest in literacy, numeracy and memory, advanced literacy and basic numeracy</i>	10.2%	7.4% ↑	9.2% ↓	No significant change	8.0%	✗
Communication skills and general knowledge <i>Measures children's communication skills and general knowledge based on broad developmental competencies and skills</i>	12.3%	10.2% ↑	9.0% ↑	No significant change	7.6%	✗



Proportion of children whose parents report one or more concerns with speech or language upon entry to primary school: The following data was not available for the previous report and paints a picture of how children are beginning their school lives rather than providing a direct comparison.

AEDC DOMAIN	2012	2013	2014	2015	2015 VICTORIA
East Gippsland	18.9% 	13.5% 	19.8% 	14.3% 	14.1% 

From 2012 to 2015 the percentage of children whose parents report one or more concerns with speech or language upon entry to primary school has varied considerably. High rates of concern were reported in 2012 and 2014 when 18.9% and 19.8% of children had one or more concerns with speech or language as reported by their parents. The proportion of children in both 2013 and 2015 was lower, at 13.5% and 14.3% respectively and this is close to the rates reported across Victoria.

1.2. Children are Visiting a Maternal Child Health Nurse

Maternal & Child Health services monitor and encourage the development and wellbeing of children and provide support to parents who in turn support their children before they attend school. In East Gippsland, Maternal & Child Health (MCH) is delivered by Gippsland Lakes Community Health (GLCH) for East Gippsland main centres and high country and Orbost Regional Health (ORH) for the Far East area (Orbost, north of Orbost, surrounding areas, Cann River and Mallacoota).

The data below for East Gippsland shows the high rate of home visits to families:

YEAR	2013 EG	2014 EG	2015 EG	2015 VICTORIA
Infants receiving MCH home visiting – EG/Victoria	101.4%	100.2%	100.4%	100.9% 

Source: AEDC, Department of Education, 2016.

The above data indicates that MCH is seeing all families in the region in addition to families who have moved into the area. This is why some of the rates are over 100% both for East Gippsland and for Victoria-wide.

YEAR	2013	2014	2015	2015 VICTORIA
Children having their four-month assessment	102.4% 	74.4% 	102.4% 	69.9%
Children having their 12-month assessment	86.0% 	93.8% 	88.6% 	57%
Children receiving their three-years-and-six-months check	92.6% 	84.6% 	71.1% 	42.8%

Source: Maternal & Child Health Services Annual Report 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015 South Eastern Victoria Region, Maternal & Child Health Services Annual Report 2015-2016 State-wide and Department of Education and Training.

East Gippsland's rate for the three-years-and-six-months-old checks was significantly higher than those across Victoria in 2013 and 2014. This rate dropped from 79.5% in 2014, to 63.5% in 2015. The reason for this decrease is possibly the removal in 2015 of the Healthy Kids Check and incentives by the Australian Government.



Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Children:

YEAR	2013		2014		2015		2015 VICTORIA
Children having their four-month assessment	102.4%	✓	74.4%	✓	102.4%	✓	69.9%
Children having their 12-month assessment	86%	✓	93.8%	✓	88.6%	✓	57%
Children receiving their three-years-and-six-months check	92.6%	✓	84.6%	✓	71.1%	✓	57%

Source: Maternal & Child Health Services Annual Report 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015 South Eastern Victoria Region, Maternal & Child Health Services Annual Report 2015-2016 State-wide

The four-month, 12-month and three-years-and-six-months check for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children are all above the Victorian state average. Note: the rate above 100% may be due to the mobility of the Aboriginal population, with an increase of new families moving into the area.

1.3. Parents are Attending Parent Education and/or Support

This was a data gap in the 2013 report. There is data for some local parent education sessions provided by the Communities for Children program at Uniting in 2017. A total of 137 parents attended these sessions. For future reports, it would be useful to have a picture of the attendance and outcomes over time of parent education sessions.

1.4. Babies are Fully Breastfed

There is significant evidence demonstrating the health and wellbeing benefits for breastfed babies.

Babies breastfed in 2013-2014 to 2014-2015:

AGE OF BABY	EAST GIPPSLAND 2011/2012		EAST GIPPSLAND 2013/2014		EAST GIPPSLAND 2014/2015		VICTORIA 2014/2015
Three-months	50%	✗	49.8%	✗	48.2%	✗	51.4%
Six-months	15%	↓	17.2%	↑	13.2%	✗	34%

Source: Victorian Child and Adolescent Monitoring System (VCAMS), Indicator 2.1: proportion of infants breastfed

The rates of breastfeeding in East Gippsland are significantly lower than across Victoria for babies at six-months-old. Rates of breastfeeding for three-month-old babies is slightly lower than the State average.

Questions for follow up:

What are parents looking for in regards to education and support?

What best supports the challenging and changing role of being a parent?

DOMAIN 2: SAFE AND SECURE

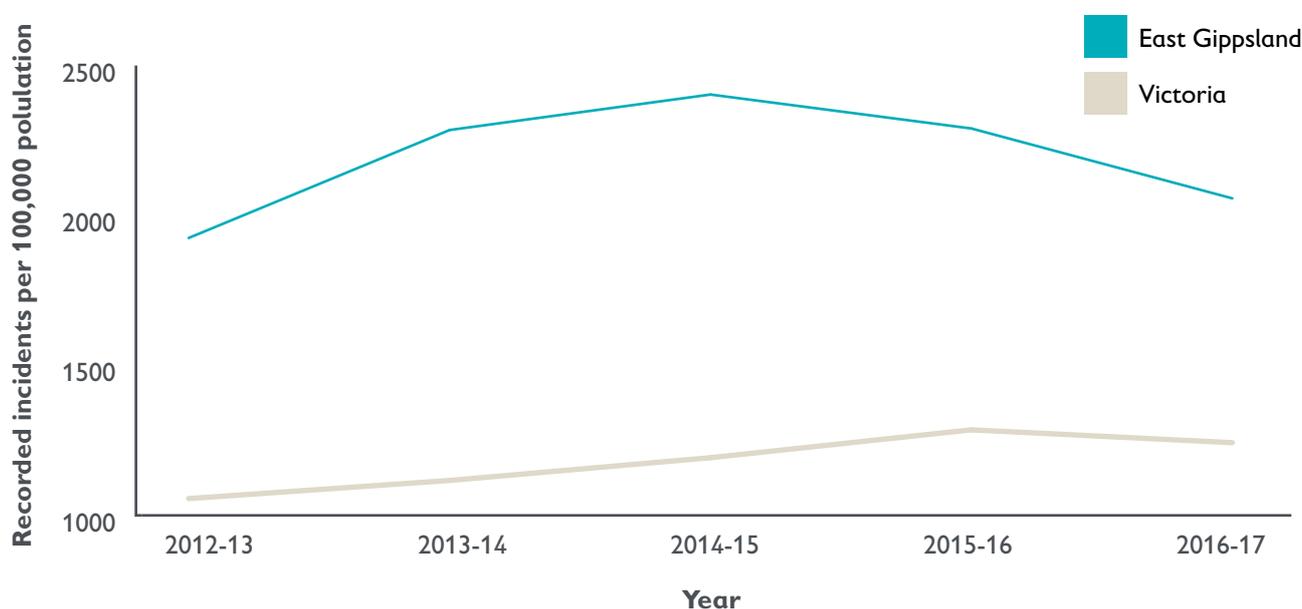
There are three indicators under the domain of Safe and Secure:

- 2.1. Children are Feeling Safe at Home;
- 2.2. Children are Feeling Stable and Secure;
- 2.3. Children and Young People are Safe From Injury and Harm

2.1. Children are Feeling Safe at Home

Growing up feeling safe and secure is important for children’s development. The growing brain of a child is significantly impacted when it is exposed to traumatic events like family violence. Children experiencing respectful, equal relationships are more likely to develop well and thrive at school.

Number of recorded Incidents of Family Violence per 100,000 people for East Gippsland and Victoria-wide:



Source: VCAMS, Crime Statistics Agency.

Number of family violence incident reports 2016-17:

The data indicates that reports increased from 835 in 2012-13 to 1020 in 2015-16. In 2016-17 the rates decreased to 924. East Gippsland has the second highest rate of family violence incidents in Gippsland and the sixth highest in the state.

These incidents are converted per 100,000 people which can be seen above, highlighting that East Gippsland has a much higher family violence incidence rate per 100,000 people compared with State-wide.

Proportion of children and young people present at reported family violence incidents in East Gippsland and Victoria:

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	VICTORIA
East Gippsland	35.1% ✘ ↓	37.7% ✘ ↓	39.9% ✘ ↓	34.5%

Source: VCAMS, Crime Statistics Agency.

