

SNAPSHOTS FROM Mothers Living Well in Bayswater



Background to the Mothers Living Well Project (MLW)

It all started with some conversations...

In 2006, Knox Community Health Service (KCHS) started to talk with local mothers in Bayswater about their vision for themselves, their family and community. This turned into the Mothers Living Well project (MLW) which became KCHS's major health promotion initiative from 2006 to 2013.

The first stage of the MLW project saw KCHS working together with mothers and other organisations including Knox City Council (KCC), Care Connect, Women's Health East and EACH to create environments which supported mothers and families to walk and cycle locally and to feel connected to community.

In 2008, mothers were involved in developing a Bayswater Community Plan that set out how to create interesting and inviting spaces within the community for people and families to meet with one another and work on neighbourhood improvements.

Since then, MLW project has continued to grow and there are now community projects led by local partnerships, which involve a wide range of mothers and local people in the ongoing work. This growth has been much like a tree, taking a life of its own, and is engrained in Bayswater's community itself. It is represented here below as the MLW tree with the various leaves representing these partnerships and projects. Three partnership groups now lead activities:

- ✿ Bayswater West Community Hub Forum,
- ✿ Bayswater Community Festival Committee,
- ✿ Bayswater Buzz Partnership Group.

As of 2013 the activities or "leaves" on the tree have included Streets4Living, Bayswater Community Festival (BCF), The Bayswater West Community Café, the Guy Turner Community Plan and the Bayswater Buzz Community Paper, which are described further on.

There were lots of people who helped along the way. KCHS provided 2 Health Promotion Officers to support the community and other organisations committed time, staff and resources. The community members including local mothers and organisations have provided an enormous amount of volunteer time.

In 2007 mothers expressed experiences of living in Bayswater:

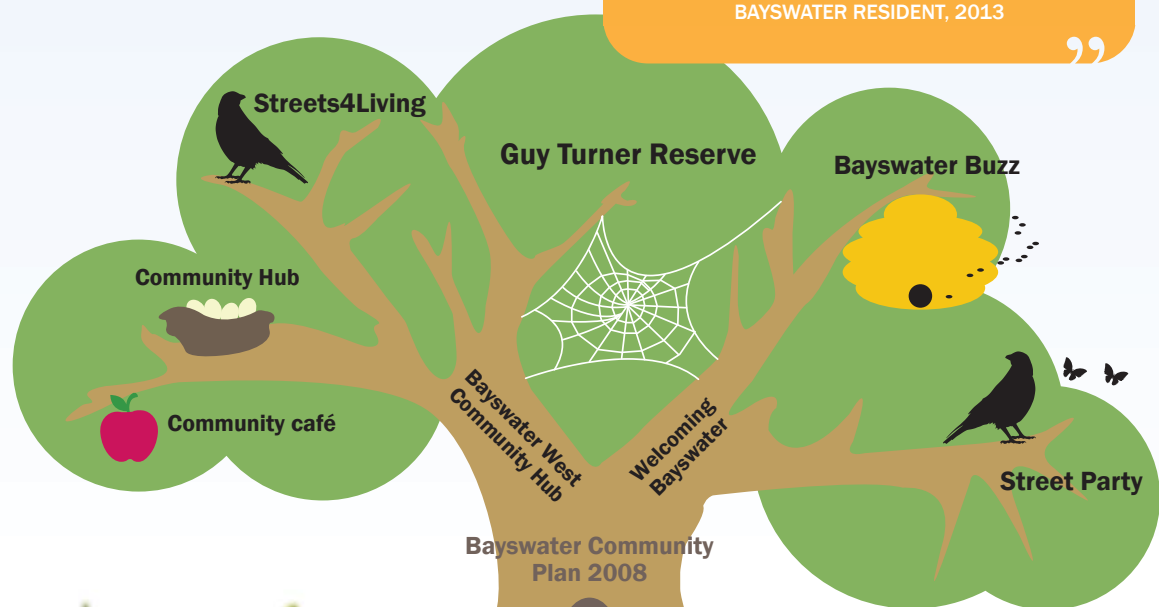
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People need to feel comfortable to talk to others in their community.

