



FOCUS ON GYMPIE:
A Kids Eye View 2022



GYMPIE REGION
LOCAL LEVEL ALLIANCE
Collective Impact in Action



Acknowledgements

This document has been compiled and produced by the Gympie Region Local Level Alliance (LLA). The LLA is delivered in the Gympie region through a partnership between Gympie Community Place, Act for Kids, and the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs. Local Level Alliances are responsible for identifying the family support services communities need and how those needs can be met. They are designed to ensure all families are supported with an integrated mix of services that respond to local needs and issues. The Gympie Region LLA is committed to listening to the voices of children and ensuring they are welcomed and valued as community members. The *Focus on Gympie: A Kids Eye View* project has been a starting point for capturing and celebrating the views of children by using creative methods.

Photographs, artworks and stories contained in this report have been provided by children and young people from across the Gympie region. They showcase how children see their community. They provide a perspective about the people, places and possibilities in children's lives.

We thank every child and young person who contributed. Thank-you also to the children and young people who participated in the Project Advisory Group and helped to design project resources, select and frame artwork, and who have helped us to identify the key messages and themes of this project.

We would also like to acknowledge and express our appreciation for the following key project contributors:

- The Regional Arts Development Fund, which is a partnership between the Queensland Government and Gympie Regional Council to support local arts and culture in regional Queensland,
- Local Artists - Henna Halonen and Sandra Ross who facilitated a series of incredible visual arts workshops with children from across the region,
- Holly Moore, Centre Manager at Vicinity Shopping Centres, whose contribution towards promotion, resources, workshops and centre-based exhibitions has been invaluable.
- Rachel Rolfe from Lead Based Ink who provided graphic design
- Jekka Shearer from Naturally Jek Photography who captured photographs of children and young people from across the region
- Members of the LLA Core group, in particularly Jayne Clapton and Abbie Grant-Taylor, who helped to develop and manage the project, and the partner organisations of the LLA.

We respect and acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the Gympie region, the Kabi Kabi First Nation people (also known as Gubbi Gubbi), and the Butchulla and Wakka Wakka people of the greater Gympie region. We pay respect to Elders past and present for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of Australia's first people. We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who live in, work in, and contribute to the Gympie Region.



The Regional Arts Development Fund
is a partnership between the
Queensland Government and
Gympie Regional Council to support local
arts and culture in regional Queensland.





Contents

Introduction	5
<i>Focus on Gympie: A Kids Eye View – What and why</i>	7
How we approached <i>A Kids Eye View</i>	13
<i>Rationale</i>	14
<i>Using creative activities as a method</i>	14
<i>Process</i>	15
<i>What we learnt from the children’s creative activities</i>	16
Presentation	23
<i>People</i>	24
<i>How children and young people see themselves</i>	29
<i>Pets</i>	33
<i>Places</i>	35
<i>Possibilities</i>	39
Where to from here? Opportunities?	42
Endnotes	44

Introduction

The wellbeing of children right across the Gympie region is at the core of the work being done through the Gympie Region LLA. Hearing, listening to and responding to their voices is important to us.



From before birth children are connected to family, community, culture and place. Their earliest development and learning takes place through these relationships, particularly within families, who are children's first and most influential educators. As children participate in everyday life, they develop interests and construct their own identities and understandings of the world.'