In East Gippsland, 39.9% of family violence incidents reported to police had at least one child present, which is higher than the Victoria-wide rate of 34.5%. This is a slight increase from the previous report: in 2011-2012, 39% of recorded incidences had children and young people present (VCAMS, Crime Statistics Agency).



Higher rates for East Gippsland are also found in the School Entrance Health Questionnaire (SEHQ) for the percentage of children that have witnessed violence:

	EAST GIPPSLAND	REGIONAL VICTORIA	VICTORIA
Child witness to violence	6.8%	5.3%	3.3%

Source: Department of Education and Training, 2016, School Entrance Health Questionnaire (SEHQ).

Young people are feeling safe and secure at school:

The Communities That Care (CTC) program in East Gippsland schools collected data from young people in regards to anti-social behaviour, family and school life and attitudes to alcohol and drugs (Communities That Care - East Gippsland Youth Survey, 2015). This data provides a picture of how safe and secure young people are feeling at school. It shows that 26% of Year Six students and 37% of Year 10 students reported recently being bullied. A higher rate for Year Eight students was reported at 56% of students being bullied recently (this compares to 40% for other Year Eight students across Australia). The percentage of Year Eight students reporting reporting that they had recently bullied others is particularly high at 28%, considering that the Australia-wide rate is 12%. Students who bullied others in Year 6 and Year 10 were lower at 16% and 17% respectively (Cooney, Smith & Toumbourou, 2015).

In addition to the CTC Survey data, there is also information from the Victorian Child and Adolescent Monitoring System (VCAMS) in regards to the percentage of children in primary school and high school who have reported being bullied. The rates rates of reported bullying in East Gippsland are higher than those across Victoria.

INDICATORS OF WELLBEING FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Proportion of children who reported being bullied in Year Five and Six:

	2014	2015
East Gippsland	19.8%	17.9% 
Across Victoria	15%	15%

Source: VCAMS.

Proportion of children who report being bullied in years 7-9:

	2014	2015
East Gippsland	31.2%	18.4% 
Across Victoria	29.4%	18%

Source: VCAMS.

The percentage of children and young people in East Gippsland who have reported being bullied is consistently higher than the Victorian average.

Child Protection Reports (0-17 years):

Child Protection reports are generated when a child has come to the attention of Child Protection authorities within the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Substantiated reports are those where reported incidents have been verified. Data is also collected where there has been a further report (re-notification) within a 12-month period indicating the reported abuse has continued. The rates reported in 2013 were for children up to eight-years-old. The following data is for children aged up to 17-years-old from 2014-2015 until 2016-2017. Overall, these rates are increasing and this highlights a need for greater support for families.



Research highlights that as a community we invest significant resources into Child Protection, yet we don't invest much into better support for families.

Child Protection Reports:

		2014-15	2016-17
	Number of child protection report substantiations	208	310
	Number of child protection report substantiations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children	81	110
		2015-16	2016-17
	Proportion of child protection re-reports	64%	65%
	Proportion of child protection re-reports for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children	80%	69%

Source: Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

2.2. Children are Feeling Stable and Secure

Data on East Gippsland residents who remained in public housing in the previous report, was not available for this report.

Rental stress is common in East Gippsland, with 30% of low income households reporting this. In comparison, Gippsland as a whole sees 28% of low-income households reporting rental stress, and Victoria-wide this is at 25% reported (Needs Assessment, GPHN). compared to Gippsland (28%) and Victoria (25%) (Needs Assessment, GPHN). However, a higher proportion of residents were at the same address a year ago and five years ago, both compared with 2011 and with against Victoria generally. (ABS Census, 2016).

Proportion of people at the same address one year ago and five years ago:

	SAME ADDRESS	EAST GIPPSLAND	ACROSS VICTORIA
	One year ago	87%	76%
	Five years ago	60.6%	50.7%

Source: ABS Census, 2016.

2.3. Children and Young People are Safe From Injury and Harm

The following table provides the number of children and young people aged up to 17-years-old per 1000 who are a victim of crime. The following table shows that rates have increased, dropped and increased again. Rates are much higher in East Gippsland than for across Victoria. In the previous report, this data was available as an overall percentage, rather than per 1000. This also reflected higher rates in East Gippsland than for Victoria as a whole.

Number of those aged between 0-17 per 1000 who were a victim of crime:

	YEAR	EAST GIPPSLAND	ACROSS VICTORIA
	2014-15	18.4%	9.6%
	2014-2013	16.1%	9.7%
	2013-2012	18.1%	10.1%

Source: VCAMS, Crime Statistics Agency.

DOMAIN 3: HAPPY & HEALTHY

There are five indicators under the domain of Happy and Healthy:

- 3.1. Children are Physically Active;
- 3.2. Children are Eating Well;
- 3.3. Children have Good Oral Health;
- 3.4. Children and Young People are Emotionally Well;
- 3.5. Children and Young People with a Disability Requiring Assistance.

3.1. Children are Physically Active

This was a data gap in the previous report. There is now information available from the Victorian Child Health and Wellbeing Survey for the Outer Gippsland area (East Gippsland and Wellington Shires).

The proportion of children in East Gippsland aged five to 13-years-old in 2013 who completed 60 minutes of physical activity every day is 64.5%. This is higher than the rate for children across Victoria, which is 62.2% (VCAMS, the Victorian Child Health and Wellbeing Survey- VCHWS).

Data is also now available from the Communities That Care program regarding young people aged 13 to 17-years-old in East Gippsland. The data shows the number of young people who meet the Australia’s Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines. These guidelines recommend that young people are physically active for at least an hour a day and limit screen time to a maximum of two hours per day (Cooney, Smith & Toumbourou, 2015).

The proportion of East Gippsland students surveyed for meeting the physical activity guidelines, they are physically active for more than an hour a day and do not sit for long periods of time:

YEAR SIX	YEAR EIGHT – EAST GIPPSLAND		YEAR EIGHT – ACROSS AUSTRALIA	YEAR 10
23%	10%	X	17%	16%

Source: Cooney, Smith & Toumbourou, 2015.

The proportion of East Gippsland students surveyed who meet the sedentary behaviour guidelines, they have no more than 2 hours of screen time:

YEAR SIX	YEAR EIGHT – EAST GIPPSLAND		YEAR EIGHT – ACROSS AUSTRALIA	YEAR 10
57%	34%	X	48%	37%

Source: Cooney, Smith & Toumbourou, 2015.

Of note is that Year Eight students in East Gippsland report lower levels for reaching Australia’s Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines, compared with Australia-wide students which is at 17% and 48% for physical activity and sedentary behaviour respectively (Cooney, Smith & Toumbourou, 2015).

3.2. Children are Eating Well

This was a data gap in the 2013 report. In 2014, the Victorian Child Health and Wellbeing Survey (VCHWS) provided tAcross Victoria, this is 10.6% and for Outer Gippsland (East Gippsland and Wellington Shires), it is 12.4%.

The Communities That Care Report (Cooney, Smith & Toumbourou, 2015) highlights the proportion of East Gippsland Students who meet the daily dietary guidelines for fruit and vegetable intake and whether students have breakfast every day.

This shows that a high number of young people in East Gippsland are not having breakfast, that there is a low level of daily vegetable intake, despite a higher number of Year Eight students in East Gippsland eating the recommended amount of fruit at 38% compared with Year Eight students across Australia at 23% (Cooney, Smith & Toumbourou, 2015).

Percentage of East Gippsland Students meeting the daily dietary guidelines for fruit and vegetable intake and eating breakfast everyday:

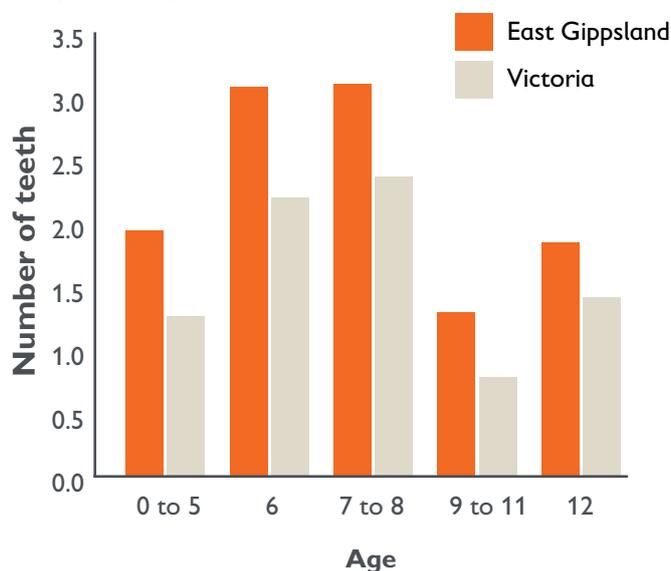
	YEAR SIX	YEAR EIGHT – EAST GIPPSLAND	YEAR EIGHT – ACROSS AUSTRALIA	YEAR 10
Students who eat the daily recommended amount of fruit	35%	38% ✓	23%	28%
Students who eat the daily recommended amount of vegetables	18%	21% ✗	34%	22%
Students who eat breakfast	47%	39% ✗	51%	32%

Source: Cooney, Smith & Toumbourou, 2015.