I think there are lots of mums out there who are isolated.
BAYSWATER MOTHERS, 2007

Following the MLW project in 2013 experiences of Bayswater had changed:

“
Everyone is so inclusive, it's incredible. They [people outside Bayswater] don't really know what it's like here until they become embedded into the community.

BAYSWATER RESIDENT, 2013



**Mothers Living Well project
Inception 2006**

How did things change?

Local mothers along with the health promotion team at KCHS were responsible for the planning of projects, as well as developing the evaluation design to collect and analyse data from the community.

In 2007, mothers in Bayswater interviewed other mothers, and took part in a photo project to capture images of life in Bayswater to identify what was important and what changes people would like to see. They developed a vision for their community (see below).

A snapshot survey was also undertaken in 2007, 2010 and 2013 at various Bayswater locations visited by mothers, including Blue Hills Children's Centre and primary schools. This helped check in to see what changes were happening.

Finally, in early 2013 mums and key partners were invited to be interviewed again to reflect on the changes that have been seen in Bayswater since 2006.

Environmental changes were captured through Community Audits run before and after the MLW project. These audits involved mothers and community members walking around local spaces, having discussion and taking photographs of what they thought was important.

The results from this data has been summarised into an evaluation report which is available from KCHS.

It demonstrated the changes achieved by the MLW project from the point of view of Bayswater mothers and other community members.

Some Hub Forum members at the Hub's Giant Crayons



The Mothers Living Well Vision



Bayswater Buzz

The Bayswater Buzz community newspaper developed out of a meeting in a local café at the Bayswater shopping village in 2009. This was attended by mothers, traders and community people interested in helping make the village area a welcoming, friendly place for all local people.

During this meeting the idea for a Bayswater Community Festival (BCF) (discussed below) also emerged. Both the newspaper and festival promoted social inclusion, connectedness and diversity in Bayswater.

The Buzz's community planning group asked Interchange Outer East to become the publisher, and they now co-ordinate the Bayswater Buzz Partnership Group.

The partnership includes Glen Park Community Centre, Leaps and Bounds Education Program, Bayswater Secondary College and KCHS, and is responsible for coordinating, editing, producing and distributing the paper.

In 2012, the Buzz was recognised at the Community Newspaper Association of Victoria awards in two categories, including format and best article.

The Buzz is distributed quarterly, with 9000 copies going to all Bayswater and some Bayswater North residents.

The paper has received enormous community contribution. In the 4 editions for 2011, there were contributions from:

- ✿ 16 young people,
- ✿ 13 people with disabilities,
- ✿ 24 mothers,
- ✿ 9 sporting groups,
- ✿ 6 schools and
- ✿ 6 traders.

Over the time of the project, 13 editions have been produced, and they have been fully developed by volunteers and funded by local traders, KCC and community sponsorship.

The evaluation interviews with mothers showed that the paper is highly valued in the community.

The Buzz provides an opportunity to involve local people, strengthen community pride and reflect diverse local voices in a shared local community publication.



Bayswater Community Festival

The Bayswater Community Festival (BCF) started as the Welcoming Bayswater Street Party in 2009. It is an annual festival, promoting and celebrating Bayswater's sense of community and social inclusion. The BCF provides opportunities for diverse groups of people to participate in planning, community stalls, performances and activities. The diversity of groups involved promotes the vision of a community which is welcoming and involves children, young people and people of all abilities, cultures and ages

Since 2011, the BCF has been led by Scope (as financial auspice) in partnership with the Temple Society Australia (independent Christian community) and Interchange Outer East with support from other organisations and individuals.