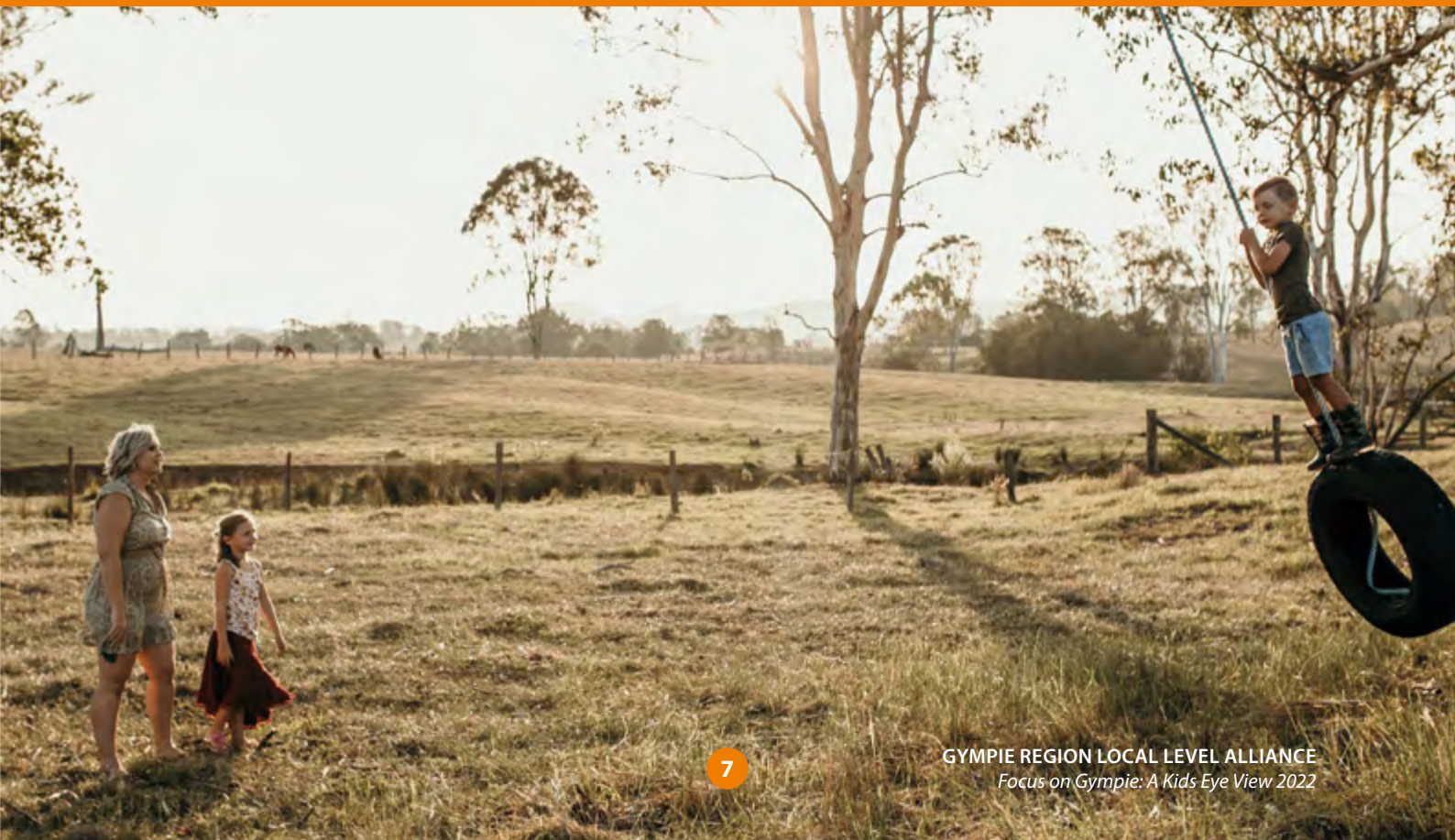




The Gympie Region covers a large and diverse geographical area spanning some 6,898 square kilometres.

The region comprises the City of Gympie and its many surrounding smaller towns and communities. It includes the Cooloola Coast communities to the east, the Mary Valley to the south, north to Curra, Gunalda and Theebine, and west to Kilkivan and Goomeri.

Focus on Gympie: A Kids Eye View – What and why



During the past five years, the Gympie Region LLA has partnered with community members, government departments and services to develop whole of community and place-based responses to create the best start for every child in the region. We recognise that children bring value and influence to our community and have the right to contribute to decision-making. Through *Focus on Gympie: A Kids Eye View*, children who are growing up in the Gympie region have had opportunity to share what's important to them. Hence, using various creative activities, *Focus on Gympie: A Kids Eye View* aims to capture and celebrate the voices and views of children in the Gympie region and provide them with an opportunity to have authentic input into the planning and decisions that affect their lives.

After engaging children in workshops and conversations designed to empower their participation and contribute to their sense of belonging as active community members, *Focus on Gympie: A Kids Eye View* also shares key messages, artwork and themes through this report and local exhibitions.

This project brings the experiences, rights and views of children to the centre of the LLA's collaborative planning efforts and will help services, funding bodies and the broader community understand the perspective of children and recognise the unique strengths, barriers and opportunities they face growing up in our community.

Current data shows us that many children in the Gympie region are thriving. However, some children in our region experience vulnerabilities and face big challenges.

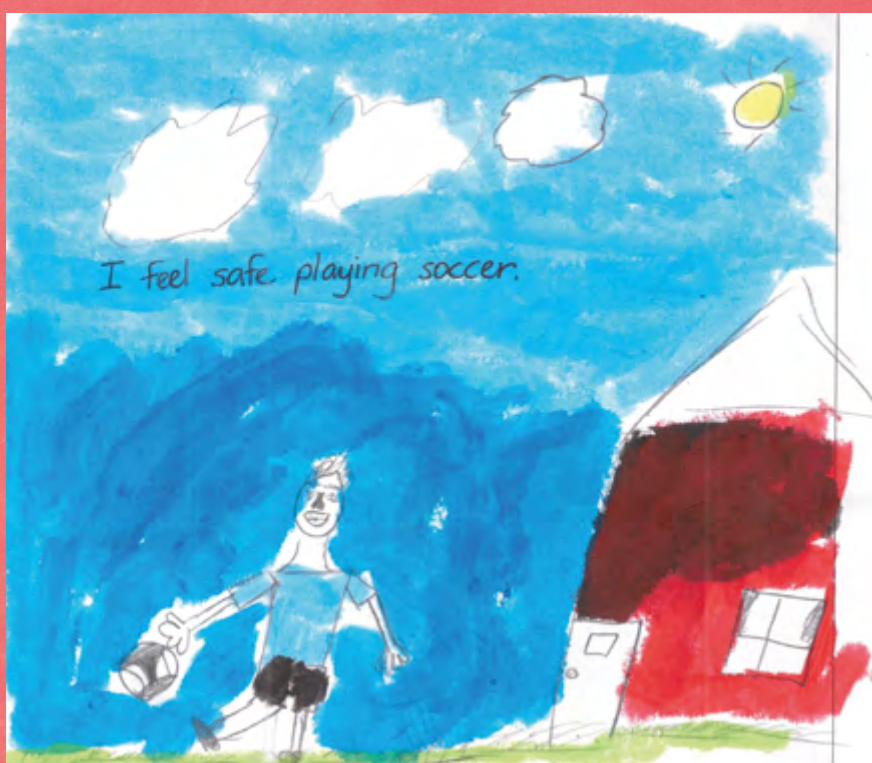
The 2016 Census provides us with data on relative socio-economic disadvantage, based on a range of characteristics. The Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD) paints a challenging picture for our region. With a score of 919, the Gympie Region sits in the 13th percentile which means that only 13% of areas in the country have higher levels of disadvantage. Or, to phrase that another way, 87% of areas have higher levels of advantage.



➤ 64.8% of children were read with regularly at home before school age (AEDC).