3.3. Children who have Good Oral Health

This was reported as a data gap in the 2013 report. Additional information shows that in 2013-14, the children who attended Bairnsdale Regional Health Service dentists aged six-years-old had an average of 4.09 decayed, missing or filled teeth, compared to 2.37 across Gippsland and 2.28 for Victoria as a whole. In 2015-2016, six-year-olds had, on average, 3.07 decayed, missing or filled teeth, compared with a 2.20 Victoria-wide average.

East Gippsland and Victoria Average of Teeth that were decayed, missing or filled 2015 to 2016:



Source: Bairnsdale Regional Health Service, 2015-2016.



INDICATORS OF WELLBEING FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The following data has been gathered through the School Entrant Health Questionnaire, completed by parents when their children start school. It predominantly represents children aged around five-years-old entering their prep year.

Proportion of children reported to have visited a dentist in the past year:

2012			2014			2016		
East Gippsland	Regional Victoria	Across Victoria	East Gippsland	Regional Victoria	Across Victoria	East Gippsland	Regional Victoria	Across Victoria
 57%	51.8%	48.5%	 55.2%	54.9%	50.3%	 53%	59.2%	54%

Source: Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET), School Entrant Health Questionnaire 2012, 2014 and 2016.

In East Gippsland a higher proportion of children attended the dentist in the year prior to starting school than those in either regional Victoria or Victoria generally. This has slightly decreased from 2012 by nearly two percent.

Number of children with parental concern regarding their oral health:

2012			2014			2016		
East Gippsland	Regional Victoria	Across Victoria	East Gippsland	Regional Victoria	Across Victoria	East Gippsland	Regional Victoria	Across Victoria
15.5%	14.6%	14.4%	18.0%	14.7%	14.5%	15%	13.6%	13.8%

Source: Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET), School Entrant Health Questionnaire 2012, 2014 and 2016.

More parents of children starting school in East Gippsland have expressed concern about their child's oral health, including teeth and gums, than in regional Victoria or Victoria as a whole. This has increased from 2012 by two-and-a-half percent (Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET), School Entrant Health Questionnaire 2012, 2014 and 2016).

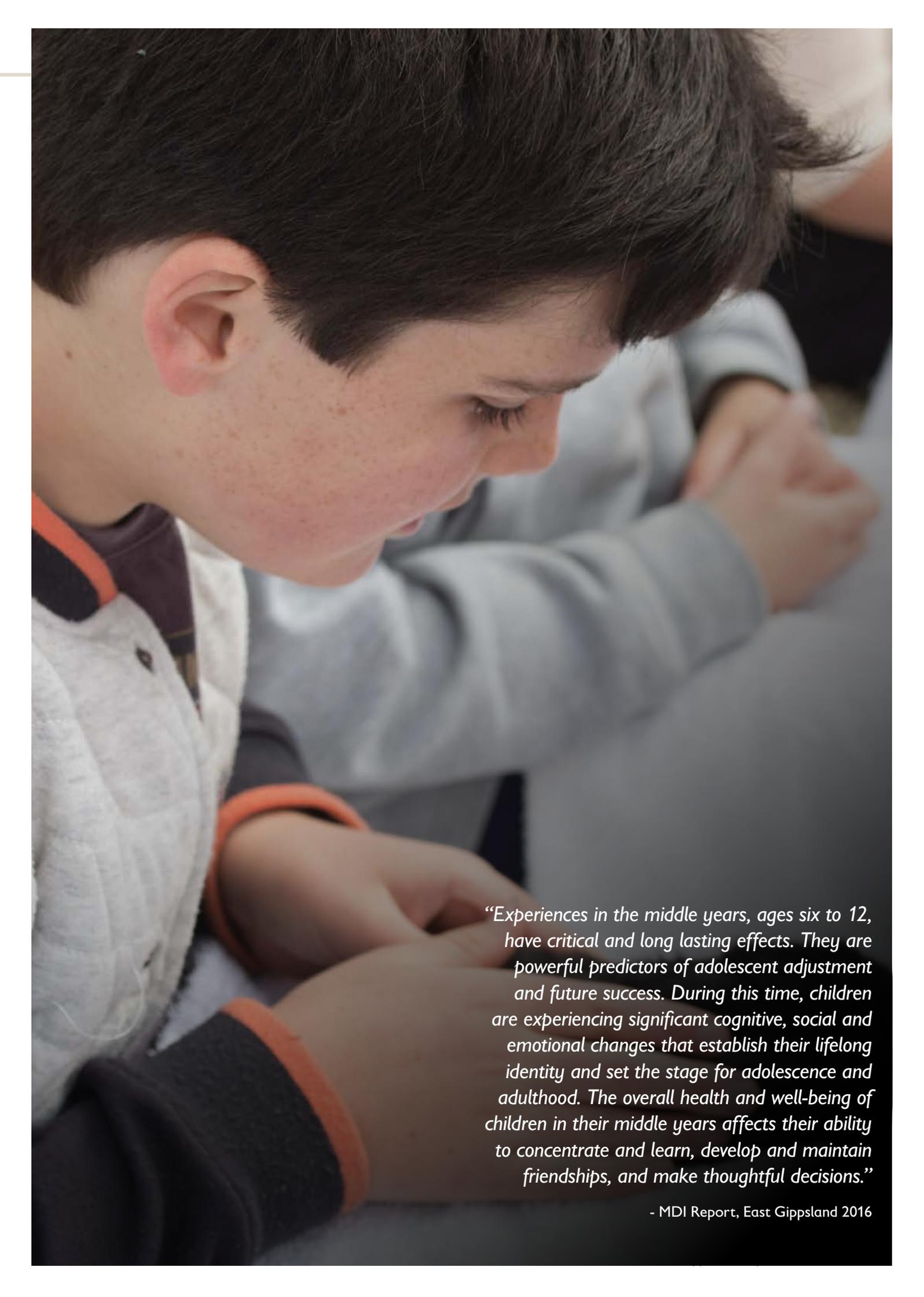
3.4. Children and Young People are Emotionally Well

The School Entrant Health Questionnaire data shows that children in East Gippsland are more likely to exhibit emotional or behavioural difficulties well above the Victorian average. The following shows the percentage of children with high risk of emotional problems. The rate has decreased (or improved) since 2013 however it increased in 2016 and is still higher than the Victorian average (Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET), School Entrant Health Questionnaire 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016).

The proportion of children at school entry at high risk of emotional & behavioural difficulties reported by parents:

	YEAR	EAST GIPPSLAND	ACROSS VICTORIA
	2013	7.9%	4.4%
	2014	7.7%	4.6%
	2015	5.8%	4.6%
	2016	8.8%	4.8%

Source: Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET), School Entrant Health Questionnaire 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016.



“Experiences in the middle years, ages six to 12, have critical and long lasting effects. They are powerful predictors of adolescent adjustment and future success. During this time, children are experiencing significant cognitive, social and emotional changes that establish their lifelong identity and set the stage for adolescence and adulthood. The overall health and well-being of children in their middle years affects their ability to concentrate and learn, develop and maintain friendships, and make thoughtful decisions.”

- MDI Report, East Gippsland 2016

Proportion of children at school entry whose parents report concerns with their behaviour and emotional wellbeing at school entry:

	YEAR	EAST GIPPSLAND	ACROSS VICTORIA
✘	2013	15.1%	13.3%
✘	2014	15.3%	13.5%
▬	2015	12.3%	13.0%
✘	2016	16.3%	12.6%

Source: Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET), School Entrant Health Questionnaire 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016.

The Middle Development Index (MDI)

A number of schools in East Gippsland have participated in the Middle Development Index (MDI) feasibility trial in 2016 and 2017. This measure is designed to be cohesive with the AEDC and can be aggregated at a local community level to provide decision makers with normative data.

As a component of comprehensive child development monitoring it may be linked to other health and education data sources (e.g. AEDC, School Entrant Health Questionnaire) to better understand developmental trajectories as well as social context factors that are most likely to enhance or impede children's health and wellbeing.