The 2011 BCF involved 65 traders, community groups, services, schools and sporting clubs. In addition, 10 primary school student leaders from 3 primary schools worked together to plan and run one of the activities on the day. Traders and KCC have been key sponsors and supporters.

Reflecting on the 2012 BCF, a committee member noted the sense of social connectedness promoted by community members having the opportunity to perform at the event.



"I think one of the main benefits I saw from the last one [Bayswater Community Festival] – like, this one, is all the families coming together and watching their kids in the concerts. Like, there was a real family atmosphere up that end because that's where the stage was. And I think that's good to bring people together as a community."

BAYSWATER COMMUNITY FESTIVAL COMMITTEE MEMBER

Bayswater West Community Hub Forum

The Hub Forum is a partnership of groups and residents who are located around Bayswater West Primary school and want "a fun and active Bayswater West that we can strive to be proud of, and which welcomes everyone." It came together after a successful Street Party for children and parents was held in the area as part of the MLW project.

The Hub Forum members include:

- ✿ Bayswater West Primary School
- ✿ Blue Hills Children Services (KCC)
- ✿ Guy Turner Tennis Club
- ✿ Bayswater Bowls Club
- ✿ Bayswater Sharks Cricket Club
- ✿ Bayswater Strikers Soccer Club
- ✿ Bayswater Scouts
- ✿ St Stephen's Anglican Church
- ✿ Residents of the Bayswater West neighbourhood.



"It's sort of, like, we're all one big family and I, you know, I feel like I can walk into the school in the front door or the back door, it doesn't matter. These things weren't happening a few years ago."

BAYSWATER WEST COMMUNITY HUB MEMBER

Streets4Living: building interesting spaces

Streets4Living was a partnership project initiated by the Bayswater West Community Hub Forum to improve the look and feel of the local streets. The focus was the intersection streetscape of Phyllis Street and Waruga Avenue in Bayswater West. KCC accepted the invitation to lead the project, and supplied the initial funding along with securing additional funding from the Victorian State Government Department of Transport.

This funding was used to create a "pause point" at the main intersection with colourful seating and multifunctional play space for adults and children to stop, rest, catch up, and play. A community notice board, plants and a drinking fountain were also installed. The tiles for the fountain were created by local children at Cinema Under the Stars.

The involvement of children and families from the community was identified in the evaluation as important for the success of the Streets4Living.



"Yeah. And even those beautiful things they had put outside the schools and that, the giant pencils and the crayons. Yeah. It's wonderful."

BAYSWATER WEST COMMUNITY HUB MEMBER

In addition to the "pause point" other environmental changes that occurred in the area are:

- ✿ Artwork reflecting some of the activities in the area was placed at the entrance ways of Blue Hills Children Services, Bayswater Bowls Club, Bayswater West Primary School, and St Stephen's Anglican Church.
- ✿ Two speed humps on Phyllis Street.
- ✿ A community notice board to promote activities in the area.
- ✿ Signage and maps displayed at the entrance of Guy Turner Reserve to promote the facilities.

A stakeholder's comments on Pause Point:

"I think that pause point was really critical – that came from the community, that 'let's have a place to stop and connect'- And I think ...that ended up being really the heart of the project and then...identity stuff started coming out."

"If we had have just tried to connect the community that would have had some outcomes but to me it was the joining of the physical and the people connection."

BAYSWATER WEST COMMUNITY HUB MEMBER

"I look forward to getting the Buzz, it's getting out more... It's [The Buzz] very community and local. It has opinions and what's happening in the area and keeping people up to date what's happening now or politics."

BAYSWATER MOTHER

"The Bayswater Buzz is the best quality publication that I regularly read. It has an amazing scope of articles in every edition..."

BAYSWATER COMMUNITY MEMBER



Bayswater Community Festival (BCF)

Streets4Living project was nominated for and won the 2011 Knox City Council Environment Award for Community Engagement.



