



Brimbank Lifelong Learning Strategy 2018-2023

A framework for building
better learning outcomes for all

Introduction

Learning is widely recognised as a driver for positive economic and social change. Brimbank City Council, through its Lifelong Learning Strategy and with its partner organisations and community members, seeks to achieve better learning outcomes throughout the municipality. It will facilitate the creation of new approaches and partnerships, seek the ongoing development of pathways to learning, and lead, encourage, and support residents to participate in learning on a daily basis over their lifetime.

Brimbank City Council developed its first Community Learning Strategy 2010 in recognition of the importance of learning; Brimbank Community Learning Strategy 2010-2013. The second Community Learning Strategy 2014-2017 built on the achievements of the first. Evaluations were conducted on each Strategy and feedback incorporated into new editions.

The third Brimbank Lifelong Learning Strategy has developed from the experiences of the previous strategies, and identifies specific priorities and outlines a framework for future work.

Lifelong learning is replacing community learning as it better reflects the life stages approach to the work of building better learning outcomes.

This Lifelong Learning Strategy supports learning in all life stages and is a long-term approach for Council and its partners to improve the social and economic outcomes of individuals and the community. A rights based framework underpins this Strategy to ensure appropriate and high quality education, training and learning resources are available to all in Brimbank. These learning resources are particularly important to those who face barriers in engaging with learning.

The third Brimbank Lifelong Learning Strategy aligns with priorities identified in the Brimbank Council Plan (2017-2021) and Community Vision 2040: "People are able to access quality education and lifelong learning opportunities" as part of Strategic Direction 3: a Prosperous Community.

Learning helps to achieve personal fulfillment, maintain employability, build caring and cohesive communities and add to quality of life.

Lifelong and Life wide Learning

Lifelong learning recognises that learning occurs continuously throughout life. It helps people become more resilient and respond to ever-changing cultural, social and economic circumstances by developing their skills, knowledge and capacity.¹ Lifelong learning supports both individual success and community strengthening.

Life wide learning recognises that learning can occur simultaneously in all learning contexts (home, community, workplaces and institutions) and different learning settings (formal, non-formal and informal).²

Lifelong and life wide learning³ aims to:

- Foster prosperity
- Improve social inclusion
- Lead to better health and wellbeing outcomes
- Enable people to better anticipate and experience life transitions
- Create a richer, more engaged society

The purpose of the Brimbank Lifelong Learning Strategy 2018-2023 is to guide Council's actions to improve learning outcomes in Brimbank by:

- Enabling communities to lead change and control in their lifelong learning during every stage of their lives
- Raising awareness and building a culture of lifelong and life wide learning across the municipality
- Identifying advocacy priorities and platforms for better planning and provision of lifelong learning across all life stages in Brimbank
- Building communities of practice to strengthen collaborative work on lifelong and life wide learning
- Targeting support and resources where needed to achieve equity in learning and education

¹ ALA, 2018, cited in Adult Learning Australia (pre-budget submission for 2018-2019)

² ibid

³ ibid

Brimbank City Council's Vision

Brimbank - vibrant, harmonious & welcoming, a great place to live, work and grow

Council will achieve this through four strategic objectives of developing

- An inclusive community
- A liveable community
- A prosperous community
 - *More and improved educational facilities*
 - *Community learning opportunities*
 - *Employment and job creation opportunities*
- An innovative and responsive 'Community First' Council

This vision and strategic objectives frame the work of the Brimbank Lifelong Learning Strategy 2018-2023.



Indigenous Acknowledgement: Brimbank Council acknowledges the original custodians of the Kulin Nation, the lands upon which we live, work and play, and pays respect to their elders, past, present and emerging.

Brimbank Lifelong Learning Vision

‘To foster a community of lifelong learners in Brimbank by empowering people to take control of their lives, build aspirations, enhance employability and quality of life and achieve this by working alongside partner organisations and the community.’



The Brimbank Lifelong Learning Strategy is underpinned by Brimbank’s Social Justice Charter which commits Council to the principles of access, equity, community participation and human rights.