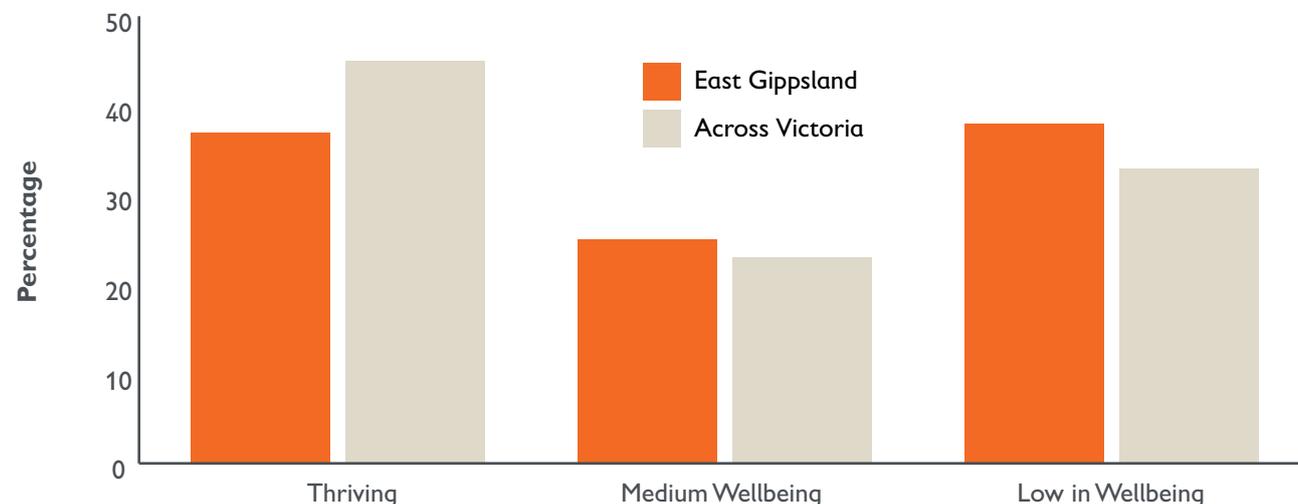
The MDI is a self-report questionnaire that asks children in Year 4 and Year 7 about their thoughts, feelings and experiences in school and in the community. The MDI uses a strengths-based approach to assess five areas of development that are strongly linked to children's wellbeing, health and academic achievement. It focuses

on highlighting the protective factors and assets that are known to support and optimise development in middle childhood.

The five areas are: Social and Emotional Development, Physical Health and Wellbeing, Connectedness, Use of After-School Time and School Experiences.

The Wellbeing Index for Far East Gippsland includes questions from social and emotional development areas including: optimism; self-esteem; happiness; absence of sadness; and general wellbeing. This index shows that 37% of children that participated feel they are thriving, 25% of children reported medium wellbeing and 38% reported feeling low in wellbeing. This compares with the other areas that participated in the MDI (a total of 2489 children in Victoria), which found that 45% are thriving, 23% report medium wellbeing and 33% have low wellbeing (Middle Development Index - MDI - Report, East Gippsland 2016, Department of Education).

Wellbeing Index for Far East Gippsland:

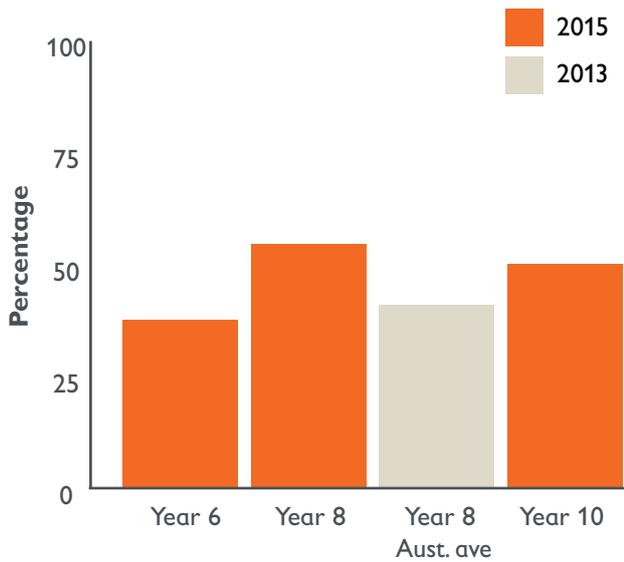


Source: Middle Development Index (MDI) Report, East Gippsland 2016, Department of Education.

Number of young people impacted by mental health issues

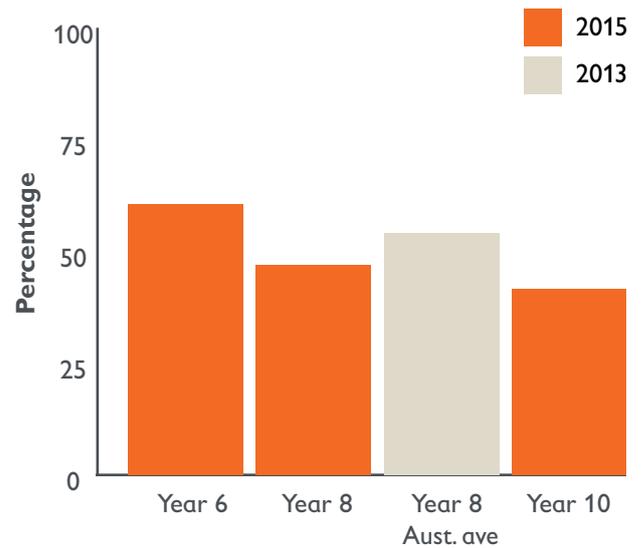
This was a data gap in the 2013 report. The following data has been sourced from the CTC East Gippsland Report (Cooney, Smith & Toumbourou, 2015). These figures show that a prevalence of depressive symptomology is high across all year levels. Year Eight East Gippsland students report a significantly higher level of depressive symptoms (55%) compared with Year Eight students Australia-wide at 41%.

Student Reports of Depressive Symptomology during the last Month:



Source: Cooney, Smith & Toumbourou, 2015.

Coping with Stress - Adaptive:

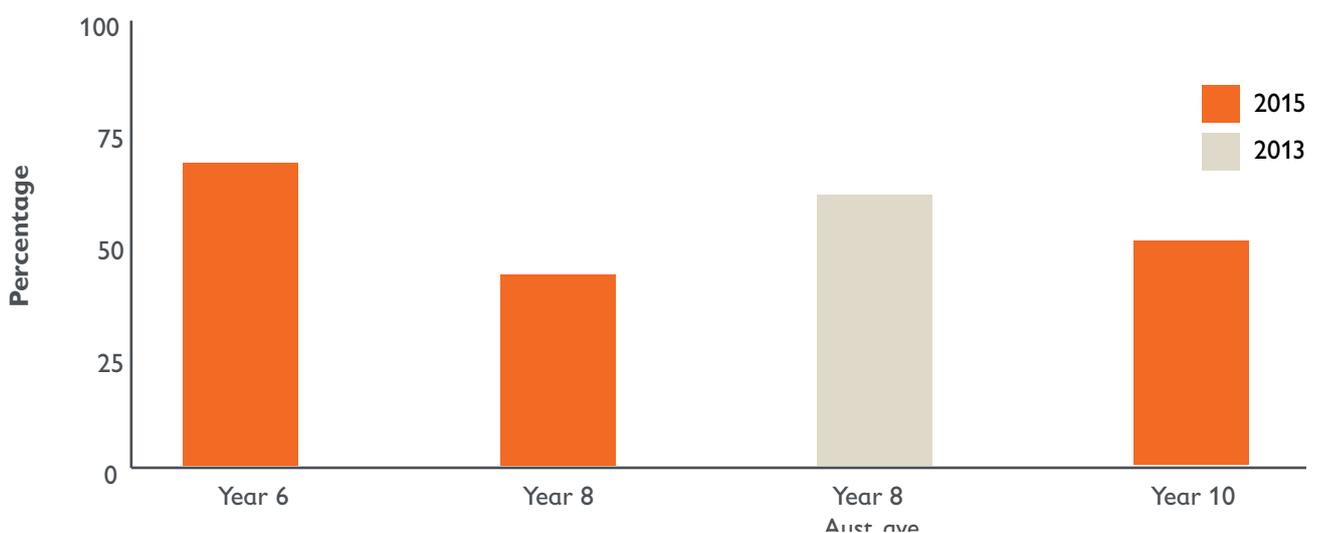


Source: Cooney, Smith & Toumbourou, 2015.

Students report a decline in coping with stress from Year Six to Year 10 (Cooney, Smith & Toumbourou, 2015).

Protective factors can moderate or mediate potential risk factors for children and young people. Similar to risk factors, an increase in levels of protective factors in a young person’s environment can enhance protection against adverse outcomes. Young people who demonstrate greater emotional control experience depression less frequently. Compared with students from across Australia, Year Eight East Gippsland students report significantly lower levels of emotional control.

Emotional Control:



Source: Cooney, Smith & Toumbourou, 2015.

3.5. Children and Young People with a Disability Requiring Assistance

In the previous report, the percentage of children and young people with a disability requiring assistance was higher in East Gippsland than in regional Victoria as a whole. These rates have increased slightly for younger children and for young people aged 15-19 years-old. However the rates are not directly comparable for the 5 to 19-year-olds, as the age brackets have changed slightly. The proportion of children and young people in East Gippsland that require assistance is consistently and slightly higher than the rate across Regional Victoria (East Gippsland Community Profile, ABS Census, 2016).