Cinema Under the Stars

Art based Fountain at Hub pause point



The tiles for the art based fountain (shown in the picture above) were created by local children at Cinema Under the Stars.

The Streets4Living project highlighted the importance of environmental changes in assisting social inclusion. A key finding from the interviews with mothers and partners was that through beautification of the local environment, decision making by local residents and participation in civic life, mental health and wellbeing can be positively influenced.

The Streets4Living influenced aspects of KCC's Open Space Plan 2012-2022. The following criteria are now included when making decisions about developments in Knox's open spaces:

- ✳ Develop strong community links to the space.
- ✳ Develop a sense of community custodianship of the site.
- ✳ Good provision of community infrastructure.

Spin off's from the Hub in supporting local community strengthening initiatives

The Bayswater Community Hub became the basis for other shared activities. For example, the Guy Turner calendar initiated by the Bowling Club and distributed to local residents in 2013 included monthly photos promoting various community hub activities. Similarly, Cinema Under the Stars, a key neighbourhood event, run by the Bayswater Sharks Cricket Club, was also supported by the Hub Forum.

Events such as these were found to be important to mothers as they provide child-friendly opportunities for participation and connection.

The evaluation showed the Hub Forum members identified that the MLW project supported many of these events. With stronger relationships developed across the clubs and settings there were more opportunities for collaboration across the Bayswater West community. The bowling club for example started to work with the school on bowling activities during school time; the Bayswater Cinema Under the Stars became a forum for the preschool to do its fundraising, and provided a platform for the Scouts and sporting clubs to promote their clubs.

These cooperative efforts increased the community participation in activities, and strengthened club membership and grants, which are strong benefits for remaining involved in the partnership.

It's given me a sense that I can make a difference, these ideas I've had that have just been at the back of my mind, it's given some clarity to them. I'm proud to be part of the project.

BAYSWATER MOTHER

Building on strengths... Guy Turner Master Planning



Following the successful completion of the Streets4Living Project, the Hub Forum members decided to focus on Guy Turner Reserve. This reserve is near the Hub and provides a range of sporting and leisure activities. Two workshops were held in May 2010, which led to the development of the Guy Turner Reserve Community Plan. The Hub Forum members took their community plan to a Budget Submission meeting at KCC and successfully advocated for funds and Council staffing to be dedicated for the development of pathways through Guy Turner Reserve.

Surprisingly the group was notified later in the same year that a further budget allocation was made for Master planning at Guy Turner reserve, based on the community plan. Following on from this approval, KCC further approved budget allocations which paid for implementation of both stage 1 and stage 2 of the Guy Turner Master Plan.

Throughout Master planning and implementation of Stage 1 and 2, the Hub Forum has regularly met to inform and support the work of KCC and have been highly involved in community engagement, consultation and promotion of the activities. The impact of the involvement from community in can be seen in the number of ideas that were generated by the Hub members which were included into the Master Planning design. The Hub Forum tabled 17 ideas for environmental improvements of which 13 were adopted and some of which have already been completed.

This is an exceptional example of the effectiveness of the Hub Forum members working in partnership with KCC to ensure redevelopment of the reserve reflected community needs and making the area more accessible.

Pieces of all community members can be seen all over the Masterplans, there is something for everyone.

BAYSWATER WEST COMMUNITY HUB FORUM MEMBER

Spin offs from Guy Turner Masterplan and Streets4Living

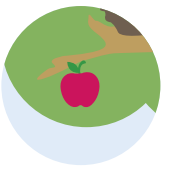
As part of MLW project, the Bayswater West Community Hub Forum advocated to have a pedestrian crossing at the corner of Stud road and Phyllis Street. This pedestrian crossing would link residents from both sides of Stud Road and encourage walking within the neighbourhood, including children walking to school. This involved a campaign of letter writing and community organising.

In 2012, the Hub Forum members were informed that a crossing would be built as part of duplication of Stud Road (to be completed by 2014).