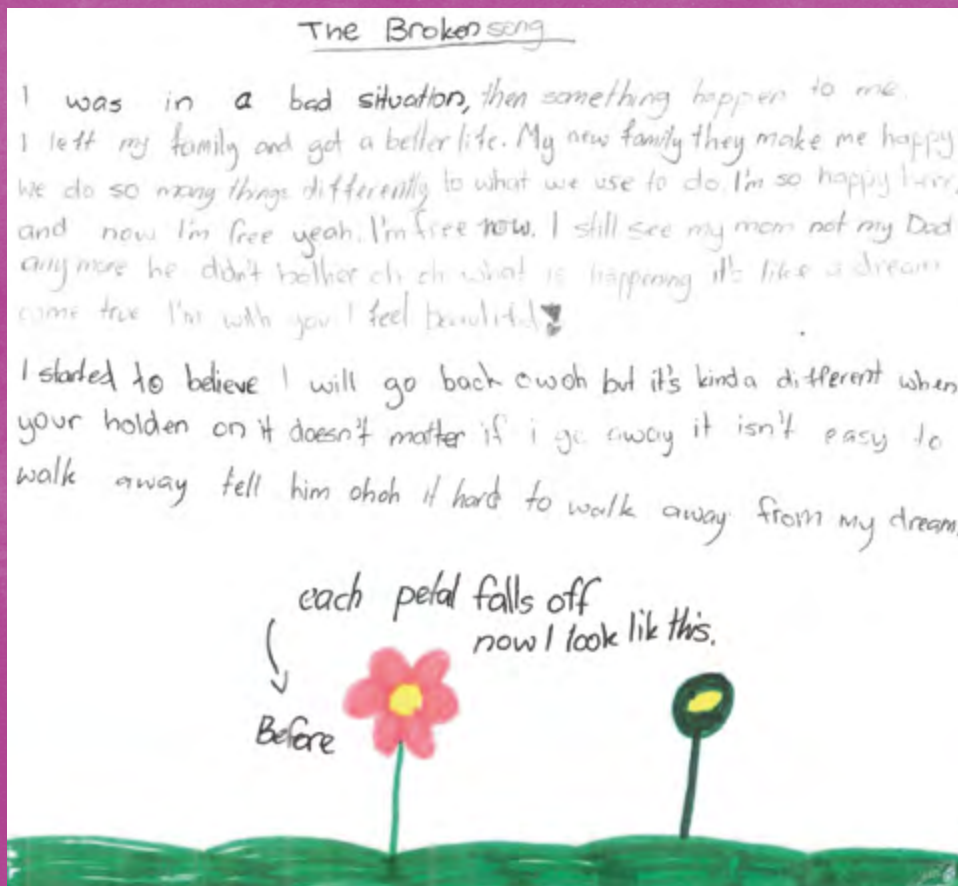
➤ 79.9% of children attended preschool/kindergarten program in year before school (AEDC).



➤ 72.4% of children are on track with their physical health and wellbeing starting school (AEDC).



➤ 27.7% of children are vulnerable on one or more domain while 13% are vulnerable on two or more domains (AEDC).





Where we live has an impact on life chances.

A child's earliest years fundamentally shape their life chances. Gaps in capabilities between children from socioeconomically disadvantaged families and their more advantaged peers appear early in life. Starting school 'behind the eight ball' can begin a cycle of disadvantage that sets a trajectory for poorer outcomes later in life."



When we consider place-based practice, it is usually quantitatively defined, (definitions of places/ regions, demographics, data sources). By shifting to some qualitative work, and by using artwork, photography and workshops as the methodology, the *Kids Eye View* project has allowed us to find out more.

Through this project, we can start to consider the diverse experiences that children and young people have growing up across the region, and identify some areas of commonality.