AGE	EAST GIPPSLAND RATE 2011	EAST GIPPSLAND RATE 2016	REGIONAL VICTORIA 2016
0-4 Years	1.6%	1.79%	1.21%
5-14 Years	4.8% (5-9 year olds)	4.85%	3.91%
15-19 Years	3.2% (10-19 year olds)	4.23%	3.38%

Source: ABS Census, East Gippsland Community Profile, 2016.

Data from the Department of Education also confirms that there are a higher number of children that have additional needs.

Children reported to have an intellectual disability, developmental delay or learning disability:

	YEAR	REGIONAL VICTORIA	EAST GIPPSLAND	ACROSS VICTORIA
✗	2016	4.7%	5.3%	3.7%
✗	2015	N/A	3.9%	3.5%

Source: School Entrance Health Questionnaire (SEHQ) Department of Education, 2016.

3.6. Substance Misuse – Families and Young People

Substance misuse was identified as a data gap in 2013. Data from a sample of East Gippsland students from the Communities that Care program highlights significantly higher rates of lifetime and recent alcohol use, this is provided in the table below (Cooney, Smith & Toumbourou, 2015).

	SUBSTANCE MISUSE	EAST GIPPSLAND	ACROSS AUSTRALIA
✗	Lifetime alcohol use	58%	45%
✗	Recent alcohol use	29%	17%
✗	Rates of recent binge drinking	14%	5%
✗	Lifetime cigarette use	19%	12%

Source: Cooney, Smith & Toumbourou, Communities that Care Survey East Gippsland Report 2015.

Parents report higher percentages of alcohol or drug related problems in the family compared with Victoria generally and Regional Victoria as a whole. East Gippsland also has 10 alcohol and drug treatment clients per 1,000 people; which is high compared to Gippsland with just over nine people and Victoria-wide reporting five. (East Gippsland Profile DHHS, 2015; Needs Assessment Snapshot- East Gippsland, 2016, Gippsland Primary Health Network).

Reporting by parents of alcohol or drug related problem in the family:

		EAST GIPPSLAND	REGIONAL VICTOIA	VICTORIA
✗	Alcohol or drug related problem in family	5.5%	4.9%	3.0%

Source: Department of Education, 2016, SEHQ.

3.7. Families are Able to Access Services

This was a data gap in the 2013 report, but DHHS provided data from 2008-2013. Without comparative data over a period of time, it tells us very little, and requires further investigation. Consultation with local families identified that services are difficult to access and they need to be easier to find. A challenge for many families is access to transport, with only 20% of the population living within 800m of public transport, which is lower than rates across Gippsland at 35% and far lower than across Victoria, at 74% (Need Assessment, Gippsland Primary Health Network. 2016). There are lower rates than the Victorian average for East Gippsland children seeing a GP in 2016, at 65.4% compared with 78.9%. There are higher rates in East Gippsland for children reported to have their three-years-and-six-months MCH check and children who have seen an optometrist or paediatrician (Victorian Department of Education and Training, 2016, SEHQ).

Number of Families Accessing Family and Community Support Services in East Gippsland:



Service Access Examples:

Service Access Guidelines: Four organisations in East Gippsland trialled the Service Access Guidelines developed by a partnership of organisations in the Children’s Wellbeing Collective in 2016. The guidelines are mapped with a range of national quality frameworks and draw on research and feedback from local families. They provide a checklist for organisations to use to see how they are delivering services and how they can be made more accessible.

Organisations who participated assessed things such as; when they deliver services, how welcoming the space is, whether they outreach to families, how they address transport issues and how culturally inclusive their services are.

Play in the Park: Save the Children have been working in partnership with Playgroup Victoria and East Gippsland Shire to host Play in the Park at the All Abilities Playground once a month. It’s a big playgroup at the park. All parents are welcome and a number of playgroups have been involved. It’s a way of promoting the importance of play and playgroups while also connecting with parents and children in a relaxed and fun atmosphere.

DOMAIN 4: ENGAGED, LEARNING AND ACHIEVING

There are six indicators under the domain of Engaged, Learning and Achieving:

- 4.1. Families Support their Children’s Learning;
- 4.2. Children Attend Kindergarten;
- 4.3. Attend and Enjoy School;
- 4.4. Children and Young People feel connected to their school;
- 4.5. Children and Young People are Achieving at School;
- 4.6. Young People Complete their Secondary Schooling.

4.1. Families Support their Children’s Learning

Parents reading to their children:

Research found a direct causal effect between parents reading regularly to their children, and improved educational outcomes and capacity to be productive later in life (Kalb and van Ours, 2013).

Parents reading to their children was a data gap in the previous report, however there is now information available through the Victorian Child and Adolescent Monitoring System (VCAMS) which provides the proportion of family members reading to their children under-five years-old every day for 2013. This data is for the Outer Gippsland area, which includes the local government area of Wellington and East Gippsland Shires, and indicates a higher rate than that of Victoria in general. Data for East Gippsland only is not available.

	YEAR	REGION	PROPORTION OF CHILDREN UNDER FIVE READ TO BY A FAMILY MEMBER EVERY DAY
	2013	Outer Gippsland Area	75.0%
	2013	Across Victoria	69.6%

4.2. Children Attend Kindergarten

A large body of evidence tells us that children attending early learning programs are better prepared for school and this boosts their chances of thriving at school and beyond. The recent OECD report, Starting Strong, reinforces this evidence and points to how investments in early childhood education can then be reviewed in regards to how 15 year-olds are performing at school and in the community across nearly all of the 37 OECD countries. Australia’s ranking for three and four-year-olds in kindergarten is near the bottom, being 26th and 27th out of 37 OECD countries. This tells us that Australia’s investment in early childhood education and care needs to significantly improve. To give children the best start to school, access to quality early education is critical (OECD Starting Strong, 2017).

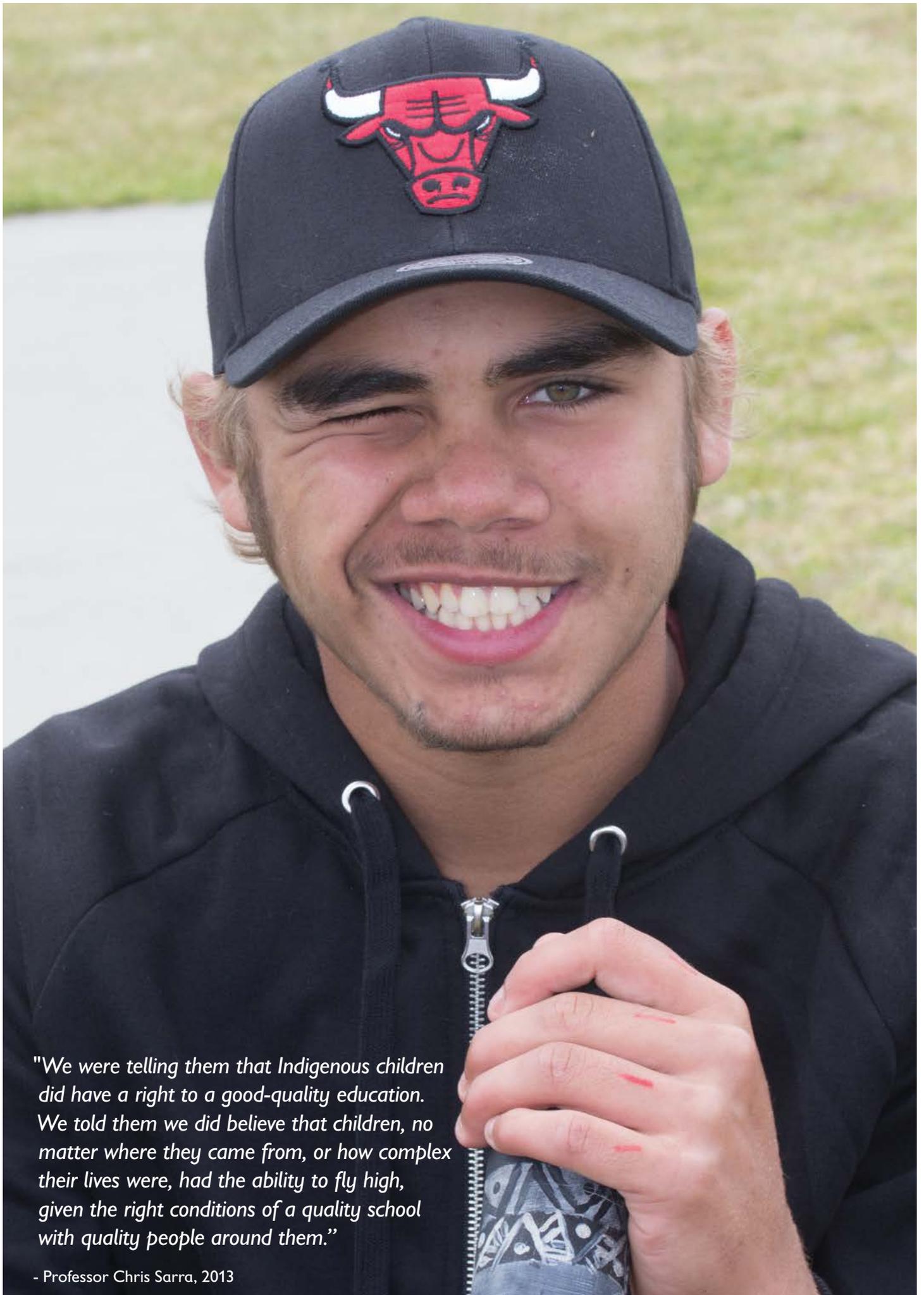
Percentage of four-year-olds attending kindergarten:

