

1. THE LONG-STANDING COMMITMENT OF THE MELBOURNE CITY COUNCIL TO CHILDREN'S SERVICESBY RUTH
MAURIE CROW

The attached chronological chart has been prepared from the reports of the Melbourne City Council Health Committee from 1913 to 1980.

From the chart the following facts can be noted:

1.1. INNOVATIVE SERVICES OF THE MELBOURNE CITY COUNCIL

1. The first children's services in the municipality were entirely dependent on philanthropic groups, or churches.
2. Before 1914 there was no municipal involvement in services for children.
3. The Melbourne City Council was the first Council to establish an Infant Welfare Centre (1920) and the first Council to establish a municipal pre-school centre (1938).
4. Serious infections epidemics prompted the opening of Infant Welfare Centres (Baby Health Centres).
5. The State Government gave matching grants to Baby Health Centres. These were the first State government grants to Councils for children's services. (councils had previously depended almost entirely on rate revenue).
6. Dr. Seantlebury Brown was the first Maternal Medical Officer to be appointed. Thus the Melbourne City Council was the first to make such an appointment.
7. The Council financed the Baby Health Centres Committee and thus enabled municipalities to meet together. This was the first such gathering of Councils on children's services.
8. The Huntingfield Kindergarten was the first municipal kindergarten in Australia.
9. The Council co-operated with the establishment of the Lady Lowrie Centre thus assisting with the first Commonwealth children's service.
10. The Council included dental clinic in buildings for kindergartens. This was the first clustering of services for children.
11. The Council set up the first Municipal Advisory Committee in Victoria.
12. The Council campaigned for the Government to introduce the Pre-school Act and the Amendments to the Local Government Act.
13. The Council was the first municipality to give scholarships to students attending the Kindergarten College.
14. The Council was the first Municipality in Victoria to establish an Infant Welfare Centre at an emergency (temporary) housing settlement.

15./

RUTH CROW
E2-5, 89 O'Shanassy Street
North Melbourne, Vic. 3051
Phone: 328 2345

15. The Council was the first municipality to prepare a Strategy Plan and community action plans with widespread community participation and to follow this through with the Community Consultation on children's services.

The above precis of the full report shows the leading role played by the Council as compared to other municipalities up to 1950 and the possibility of it once again assuming this leadership.

1.2. 1950-1960s: A PERIOD OF CONSOLIDATION

The period 1950 to 1970 was a period of consolidation of services. During these years the services that were provided became more universal. For example in 1943 1,200 pre-schoolers attended some kindergarten centre in the Melbourne Municipality out of a pre-school population of 3,500. That is about one child in three.

In 1969 1,037 children enrolled at Melbourne Municipalities pre-school centres and in 1970 1,128 children in the first grade of schools. Thus 91.9% of the children could have attended a pre-school centre. That is almost 100% as compared to 30% in 1943.

The Melbourne Municipality was not the only municipal area where there was an absence of pioneering services for children during the 1950 to 1970s. It is a symptom of all municipalities in Victoria.

It would seem that once the pattern had been set for Government funding the missionary zeal of the 1920s and 1940s was dissipated until new types of social problems began to make themselves felt.

Another contributing factor may have been that as services for young children were now being developed in all municipalities a large proportion of effort of community minded people was devoted to their own particular area, in the middle and outer suburbs, types of people who would have pioneered the early kindergarten movement and the baby health centre movement, was directed at parochial achievements in the neighbourhoods where they lived in the more well-to-do suburbs.

This coupled with the displacement of people in the inner suburbs during the 1950s and 1960s resulted in the Council having sole responsibilities for services. As there were no committees (of either parents or of philanthropically inspired people) the Council administration was not tempered by the opinions of users or socially minded reformers.

1.3. FROM THE 1970s - A TURN TOWARD COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

New types of social problems began to be recognised in the 1970s and gradually it was realised that consolidation of existing services does not necessarily mean that the needs of the people are being met.

The Council helped the Melbourne University (Dept. of Social Studies) with a report based on a study of Kensington in 1975 "Pre-school Education a Service or Disservice".

Such studies indicated the need for much more involvement of the parents in the services provided for their children.

The way forward for human services has been charted by the reports of the 1980 Community Consultation on Childrens Services. The policy recommendations of these reports have now been adopted by the Council, and a new Community-based childrens services association spanning the Melbourne municipality has been launched, to work for the implementation of the policy recommendations and act as an Advisory body to the Council on family and childrens services. (See Section 4 of this submission).

The reports of the Melbourne City Council Community Planning Groups (Carlton, Flemington, Kensington, Parkville, North/West Melbourne, East Melbourne and South Yarra) are also valuable planning blueprints. Although these reports are mainly on physical planning matters all the reports contain some important ideas for the future of services for children and for the future of the physical and social environments in which children will be growing up.

Now that there is an elected Council in the Melbourne municipality the scene is set for the Melbourne City Council to once again become the municipality that leads the way forward on the provision of children's services.