How we approached *A Kids Eye View*



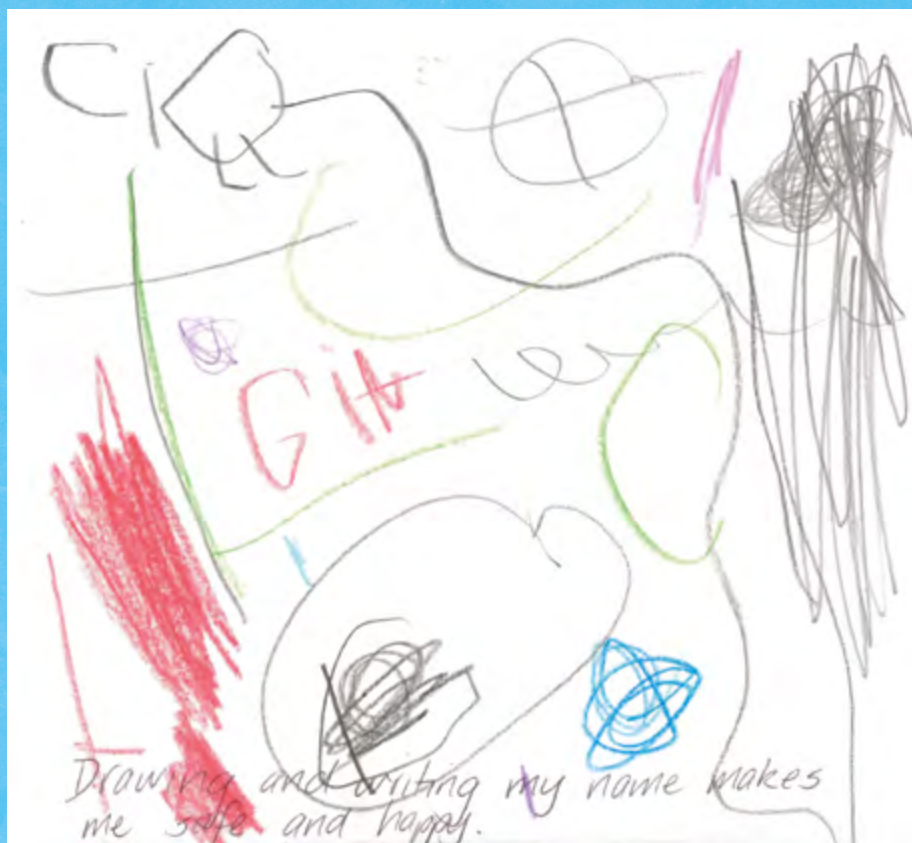
Rationale

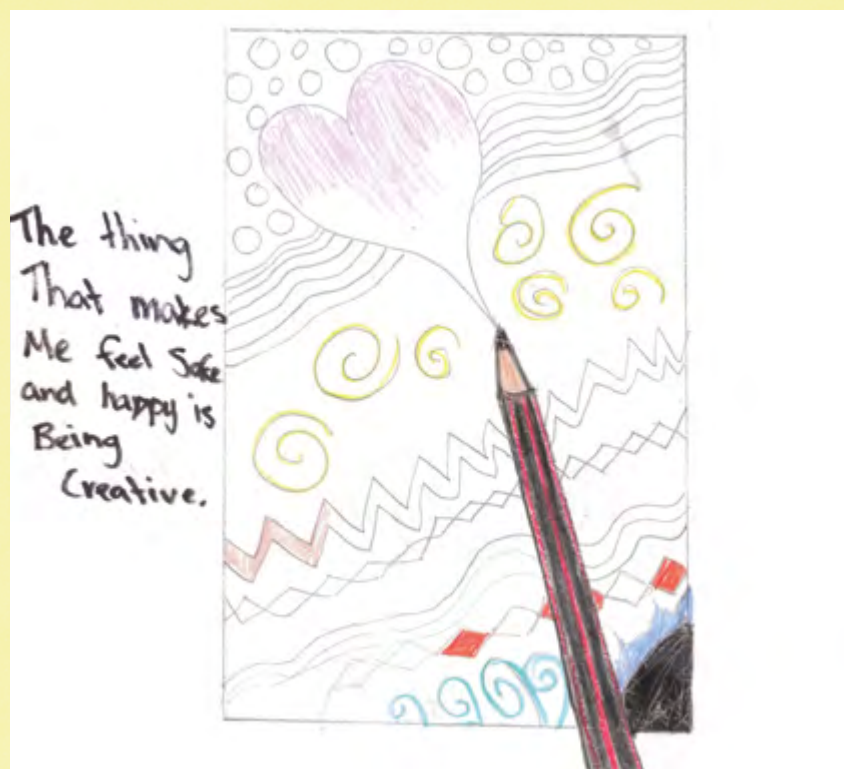
In providing an opportunity for 'Kids' to express how they view their world, various aspects and facets of their lives become apparent. Such expressions can identify specific details, such as the importance of people and places, as well as other relationships and activities. Furthermore, Kids Eye views can highlight senses of happiness, safety, participating and belonging – all essential to their inherent wellbeingⁱⁱⁱ iv. Acknowledging and exploring these intrinsic aspects of children's lives helps to understand how children developmentally navigate and transverse private to public spaces, that is: from families and personal relationships to active citizenship; from places such as home and school to community participation; from encounters and experiences to potential and opportunities^v. Therefore, understanding the significance of the transformation of children's sense of place in their world also expands a community's understandings of what matters and what responses are required.

Using creative activities as a method

This project utilised a range of creative activities as the method to collect the Kids Eye views. The creative method was chosen as it encompassed a variety of strategies that children felt at ease with by which to relate their stories and insights. For example, when describing the use of art works, Alnasuan (2016, p. 1)^{vi} states:

Children adore art because they use it as a language to express how they feel and to communicate with the outside world where words may fail. Child art is an instrument for the children as they discover the world through intellectual, emotional and physical methods.





Process

Focus on Gympie: A Kids Eye View built on the existing work of the LLA, to improve outcomes for children, by documenting children's views on what's important to them in their community. The project engaged children through photography and visual arts mediums and presented their experiences and views about growing up in the Gympie Region in local exhibitions and in this report. An advisory group that included seven children between the ages of 5 and 15 years was established and consulted throughout the project.

The *Kids Eye View* project targeted children and young people who live in the Gympie Region. It involved hearing and capturing their voices and views through intentional conversations, workshops and visual arts mediums. The project was accessible to all children in the region, with free workshops facilitated in places that children and families frequent (e.g. local shopping centre and at the 2022 Little Kids Day Out) and some broader scale participation opportunities such as a Photo Scavenger Hunt and survey which were promoted on social media and through schools.

Visual arts workshops for children were facilitated by local artists, Henna and Sandra, at Gympie Central Shopping Centre. Kindy and primary school aged children were invited to participate in an 'art class with a difference'. Henna and Sandra worked one on one to guide nearly 50 participants to create life-sized self-portraits/silhouettes whilst exploring the themes of people, place and possibilities. The impactful creations were displayed in the shopping centre through the month of October 2022.

We also asked children to share photographs of places and experiences in their local community that are of significance to them. The Child Protection Week Artwork competitions, Kids Eye View Photo Scavenger Hunt and Kids Eye View Survey were promoted on social media and through local schools and early childhood education and care programs. We showcased artwork at the Little Kids Day Out event and used this as an opportunity to further engage children in the project. At this event, we offered children the use of instant cameras to take photographs of things that interested them. With the support of Act For Kids, 110 additional artworks from children relating to the project themes. In total over 500 children have contributed to this project.

Key messages, photographs and artwork created by children through this project were also featured at an exhibition at Gympie Community Place in October 2022 for Children’s Week. With assistance from a graphic designer, a PowerPoint presentation and this report were developed.

This project provided a platform and opportunity to document and showcase the things that are important to children in the Gympie region, what they wish for in their lives and things that they like or don't like in their community.

What we learnt from the children’s creative activities

Activity: Child Protection Week art competition entries 2020, 2021

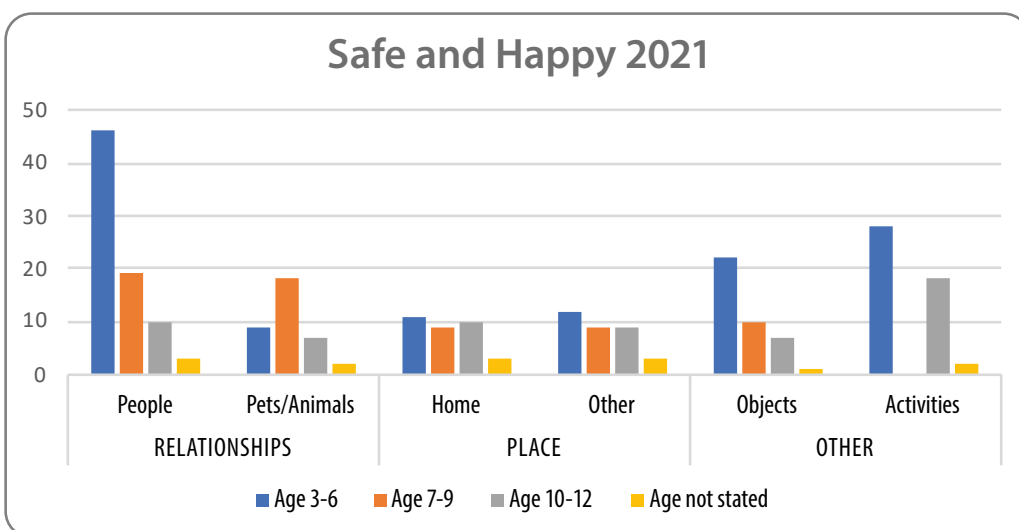
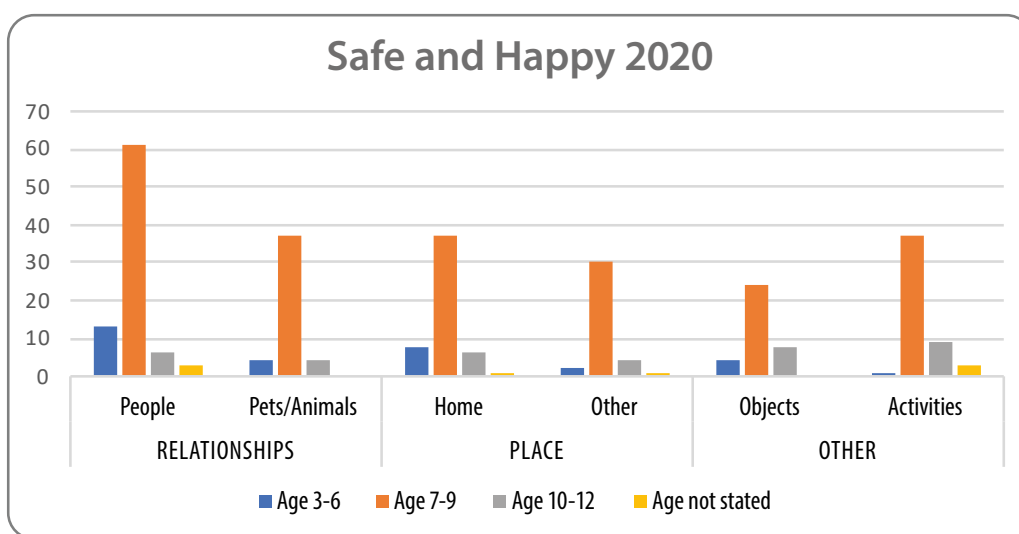
Children were invited to draw/paint/collage what makes them feel happy and safe.