	YEAR	REGION	NUMBER OF FIRST YEAR CHILDREN WHO ENROL IN KINDERGARTEN	ACROSS VICTORIA
	2015	East Gippsland	89.4%	98.1%
	2014	East Gippsland	91.9%	96.4%
	2013	East Gippsland	92.8%	98.2%
	2012	East Gippsland	94.5%	98.00%

“When young people are given more opportunities to participate meaningfully in the classroom and school, they are more likely to develop strong bonds of attachment and commitment to school.”

- *“Communities that Care Report, East Gippsland (Cooney, Smith & Toubourou, 2015).*





"We were telling them that Indigenous children did have a right to a good-quality education. We told them we did believe that children, no matter where they came from, or how complex their lives were, had the ability to fly high, given the right conditions of a quality school with quality people around them."

- Professor Chris Sarra, 2013

Kindergarten participation rates appear to have dropped compared with the 2012 rates. However, there is also data available for the number of four-year-old children who enrol in a kindergarten program in a long day care centre or integrated children’s services setting. This data shows that between two and four percent of four-year-olds are attending kindergarten in these settings. There has also been an improvement in kindergarten data collection from 2014. Duplicate enrolments were identified which can account for a minor difference between 2014 and 2015. Due to it being a minor change, enrolment percentages can still be used to see what is happening over time. Taking into account these changes, there is a slight decrease in kindergarten enrolments (VCAMS, Department of Education and Training).

Questions for follow up:

How can we increase the number of four-year-olds attending kindergarten so they have access to early learning and be ready for school?

How can we make 3-year-old kindergarten easier for families to access?

The number of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander children attending kindergarten in East Gippsland is still a data gap. Data is only available Victoria-wide, which is 82.2% of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander children attending kindergarten in 2015. This is an increase from 2007 when only 59% of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander children were reported to be attending kindergarten (VCAMS, Department of Education and Training).

4.3. Attend and Enjoy School

The days absent from school in East Gippsland are higher than the rate reported for Victoria as a whole. Attendance improves in Year 12. Absenteeism peaks through Year Seven to 11. There has been an increase in absenteeism across most of the year levels when comparing the 2009 and 2014 data.

“The ‘stronger smarter’ philosophy honours a positive sense of cultural identity, acknowledges and embraces positive community leadership, and enables innovative and dynamic approaches and processes anchored by high-expectations relationships. High expectations relationships honour the humanity of others, and in doing so acknowledge a person’s strengths, capacity and human right to emancipatory opportunity.”

- Professor Chris Sarra, 2013

Average days absent in primary and secondary school in East Gippsland – 2014:

	EAST GIPPSLAND	VICTORIA
Prep	16 days	15 days
Year 1	17 days	14 days
Year 2	17 days	14 days
Year 3	17 days	14 days
Year 4	17 days	14 days
Year 5	18 days	14 days
Year 6	16 days	15 days
Year 7	25 days	17 days
Year 8	30 days	20 days
Year 9	27 days	22 days
Year 10	28 days	20 days
Year 11	26 days	17 days
Year 12	18 days	15 days

Source:VCAMS, Indicator 33.1 Average number of days absent by primary and secondary school students 2014.

4.4. Children and Young People Feel Connected to their School

Data is collected to measure the proportion of students who feel connected to school through the Attitudes to School Survey, with the following results:

Research found a direct causal effect between parents reading regularly to their children, and improved educational outcomes and capacity to be productive later in life (Kalb and van Ours, 2013).

	YEARS FIVE AND SIX	EAST GIPPSLAND	ACROSS VICTORIA
	2010	76.3%	83.5%
	2015	84.2%	84.8%
	YEARS SEVEN AND NINE	EAST GIPPSLAND	ACROSS VICTORIA
	2010	56.8%	58.8%
	2015	51.0%	62.3%

For the Year Five and Six students, connectedness has improved over the five-year period, with eight percent more children feeling better connected with their school. For the Year Seven to Nine students, connectedness has declined by nearly six percent with just half of students in these years at secondary school feeling connected. The rates for East Gippsland students are less than for students across Victoria in both 2010 and 2015 (Victorian Child and Adolescent Monitoring System. Indicator 10.6 Proportion of students who report feeling connected with their school.)

4.5. Children and Young People are Achieving at School

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) is an annual assessment for students in Year Three, Five, Seven and Nine. NAPLAN tests some of the sorts of skills that are essential for every child to progress through school and life, such as reading and numeracy. The NAPLAN data provides a benchmarking measure to assess how children are progressing in these learning areas.

Comparing the NAPLAN results of 2012 with those from 2017 shows that while some results have improved, some have declined. In Year Three and Year Five the results for reading have stayed much the same as in 2012; Year Seven and Year Nine reading levels have declined. Numeracy results have improved for Year Three and there has been a shrinking of the gap when comparing East Gippsland with Victoria as a whole. The percentage of students in Year Five, Seven and Nine who have achieved or exceeded the national minimum standard has declined. East Gippsland students did not equal the Victorian-wide results in reading or numeracy levels in 2017.

“All students can experience success, regardless of their performance in NAPLAN. A strengths-based approach to learning is fundamental to student success by encouraging and supporting student engagement and participation”

- Emily Baker, Education Reporter (2017).

Of course, there are limitations with national and statewide diagnostic testing regimes, particularly with kids of different ethnic backgrounds... But I would rather have something than nothing, in this case, so that parents can at least have access to a comparable yardstick and benchmarks.

- Professor Chris Sarra, 2013.



Students are meeting national minimum standards in reading 2017:

		EAST GIPPSLAND	ACROSS VICTORIA
✘	Year 3	92%	96%
✘	Year 5	91%	95%
✘	Year 7	86%	95%
✘	Year 9	84%	92%

Source: Department of Education and Training, NAPLAN Data 2017.

Students are meeting national minimum standards in numeracy 2017:

		EAST GIPPSLAND	ACROSS VICTORIA
=	Year 3	95%	96%
✘	Year 5	93%	96%
✘	Year 7	92%	96%
✘	Year 9	91%	96%

Source: Department of Education and Training, NAPLAN Data 2017.

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students:

There has been some improvement from 2012 – with a significant improvement of 25% in reading achievement at Year Nine; and nine percent improvement at Year Five. Numeracy levels saw a 20% improvement at Year Three, however there has been a decline for Years Five and Nine. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students in Year Three in East Gippsland are above the Victorian average in numeracy. There was no data specifically for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students at a state level.

Professor Chris Sarra of the Stronger Smarter Institute shares his experience of education, which is important to take on board. “...have the courage to try new things if the established ways of doing things in classrooms and schools is returning data that we would never accept for our own children, but somehow we’ve accepted for Indigenous children” (Sarra, 2013).

"All of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids are individuals, we are similar and we are different. We in education should always have high aspirations for all our kids with a sense of belonging to place and country that they live in and on, being connected to place, is important for health and wellbeing and grows healthy and strong kids into young people, then into adults and Elders. Our learning stems from our relationship with those who teach us and care for us as a total being, and see us as important, and that we are a people who have endured and survived and will continue into the future."

- Lynnette Solomon-Dent, 2018

Students are meeting national minimum standards in reading – Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students:

		EAST GIPPSLAND	VICTORIA
✗	Year 3	83%	96%
✗	Year 5	76%	95%
✗	Year 7	71%	95%
✗	Year 9	78%	92%

Source: Department of Education and Training, NAPLAN Data 2017.

Students are meeting national minimum standards in numeracy – Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students:

		EAST GIPPSLAND	VICTORIA
✓	Year 3	97%	96%
✗	Year 5	69%	96%
✗	Year 7	81%	95%
✗	Year 9	71%	96%

Source: Department of Education and Training, NAPLAN Data 2017.