And now through that community café, we got involved in the community thing for the Guy Turner thing. And now the landscaper wants to talk to me about a sensory garden.

BAYSWATER WEST COMMUNITY HUB FORUM MEMBER

Community café



In 2010 the concept of a café was discussed at a Streets4Living meeting by the Hub Forum members as a way for people to meet and build relationships in a central meeting place. The project idea was led by a local mother and the café was set up as a monthly activity at the school. Bayswater West "Ambassador" roles were created across the Hub Forum organisations to attend the café, help serve coffee, and get to know others at the café. This project was funded through a grant from KCC, and led by Bayswater West Primary School. The café continues today as a core part of the school within the neighbourhood. The quarterly Hub Forums are held during community café times.

I think its inspired people to want to get out there and do community things with everyone else. I felt a few years ago that we were all very complacent in our own little pockets and we weren't going anywhere.

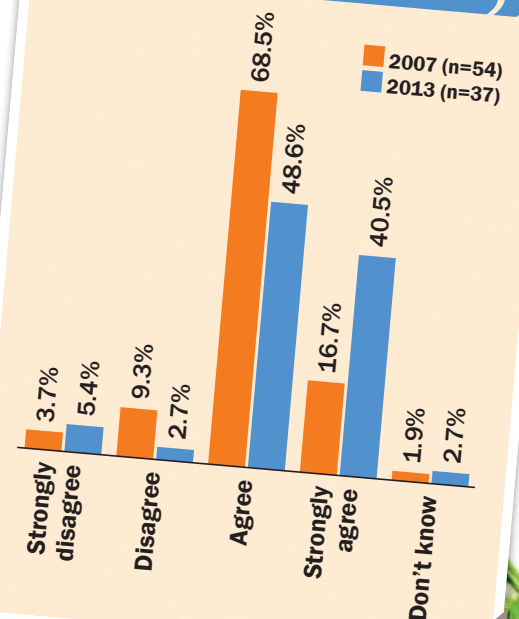
BAYSWATER WEST COMMUNITY HUB FORUM MEMBER

Sense of Belonging for mums in Bayswater West

The evaluation of the MLW project showed important changes in feeling of belonging to the community among mothers. Mothers reported Bayswater West now has a strong family feel and valued the opportunities for building connections with other local mums and families. As shown in the graph below, in 2007 16% of mums living in Bayswater West strongly agreed they felt they belonged to the Bayswater West neighbourhood. However, after the completion of the MLW project in 2012, this figure rose to 40%.

How much do you agree with the statement:

I feel I belong to the Bayswater West neighbourhood?



Partnerships

The foundation of all MLW project activities was strong community led partnerships. This involved the KCHS Health Promotion officers focusing energy on building the skills and abilities of community organisations and residents, to allow them to take on leadership roles and sustain activities the Hub Forum, Bayswater Buzz and Community café. The transferring of ownership of the activities from staff to the community was essential for ensuring the positive changes and activities have a life beyond the MLW project.

Reflecting on the collaborative partnership with KCC and KCHS, community members noted the change in opportunities for community members to participate in the decision-making process, as reflected upon by a mum involved in the MLW project:

“
It's obviously a long process to get the money side of things, but it did feel that what we had said had been listened to and had been acted on. Wasn't just falling on deaf ears, you know...
 BAYSWATER WEST COMMUNITY HUB FORUM MEMBER
 ”

The evaluation showed that this transferring of power to residents and local community based organisations has resulted in giving a stronger voice to community (through the Buzz), and that social inclusion and community cohesion as experienced by mums and locally based community organisations has increased.

MLW bike ride from Bayswater to Knox Festival



MLW mothers at Streets4Living Launch

Active Transport

A major focus of the MLW project was to improve mothers' wellbeing through increasing their local walking and cycling. Regular walking and cycling has individual health benefits, and research is now also suggesting there are many important health benefits for communities too. For example, more people walking reduces social isolation and promotes friendly communities. Mothers in the MLW project stated they would trust their children to walk or cycle independently in streets if they knew more adults in those streets. On top of this, the environment benefits from more people walking and cycling rather than driving cars.