Comments/interpretation:

We looked at the responses and found common themes. Responses were grouped under:

- a) Relationships
- b) Place – home and other (beach, parks, football grounds, playgrounds)
- c) Other – objects (e.g. toys) and activities they like doing (e.g. camping, sport)

It was apparent that the images and themes of the children’s artwork changed according to the children’s ages, as indicated in the graphs below.



Activity: Kids Eye View Art Workshops at the shopping centre 2022

Life-sized self-portrait workshops were facilitated by local artists for kindy and primary school aged children. The half-hour workshops involved children interacting one-on-one with an artist and consenting to the artist tracing their profile silhouette.

Comments/ Interpretation:

This was a life size activity where the children chose how they wanted their identity to be expressed and detailed. For example, they chose their pose, what outfits they were wearing, colours, expressions on their faces and what symbols of things that were important to them on the silhouette (e.g. food, activities, brands, styles, nature, contemporary trends, and personal characteristics).





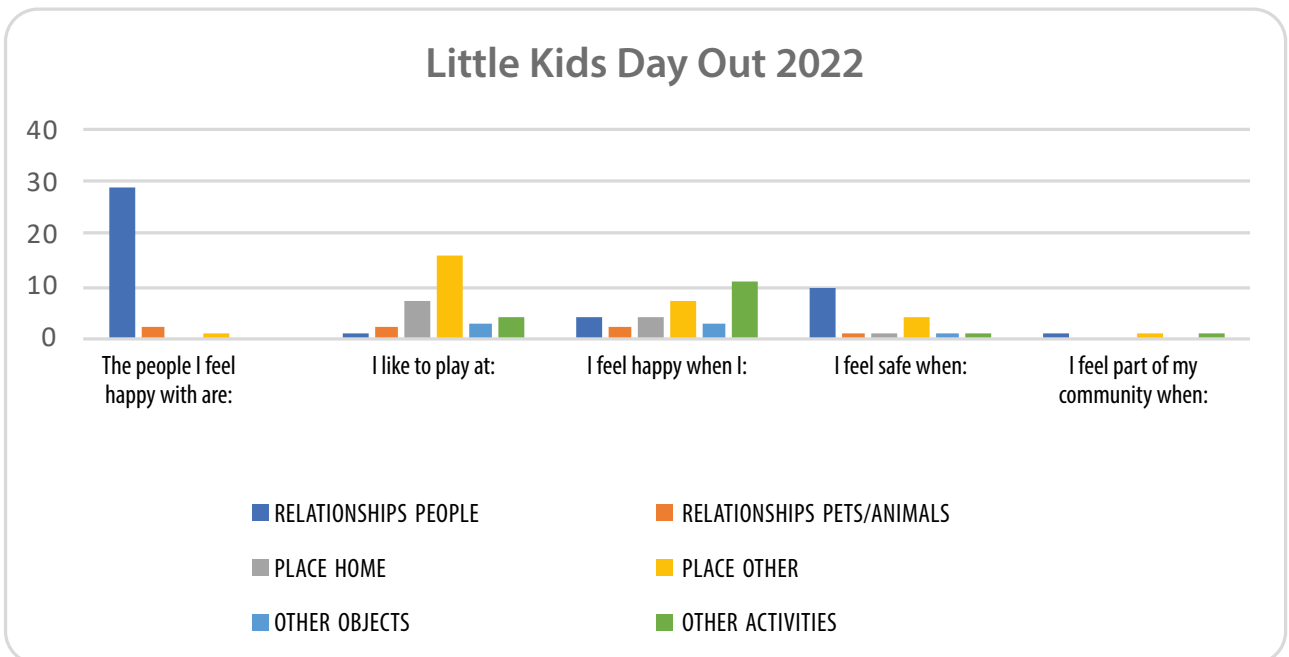
Activity: Little Kids Day out 2022 drawing entries (Act For Kids activity)