“Realise that this is a bite-sized chunk, be committed to the pursuit of excellence for each and every Indigenous child and embrace them individually and scaffold around their individual interests and the things that they're good at...”

- Professor Professor Chris Sarra, Stronger Smarter Institute (Emily Baker, Education, Reporter, 2017)

4.6. Young People Complete their Secondary Schooling

This data measures the proportion of 19-year-olds who have attained Year 12 or equivalent (VCE, VCAL – Intermediate or Senior – Certificate II or above. Rates have improved in East Gippsland from 57.7% in 2005 and 65.8% in 2011, although they are still below the average for Victoria and for regional Victoria as a whole.

Number of 19-year-olds completing Year 12 or equivalent – 2014 data:

	19 YEAR OLDS COMPLETING YEAR 12 OR EQUIVALENT
Non-metropolitan	89.5%
Across Victoria	88.2%
 East Gippsland	70.7%

Source: Department of Education and Training, data collated from VCAA, ABS Skills Victoria, 2009-14.

Proportion of students retained at secondary school to Year 12 level:

Apparent retention is a measure of school-situated Year 12 completions based on the comparison of the number of Year 12 students with the number of Year Seven students recorded when each group enters secondary school. The data is collected at the February student school census each year. There appears to be an increase in the number of Aboriginal students at Year 12 level. This data for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students is collected in August each year. This data is also volatile with significant differences each year and requires further investigation to get a clear picture of overall trends 2016 (Department of Education and Training).

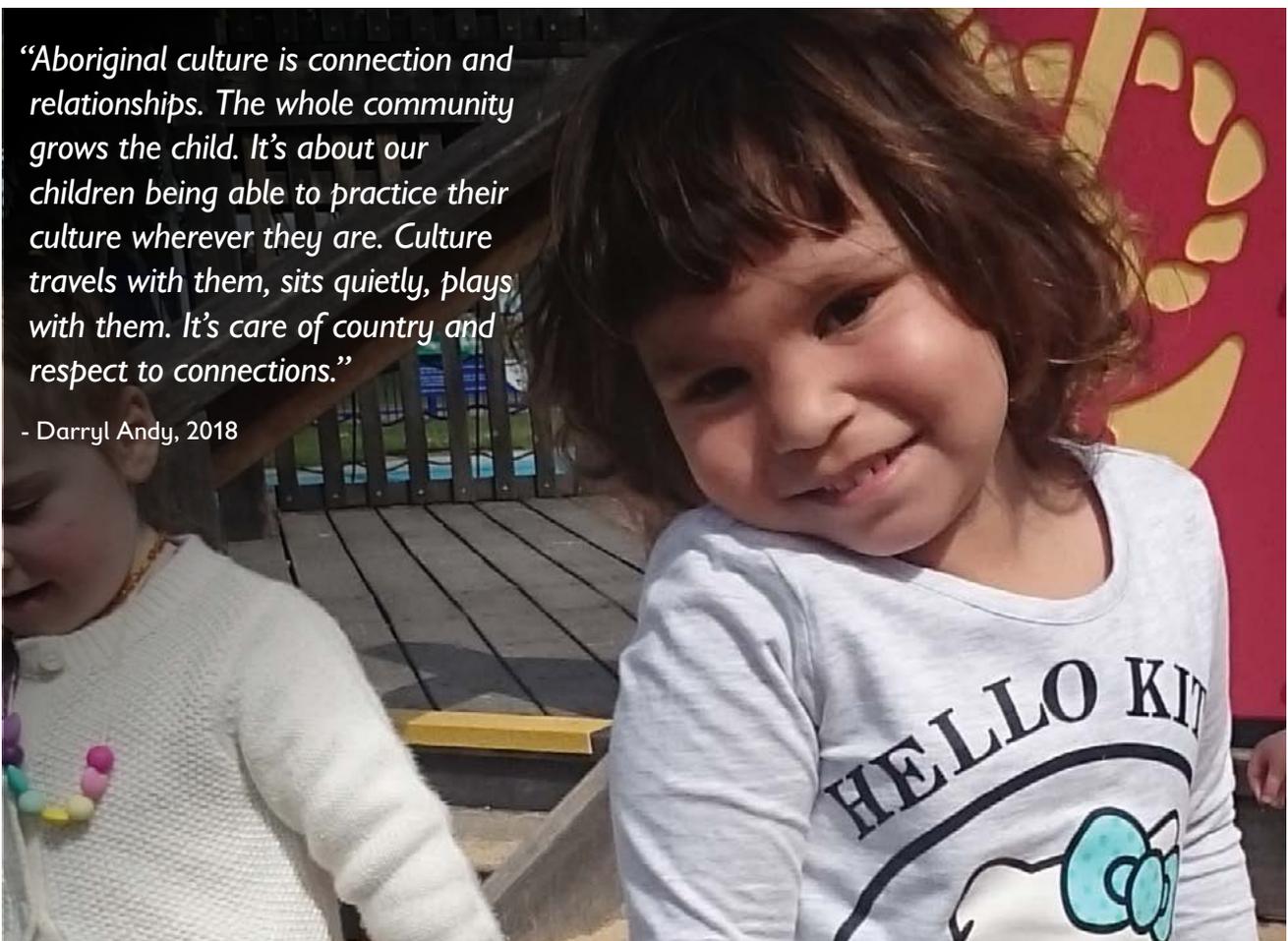
Apparent retention from Year Seven – 12 in 2016 for all students:

	APPARENT RETENTION
Across Victoria	88.7%
 East Gippsland	72.7%

Source: Department of Education and Training, data collated from VCAA, ABS Skills Victoria, 2009-14.

“Aboriginal culture is connection and relationships. The whole community grows the child. It’s about our children being able to practice their culture wherever they are. Culture travels with them, sits quietly, plays with them. It’s care of country and respect to connections.”

- Darryl Andy, 2018



These rates have improved in East Gippsland: up from 69.4% in 2004, but have fallen marginally from 74.2% in 2011.

DOMAIN 5: ACTIVE CITIZENS

There are five indicators under the domain of Active Citizens:

- 5.1. Young People Have Successful Transition From Secondary School;
- 5.2. Young People are in Employment;
- 5.3. Young people are Actively Helping in their Communities in East Gippsland;
- 5.4. Children and Young People are Engaged in Decision Making in Their Communities;
- 5.5. Children and Young People are Actively Engaged in Sporting, Youth and Community Groups

In 2016, 53.2% of East Gippsland's students completing Year 12 had a successful transition to further education or training compared with 76% for Victoria as a whole. This is a decrease, as 63% of East Gippsland's students successfully transitioned to further education or training in 2012. This is attributed to a drop in the number of young people taking up apprenticeships and traineeships in East Gippsland, although these remain significantly higher than the average for Victoria. University enrolments in East Gippsland have also decreased, with deferrals nearly doubling since 2012.

Year 12 completers destination data 2017 (2016 Year 12 students):

	EAST GIPPSLAND	ACROSS VICTORIA
Enrolled in university	24.4%	54.2%
Enrolled at TAFE	15.3%	14.5%
Apprenticeship / Traineeship	13.5%	8.0%
Employment	18.9%	9.6%
Deferred university place	21.3%	9.7%
Looking for work	6.1%	3.3%
Not in Employment, Education or Training	0.6%	0.5%

Source: Department of Education and Training, On Track data 2009-15.

Early school leavers destination data 2017 (2016 Year 12 students):

	EAST GIPPSLAND	ACROSS VICTORIA
Enrolled in university	0.0%	0.7%
Enrolled at TAFE	12.5%	23.6%
Apprenticeship / Traineeship	54.1%	20.6%
Employment	16.6%	24%
Looking for work	0.0%	15.9%
Not in Employment, Education or Training	16.7%	5.9%

Source: Department of Education and Training, On Track data 2009-15

In 2016, 66.6% of early school leavers successfully transitioned to further education or training in East Gippsland, an increase from 52.1% in 2012 and above the 44.2% for Victoria as a whole. The high rate of young people in East Gippsland transitioning from school to jobs is a positive outcome in many ways. However, the rate for Year 12 completers going straight into university has decreased from 32.3% in 2012 and again raises questions about the need to provide support and opportunities for students to pursue tertiary education, which could lead to stronger long-term outcomes for them individually and for the community generally.

The number of students who are not engaged in employment, education or training has increased from 4% in 2012 and is again closer to the 14.8% recorded in 2009.

Note: the data for East Gippsland early school leavers who are looking for work reflects the low participation rate for the 2015 On Track participant cohort and is only indicative of trends (Department of Education and Training, On Track data 2009-15).

5.2. Young People are in Employment

Unemployment rate for 15-24 year olds in 2016:

AGE	VICTORIA	EAST GIPPSLAND
15-19	22%	13.5% 
20-24	12.3%	12.3% 

Source: Department of Education and Training, data collated from VCAA, ABS Skills Victoria, 2009-14.

