



Community asset mapping in Brimbank

This snapshot summarises the findings from an extensive community asset mapping exercise conducted in the City of Brimbank: a dynamic, multicultural community located in the western metropolitan area of Melbourne, Victoria.

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Why does it matter?

Where children and young people live can have a substantial impact on their quality of life. ^[1] Research has shown that communities facing relative disadvantage often experience poorer outcomes in terms of continued engagement with education, ^[2] opportunities for employment, ^[3] and overall wellbeing. ^[4]

The presence of locally accessible services, programs and infrastructure that support the positive development of youth and young people can increase access to opportunities and contribute to a reduction in social inequities.

Asset mapping is a strength-based activity that involves identifying, cataloguing and analysing information about existing assets (e.g., programs, services, organisations, infrastructure) in a particular community.

The data generated through asset mapping shines a light on the state of service delivery in a particular place at a particular time, and can be used to inform decision-making in a range of areas, including planning for future services or identifying gaps in the system. Understanding the nature of a community's assets can promote action that centres the community's strengths, while also revealing areas for potential development.



What did we do?

We conducted an extensive mapping exercise focusing on assets that contribute to improving the education outcomes, employability, and wellbeing of Brimbank's youth (15-24 years). A register was developed to capture key information about these assets.

A suite of analyses were conducted on the final dataset, including spatial mapping and relationship analysis. The learnings from this activity provided us with an understanding of the current state of service provision in Brimbank as it relates to youth and young people.

What were our findings?

- 64% of the assets we identified that provide education, employment and wellbeing services for Brimbank's youth were concentrated in the two main town centres – Sunshine and St Albans
- Community service organisations appear to provide the majority of these services in Brimbank, and are almost exclusively funded by the State or Federal government
- In some areas of Brimbank, such as Keilor Downs and Sydenham, very few education, employment and wellbeing services were identified
- All of Brimbank's high schools provide some degree of career counselling or further education support
- Mental health services specifically catering to the needs of young people appear to be limited. Schools were identified as the primary providers of wellbeing support, and only a limited

number of specialist mental health services for Brimbank's youth were identified

- Victoria University (VU) is the only university in Brimbank, with two main campuses in the region. VU also provides *technical and further education*, and guarantees a university placement for young people who graduate high school in the area
- There appears to be more registered training organisations in Brimbank than other educational institutions (i.e., schools or universities). Registered training organisations are often expensive outside of government support

What did we learn?

Asset mapping can be a valuable tool for understanding a community's strengths and locating areas of potential development. However, when taken in isolation, data gathered through asset mapping can lack the contextualisation required for a comprehensive picture of a community.

For example, we found a notable concentration of education, employment and wellbeing assets in the St Albans and Sunshine town centres. However, when this finding was combined with statistical data, we discovered that these areas are also over-represented in terms of youth unemployment and family joblessness.

As such, we discovered that the information generated by community asset mapping is most effective when combined with other data and evidence, such as population statistics and community consultations. Communities are inherently complex, so a diverse suite of data, methods, and evidence is essential to identifying and understanding existing strengths and further needs.





References

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About Pathways in Place

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The Program teams are each leading one of two complementary streams:

1. Early learning and development pathways (children and youth 0-15 y.o.), led by Griffith University in Logan (Queensland, Australia).
2. Pathways through education to employment (youth 15-24 y.o.), led by Victoria University in Brimbank (Victoria, Australia).



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