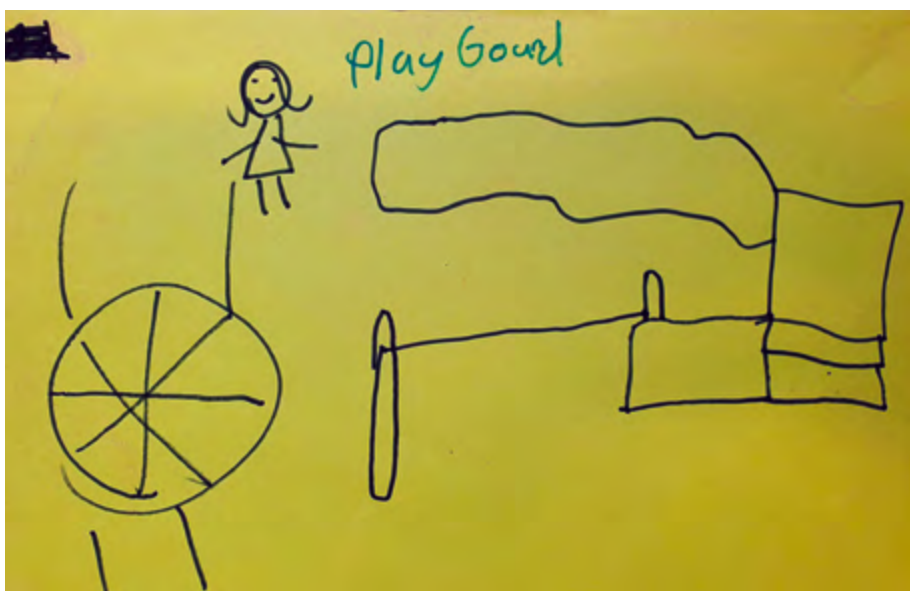
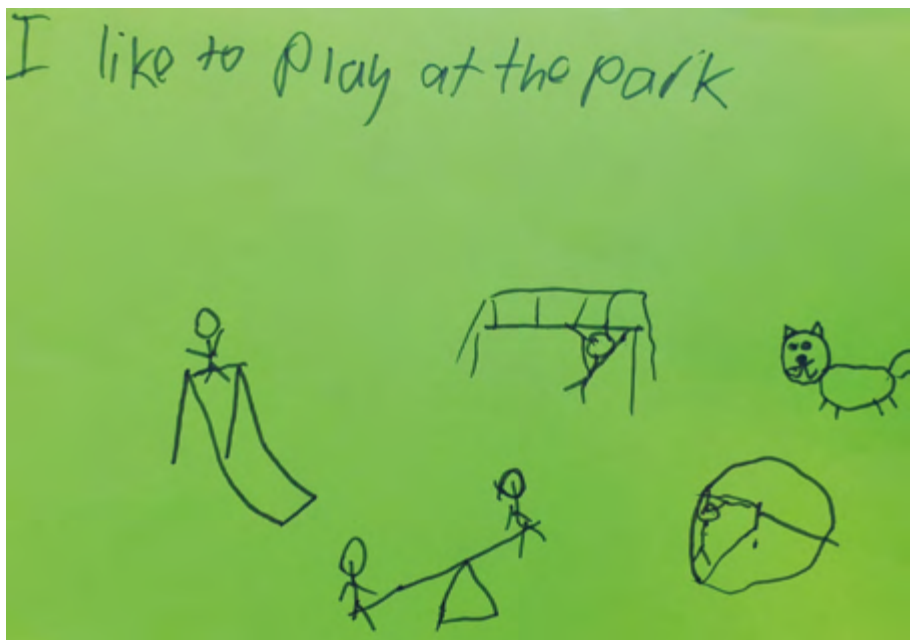
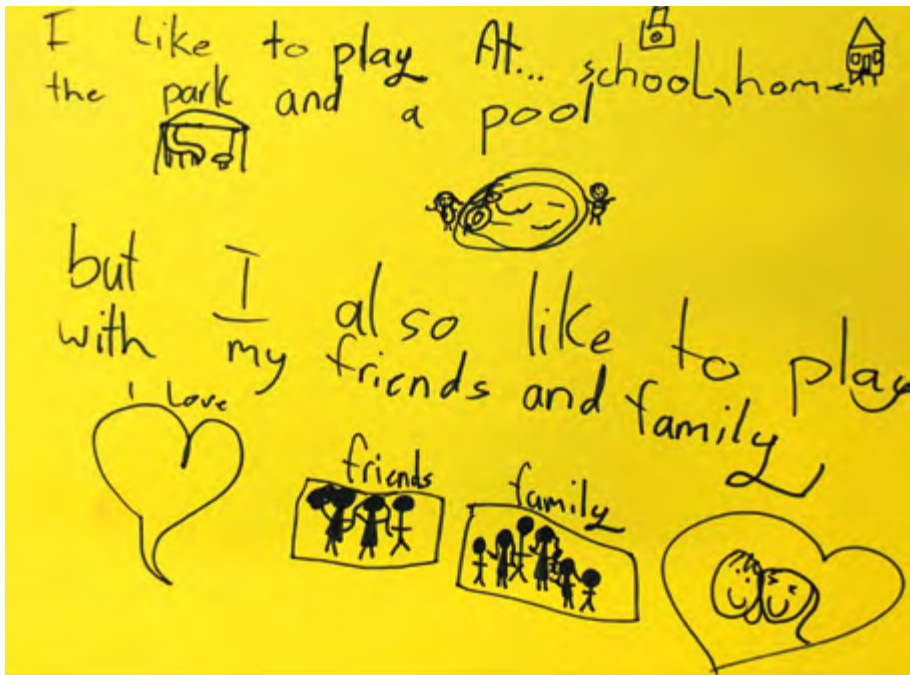
Children were invited to respond to themes:

- People I feel happy with...*
- I like to play at...*
- I feel happy when I...*
- I feel safe when...*
- I feel part of my community when...*

Comments/Interpretation:

Although a different set of guiding questions to the Child Protection Week art competitions, the children’s responses in this activity revealed similar themes of relationships, place and activities. The graph below indicates the spread of these themes according to the guiding statements.





Activity: Photos by children at Little Kids Day Out 2022


Self-directed instax camera use by children.

Comments/ interpretations:

Photos taken by children showed images of activities, animals, toys, police car, trees, and activity displays.


Activity: Photo Scavenger Hunt


FOCUS ON GYMPIE – A KID'S EYE VIEW PHOTO SCAVENGER HUNT



Here's your task –

Use a camera or an available device with a camera app.
Read and choose one or more prompt to drive your creativity and object of your photo.
Take photos where you live, play or learn, or plan to take this list with you on an outing. The prompts are designed around the themes **People**, **Places**, and **Possibilities**, and you can do as many or as few as you are inspired; any contribution is appreciated.