The MLW project worked towards increasing walking and cycling among mothers, and incorporated this into the physical improvements to neighbourhoods, events and local projects discussed above. A focus on active transport into the other levels of the project in the following ways:

- ✳ Local mothers were encouraged to explore what would make it a great place for mothers and children to walk and cycle around.
- ✳ These conversations encouraged mothers and communities to explore how safe and friendly places for children would also help communities to be more walking- and cycling-friendly.
- ✳ As local community partners worked towards achieving what they value and envisioned, they were also working towards neighbourhoods which encouraged walking and cycling.

The evaluation explored whether this approach increased walking and cycling by asking mothers to complete a survey before and after the MLW project. This part of the evaluation found:

- ✳ A 12 fold increase in the percentage of Bayswater West Primary school students cycling to school after MLW (1% to 12%).
- ✳ A slight increase in mothers who had walked the week before being surveyed.

- ✳ While measures of students walking to school did not increase, Bayswater West community members perceived local walking to have increased and that this had occurred because of MLW.
- ✳ Changes in individual behaviour can take time and the community feels confident that more walking and cycling will occur as the local people respond to environmental and other improvements.

The MLW project evaluation also looked at whether the neighbourhood environments of Bayswater had become friendlier towards walking and cycling and found the following improvements:

- ✳ New and improved pathways, playspaces and a new signalled intersection at Stud Road (described above in Streets4Living) which improved access and safety for walking and cycling.
- ✳ Beautification of streets including artwork, playspaces, seats etc. which bring more people into public spaces and improve the safety for children and families to walk and cycle.
- ✳ Increased bike parking and signage around Bayswater Shopping Village and Bayswater West Community Hub.
- ✳ Improved look and feel to family service buildings including the Blue Hills Children's Centre.
- ✳ A library in Bayswater (as a meeting place and local destination which people can potentially walk or cycle to).

“
I think from my perspective one of the most important things that's happened is that there's a joined up approach now to supporting families. We know which agencies, which groups, which people within the community can help with different problems.
 BAYSWATER WEST COMMUNITY HUB FORUM MEMBER
 ”

What MLW has taught us...

Some of the key lessons from MLW are:

- ✳ Communities are amazing. They are capable of achieving high quality health promotion outcomes, especially when provided with support, resources, a voice in decision making and trust. The solution to localised issues lies within the local community.
- ✳ Neighbourhood improvement provides a great way of bringing together diverse community members and decision makers to do health promotion in communities with many spinoffs.
- ✳ Events, celebrations and community run papers are powerful tools for linking people together, connecting people to community and linking them to other local health promotion work.

To conclude MLW project processes have been validated in a number of ways. In 2011 the MLW project received the “Optimising the health status of Victorians” award of the Victorian Public Health Care Awards.

However, the most important validation comes from the community. The quote below reminds us that for the MLW project, some of the most sustainable achievements arise from strengthening the community itself:

“
We rely on one another, we support one another and most importantly the hub has grown to be a place where people feel they can be heard and they actually see their viewpoints represented in projects that take place.
 BAYSWATER COMMUNITY MEMBER
 ”

To find out more about MLW or receive the full evaluation report, contact Senior Health Promotion Officer, Knox Community Health Service, (03) 9757 6200

To get involved in ongoing projects in Bayswater arising from MLW contact the following:

- ✳ Bayswater West Community Hub: Bayswater West Primary School: (03) 9729 3394
- ✳ Bayswater Buzz: Toni Nelson, Volunteer Editor: Interchange Outer East: (03) 9758 5522
- ✳ To find out about the Bayswater Community Festival: Temple Society Australia: (03) 9557 6713