In East Gippsland in 2016, 13.5% of young people aged 15 to 19-years-old were not in employment, but looking for work. The trend shows an increase of almost one percent since 2011. This is significantly less than Victoria as a whole, where 22% of 15 to 19-year-olds were not in employment, but were looking for work. For those aged 20 to 24-years-old, East Gippsland and Victoria-wide rates are both at 12.3%. The trend for East Gippsland indicates an increase of nearly four percent of this age group not in employment.



Percentage of early school leavers who are unemployed six months after leaving school:

YEAR	EAST GIPPSLAND	ACROSS VICTORIA – METRO	ACROSS VICTORIA – REGIONAL
2015	16.3%	17.5%	13.1%

Source: VCAMS.

Of the young people in East Gippsland who have left school early, 16.3% are unemployed six months after leaving school. This is less than for Victoria as a whole, but higher than the average across regional areas.

5.3. Young People are Actively Helping in their Communities in East Gippsland

In East Gippsland, 20% of the population reported that they volunteered in the community in 2016, with young people aged 15 to 24-years-old only slightly less engaged than the general adult population.

Volunteering rate for 15 to 24-year-olds:

AGE	ACROSS VICTORIA	EAST GIPPSLAND
15-19	19.8%	18.2% 
20-24	18.2%	18.4% 

Source: Department of Education and Training, data collated from VCAA, ABS Skills Victoria, 2009-14.

Note: Census data varies with local data: 69% of young people interviewed in the East Gippsland Youth Survey 2015 were aged between 15 to 24-years-old and they indicated a higher volunteering rate of 28% (East Gippsland Youth Survey 2015, ABS Census 2016).

5.4. Children and Young People are Engaged in Decision-Making in Their Communities

Two case studies follow and a link to a short video that highlights the voices of children and young people in the community.



CASE STUDY 1: Youth Ambassadors – East Gippsland: Instigators of Positive Change

Youth Ambassadors are young people aged 12 and 25-years-old who are living, studying or working in East Gippsland and are passionate about creating positive change for young people.

The Youth Ambassadors Program was formed four years ago through funding from the Victorian Government's Youth Engage! initiative and is now supported by East Gippsland Shire Council. 20 young people are involved in Youth Ambassadors from all across East Gippsland, including Mallacoota, Orbost, Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance and Paynesville.

Youth Ambassadors are involved in a range of decision-making and community initiatives. Some Youth Ambassadors were involved in youth parliament in Canberra, where they experienced tabling a bill about an issue they felt strongly about. The issue they focussed on was school suspension policy and looking at healthy alternatives to school suspension.

Young people involved in Youth Ambassadors gain new opportunities, make connections and meet new people through events and community projects. This is especially beneficial for young people who live in isolated communities like Mallacoota.

The Youth Ambassadors Program plays an important role in advocating for the voice of young people to be included in community decision-making. Youth Ambassadors have had input into decisions about the Orbost Skate Park, supported the Colourfest event in youth week and advocated for more support for LGBTIQ+ young people. This advocacy has resulted in a weekly support group, UBU, at Headspace in Bairnsdale. Youth Ambassadors have been involved in a range of community events including NAIDOC Week, Youth Week, Children's Week and the Ice Prevention Forum. Being a Youth Ambassador also provides a significant opportunity to be involved in a range of community activities, as described by one: "...It means being seen [as] more than just a kid in the community that's going to cause trouble, it's about being heard and seen in a positive way".



CASE STUDY 2: headspace

headspace Bairnsdale provides free or low cost confidential support services for young people aged between 12 and 25 years. headspace Bairnsdale is there to help young people and answer any questions or concerns they have about their mental health, drug and alcohol issues, general and sexual health, and relationships.

headspace Bairnsdale offers a diverse range of services including: counselling, case work, employment assistance, drug and alcohol support, a bulk-billing GP, Centrelink appointments, disability support work, and child and adolescent psychiatric consultations. Headspace also offer support groups for young people to improve their mental health and enhance their social connections.

The centre has been operational since March 2017, and provided services to over 289 young people in 2017. headspace Bairnsdale has an active volunteer group, the Youth Advisory Group (YAG). The YAG meets on a regular basis to have their say about youth mental health. They helped to design the centre, including the layout and helped set priorities for the year ahead. The volunteers assist in the centre's service development, as well as providing peer support and mentoring.

YAG members also help to run events and represent headspace Bairnsdale at community events. One YAG member has been appointed to the National headspace YAG, so in 2018 the young people of East Gippsland will have a voice advocating for their mental health and wellbeing at a national level.

Feedback to date from the YAG's 16 registered members has indicated that the group has been a positive way for young people in East Gippsland to actively participate in developing services in a community organisation, learn new skills and have their voice heard and acted on.

Feedback from YAG volunteers:

“The friendly and welcoming environment of headspace has allowed me to feel safe and comfortable when sharing my thoughts and opinions in regards to youth mental health. Through being a part of my local YAG I have found I've been able to start making positive changes in the community. It's rewarding to see that so many people are willing to band together to better improve the services provided for youth and their families, particularly in rural communities like mine, where we are faced with a heavy stigma around mental health. The community and I have really benefited from having such a positive and welcoming space at headspace. Although our centre is new, it has already begun to break down the negative stigma. Being part of two wonderful reference groups has not only given me fantastic friends and amazing experiences, it has provided the chance for me to share my passions and help shape a positive outlook on youth mental health.”

“Being a part of the YAG has helped me feel as if I can help other young people have their say by providing opportunities for youth to come together such as games days and social groups. I love seeing the support we can give with our ideas and watching them being put into practice. headspace has been a way for me to feel involved in the community and make great friends whilst making a difference.”

Young people in East Gippsland participated in the Sing it Out Survey conducted by East Gippsland Shire. The top four concerns for 200 young people in East Gippsland are: alcohol and drugs, bullying, mental health and racism and cultural diversity (Sing it Out Survey, East Gippsland Shire, 2017). East Gippsland young people also expressed their views at a youth forum which reflected the concerns expressed in the Sing it Out Survey. Young people also talked about the importance of community engagement and belonging, youth spaces and services and public transport (Youth Affairs Council Victoria, Youth Forums, 2016)

Children's Voices on Children's Week

What children thought of Children's Week and the activities held was captured during Children's Week 2016. The result of which is a video that captures children's voices and encourages community members and organisations to get involved and support Children's Week by acknowledging and celebrating children in our community. You can view the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/05tgdDlwx3g?rel=0>

5.5. Children and Young People are Actively Engaged in Sporting, Youth and Community Groups

A survey of young people in East Gippsland in 2015 found that 59% of young people were involved in sporting, youth or other organisations. The data from small sample groups in 2010 and 2015 indicates a small trending decrease in this type of participation (Source: East Gippsland Youth Strategy 2010, East Gippsland Youth Survey 2015).

Data from the 2016 ABS Census also shows that there is a considerable number of young people who volunteer. Around 18% of young people aged 15 to 24-years-old volunteer their time with an organisation.



NEXT STEPS

This report provides the second snapshot of the wellbeing of children and young people in East Gippsland, with the first being published in 2013. The Children's Wellbeing Collective and the Children's Wellbeing Initiative at Save the Children promotes and supports collaborative efforts to address priority areas. Save the Children is committed to reproducing the report at least every five years in order to review progress and ensure a light is shone on the wellbeing of children and young people.

We all need to work together to improve how our children grow up. Whilst there are many strengths, the data in the report also highlights the challenges children and young people in East Gippsland face. These challenges are concerning and will require collaborative action and effort to combat. Every organisation and community member can play a role in turning these challenges around. All services, community groups, businesses, education settings and sporting clubs can focus on the wellbeing of children and young people and in doing so, combine efforts to create positive change. Community members can play a role through volunteering and supporting children and young people in their community. Thereby, bringing the voices of children and young people to the fore and promoting healthy families through greater support and inclusion. We can do this by working together.

If you are interested in supporting this work as a partner, volunteer or if you have data or a story to share, please contact Rachel Bell or Rachael Dooley, Children's Wellbeing Initiative – East Gippsland at Save the Children on 03-51537500 or email: rachel.bell@savethechildren.org.au or rachael.dooley@savethechildren.org.au



ACRONYMS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AEDC	Australian Early Development Census
CSA	Crime Statistics Agency
DET	Department of Education and Training
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services
LGAs	Local Government Areas
MCH	Maternal Child Health
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SEHQ	School Entrant Health Questionnaire
SES	Socio-Economic Status
VCAMS	Victorian Child and Adolescent Monitoring System
VCHWS	Victorian Child Health and Wellbeing Survey
VSHAWS	Victorian Student Health and Wellbeing Survey

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