PEOPLE


(Me and my community)

- I feel I'm good at...
- I enjoy doing...
- I'd like to learn...
- This stops me...
- My goal is...
- Something really special to me...
- Something special that has happened to me...
- A community means...
- I spend time with...




PLACES

- The best thing about living here is...
- This could be better...
- This is where I play...
- Today I went to...
- This is what I did and felt...
- A place I like to visit
 - I go with...
 - This is what we do...
 - This is how it makes me feel...



POSSIBILITIES

- I'm looking forward to...
- If I had a magic wand I would...
- My goal for the future is...



GYMPIE REGION LOCAL LEVEL ALLIANCE
Collective Impact in Action

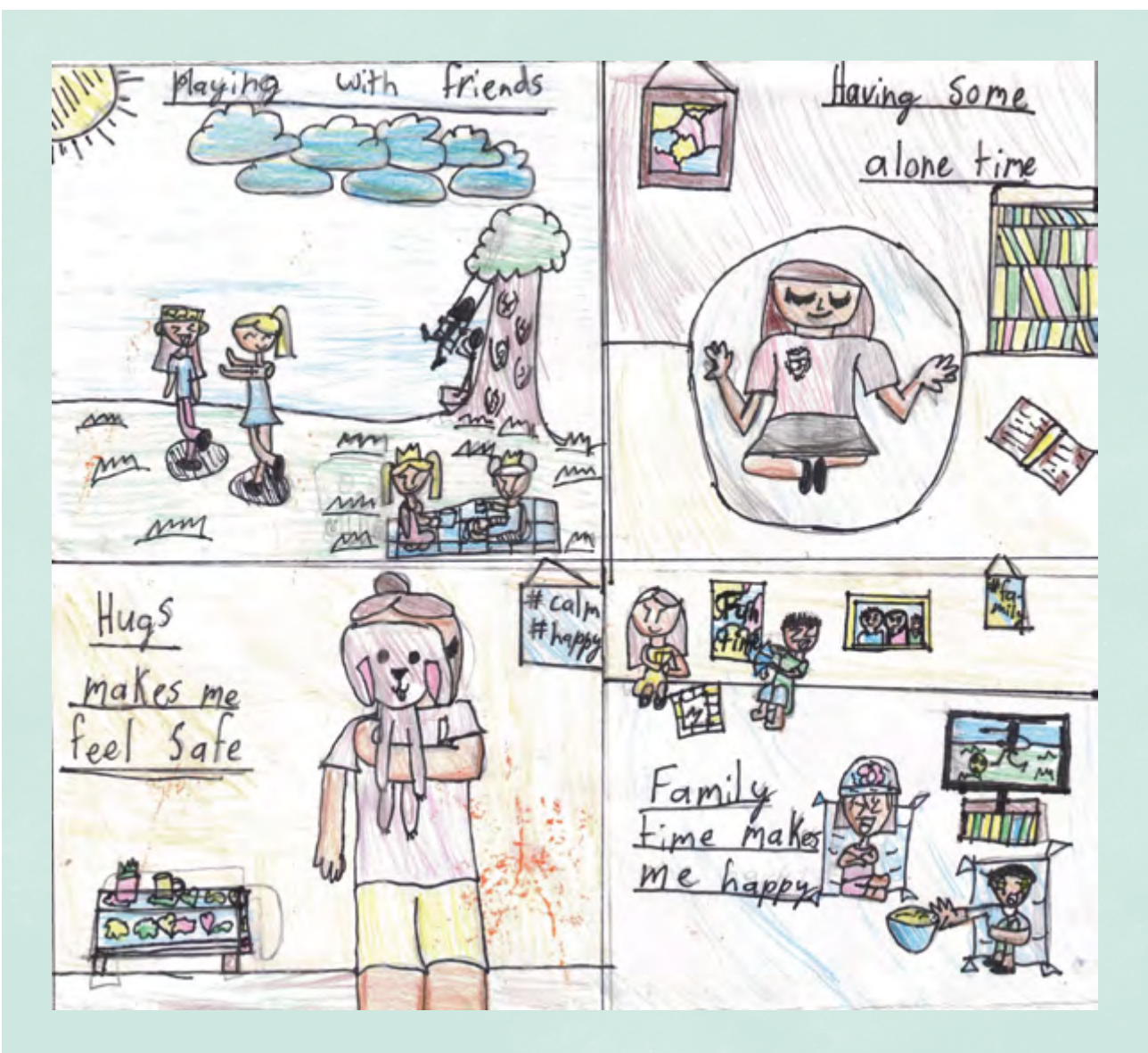
Comment/Interpretation:

Due to privacy concerns, children were asked not to submit photos of people's faces. Children submitted a range of images including toys (lego, doll house), activities (ball, football boots), animals (paw prints in sand, chicken) and nature (flowers, river, beach, trees, sky). It was evident that children value outdoor spaces.



Activity: Kids Eye View survey responses

As another method of engagement, we used an online survey in which children could submit artwork or written responses in relation to the project themes of people, places and possibilities.







Presentation

The artwork shared with us showed that when children are little, family, home, pets, objects (such as teddy) are important. The places they connected with and valued were more likely to be private spaces like their home. Older children seemed to be expanding into more public spaces and highlighted sporting groups, friendships and places they had visited as well as valuing the links to home and family. What we saw was that children, in general, focused on people and places. Younger children seemed focused in the here and now. We didn't see many children offer thoughts about possibilities.



People

People shape our local culture through their stories, values, creativity, generosity and passion^{vii}. The *Kids Eye View* project sought to explore the theme of 'People' with children by using activities and discussions about identity (self-portrait work), about how children see themselves and about people of significance in their lives.



➤ Younger children tended to start with themselves and Mum...





- As they got older they often then included Dad, siblings, grandparents and other family members.





➤ Even for older children, family remained important. As does a hug from Mum.





➤ Strong supportive families are invaluable to a child's development.



➤ For some kids, step and blended families are part of their reality. This was expressed in a number of drawings.



➤ Pets also appear alongside much loved family members.





How children and young people see themselves

The silhouette workshop allowed young people to express their views of themselves. The participants shared predominantly positive attributes and outlooks. Words like “strength” and “power” were featured.

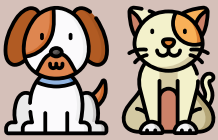








Pets



Artwork including pets featured strongly in the responses from children. Perhaps indicative of our diverse region, in addition to dogs and cats, pets included cows, calves, horses, chickens, birds, a pig, goats, a turtle and fish. The range of animals and pets reflects children's love of animals. In many cases, pets were associated with children's comfort and safety.







Places

This project fostered a strong connection to place by inviting children to share their views about their local community and aspects of community that are important to them.

Children were encouraged to take photographs of places of significance in their community and share their meaning.

The theme of place was also explored through questions such as: Where do children go in their everyday lives? What activities do they enjoy at these places? Who do they spend time with at these places? How do they feel at these places? What places would children like to visit and why?

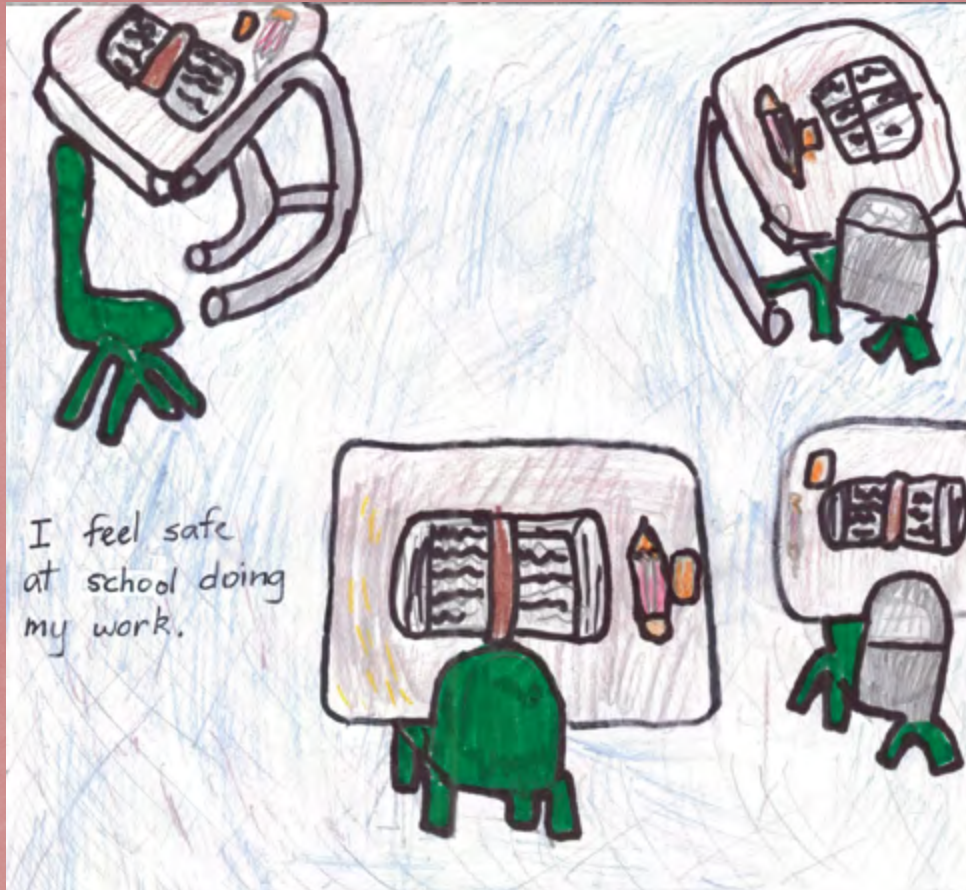
From the responses received we were able to see places of interest through a child's eyes.

It was evident that children and young people of the region have a strong appreciation for the outdoors (parks, beach and bush camping) and the natural environment (koalas, lizards, gardens and flowers). For children of all ages home featured strongly. Other places included school and church.











Possibilities

Children expressed notions of possibilities and opportunities in different forms. While some showed an appreciation for their environment, nature and what was important to them, others used images of hopes and dreams.

Reflections, images and words were used to depict possibilities as well as images of play scenes in photographs.









Where to from here? Opportunities?

The Gympie Region LLA is committed to including children's voices in our efforts to bring about positive change. Moving forward, we hope to share what children have told us through roadshow exhibitions through our local school and community networks. This will allow community members and children across the region to explore the experiences of others and find similarities and differences.

A PowerPoint presentation of images and this report will be publicly available on the Gympie Region LLA website. We will continue to use creative methods to ensure that children have a voice in our community.

As stated previously, children's relationships to family, friends, pets and others are significant in their lives. However, understanding the significance of the transformation of children's sense of place in their world is to also expand a community's understandings of what matters and what responses are required. The children's responses regarding places and activities present imperatives to support what children value in their community and how they can be maintained and improved to be child focused, for example, nature, sporting facilities, playgrounds, and parks.

Endnotes

- i Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations: DEEWR (2009), *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*, Canberra.
- ii McLachlan, R., Gilfillan, G. and Gordon, J. (2013), p. 2, *Deep and Persistent Disadvantage in Australia*, rev., Productivity Commission Staff Working Paper, Canberra.
- iii Goodhue, R., Dakin, P., Noble, K. (2021), *What's in the Nest? Exploring Australia's Wellbeing Framework for Children and Young People*. ARACY, Canberra.
- iv Harris, P., & Manatakis, H. (2013), *Children's Voices: A principled framework for children and young people's participation as valued citizens and learners*. University of South Australia in partnership with the South Australian Department for Education and Child Development, Adelaide.
- v Kraftl, P. (2019), Children's Geographies: encounters and experiences. In T. Schwanen & R. van Kempen (Eds.) *Handbook of Urban Geography*. Edward Elgar Publishing: London.
- vi Alnasuan, A. (2016), 'Developmental review on child art,' *American Research Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* (ARJHSS). 2: pp1-8. DOI:10.21694/2378-7031.16017
- vii Gympie Regional Council Arts and Cultural Plan 2015-2025.





GYMPIE REGION
LOCAL LEVEL ALLIANCE
Collective Impact in Action

llagympie@gcp.org.au • 18 Excelsior Road, Gympie Qld 4570
www.gympiella.org.au  GympieLLA