It does this by addressing issues of disadvantage, building upon community strengths and assets, and advocating for fairness and human rights outcomes

For the Brimbank Lifelong Learning Strategy this means that everyone in the municipality has the right to great learning opportunities wherever they live, and understands that some citizens may need more support to access that right.⁴ For example, additional support may be needed for children in out of home care to equitably access their educational rights.

⁴ To enable a universal right, actions must be universal and proportional to the level of disadvantage, this is called proportionate universalism <http://www.health-inequalities.eu/resources/marmot-reviews/> accessed May 21 2018

Celebrating Learning: Case Study

Amy's Story: More languages, more benefits

In my household, my partner speaks a different native language (to me) and English is our third language; we have three young children aged 12, 10 and 6.

When my eldest was 2, my child was encouraged to hear and speak Vietnamese to Grandparents, aunts, uncles, Dad and cousins, Cantonese to me, and English to Mum and Dad at home.

As a working parent, my child was cared for by my parent-in-law who spoke fluent Vietnamese and when I returned home, I would speak Cantonese and my partner would speak (English and part Vietnamese) with our children.

During my eldest child's early years' education, it was identified that my child was only pointing and speaking minimal words. A professional advised that my child was confused and I was to make the choice of reducing the languages spoken. I was faced with a difficult decision in making the choice which language to drop and speak only English at home.

My partner and I didn't realise the major impact and language sacrifice this had on our children until I participated in a Bilingualism information forum held at Sunshine Library.

The information session was a moment of sudden realization for me.

I walked away with commitment and inspiration to continue to talk to my children in our native languages. This meant that our youngest child was consistently spoken to in our native languages. Her conversation, language shifts and multi lingual speaking is excellent, much better than my two other children.

It was not an easy change and every day, I have to switch my conversation from English to Cantonese and reiterate understanding of the message with my children. We make a conscious effort to speak our native languages with our children, and know that as parents, this is a gift (multilingualism) that we give to our children.

I also know that my children will have greater cognitive flexibility and become better problem solvers. Now all my children are speaking more than one language and understand English and their cultures very well. I appreciate the information I received that more languages equals more benefits.



Key Factors in Lifelong Learning in Brimbank

While there have been significant improvements in learning participation and outcomes in Brimbank such as:

- From 2011 to 2016 qualification levels for Brimbank residents has increased for Bachelor or Higher degrees, advanced diploma and diploma, and vocational education
- The percentage of population with no qualification has decreased over this same time.
- Almost 60% of the Brimbank community speaks a language other than English at home, which is one of the new competencies for jobs of the future.

Some challenges remain:

- Kindergarten participation rates are lower than across Victoria,
- The percentage of children entering

school considered developmentally vulnerable in two or more Australian Early Development Index domains, remains higher than the Victorian average. This result continues to increase for Brimbank

- In 2015, Brimbank had a significantly lower proportion of year 3, 5, 7, and 9 students at or above the national minimum standard for literacy, compared to Victoria.
- Compared to Victoria, Brimbank had a considerably higher proportion of disengaged young people in 2006, 2011 and 2016 (ABS Census data).
- Since March 2015, the unemployment rate in Brimbank has been higher than the rate for Victoria. Young people are particularly experiencing this situation in Brimbank
- Adults are almost twice as likely not to have attended formal schooling, compared to the Victorian average, and nearly 20% of the population aged 15 years and over have completed year 9 as their highest year level of schooling.

Achievements of Brimbank Community Learning Strategy 2014-17

Development of exciting new precinct in Sunshine and refurbishment at Visy Cares hub; Brimbank Learning Futures

Promoted bilingualism and multilingualism in Brimbank in order to improve early years learning outcomes and social cohesion

Brimbank Learning Hub established on Brimbank Libraries website

Celebrating Learning e-newsletter produced and distributed to growing subscriber mailing list

Annual "Educator of the Year" award included in Brimbank City Council citizenship awards

Facilitated partnership of Schools Community Agencies exchanges to actively support and develop community linkages with schools

Monitored and tracked gaps in learning and education in Brimbank, including school leavers information, adult education funding and provision, early years indicators

Active participation in Learn West network; affiliation of local learning communities across western Melbourne

Membership and participation in Australian Learning Communities Network and Adult Learning Australia

Submissions to State Government (Early Years education) and Federal Government (School to Work transition) Inquiries

Looking Ahead

Brimbank as a Learning City:

Learning Cities promote lifelong learning for all.

UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation) promotes lifelong learning and defines a learning city as one that:

- effectively mobilizes its resources in every sector to promote inclusive learning from basic to higher education;
- revitalizes learning in families and communities;
- facilitates learning for and in the workplace;
- extends the use of modern learning technologies;
- enhances quality and excellence in learning; and
- fosters a culture of learning throughout life.

In doing so, the city enhances individual empowerment and social inclusion, economic development and cultural prosperity, and sustainable development.⁵

Learning is a key means to increasing people's capacity by providing knowledge, skills and confidence to begin, change or remain in employment. The provision of different types of learning contributes to fair and just communities. Participating in arts and cultural experiences, sports and leisure activities and unpaid or voluntary work creates opportunities for individuals and communities to extend social networks and cross-cultural interaction.

Engaging in informal learning is particularly important for those facing barriers to accessing structured or formal learning. Informal learning takes place in libraries, neighbourhood houses, and increasingly online. Online learning can provide affordable and accessible opportunities for those facing mobility issues, those with young children, or for young people who find it more culturally and technologically appropriate.

Adult Learning Australia recognises that paid work is an important outcome of education. Learning is also critically important to other aspects of people's lives:

- to be happy, to have an identity aside from work and to create multiple meanings across all life stages;

"The idea of learning throughout life is deeply rooted in all cultures."

UNESCO Learning Cities

- to enrich the practice of religion and culture;
- to participate in a democracy;
- to contribute to the life of their children, family and community; and
- to stay well and keep others around them well.³



⁵ <http://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/learning-cities>, accessed May 21, 2018

Celebrating Learning: Case Study

Jae and Karl's Story: Intergenerational Learning

Jae was matched with Karl in late 2013 at Council's L2P learn to drive program. Throughout 2014 they spent a lot of time on the road together, where Karl used his years as a bus driver to make sure Jae learnt more than just driving. He learnt to be on time, to communicate, car maintenance, trip planning and travelling all over Melbourne.

Karl used his connections at the time to try and help Jae find work as well. When Jae achieved his licence, they both had a good regard for each other.

Eighteen months later the situation was reversed when Jae, volunteering at a Brimbank Library with the Pass IT On program to help older residents with computer and phone skills was randomly paired with Karl. Jae was able to help Karl acquire some skills with which Jae was very proficient.

It was a great renewal of friendship for the two of them and a reminder that we all have something to teach and something to learn.

Jae has since gone on to acquire his Heavy Vehicle Licence and his skills are now put to work as a truck driver, and having recently moved onto his full licence, he is now preparing to return to the program as a volunteer.



Guiding Principles

The Brimbank Lifelong Learning Strategy is underpinned by the following principles:

- 1 Promotion of Learning - Increasing awareness of the importance of learning in all life stages.
- 2 Partnerships - Working collaboratively and strategically with a range of partners.
- 3 Access and Equity - Increasing participation in education and learning by all, through recognising and addressing systemic barriers for some groups in Brimbank in accessing learning in all life stages.
- 4 Creativity and Leadership - Supporting an innovative learning culture which will be open to new ideas and where leadership in many forms will exist.
- 5 Community Focused - Recognising and respecting the community's capacity to articulate and respond to their own learning needs and interests.
- 6 Advocacy - Supporting improved learning opportunities and resources in Brimbank.

This includes people living with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, those with English as an additional language, those learning later in life, lower socio economic groups and others who may be vulnerable in accessing quality learning in their life time.



People with more education earn more, are more satisfied with their work and leisure time, are less likely to be unemployed, more likely to be healthy, less likely to be criminals, more likely to volunteer their time and vote in elections. Wilkinson & Pickett, The Spirit Level, 2009

Strategic Priorities for Life Stages

Early Years (birth to compulsory school age)

Outcome: learning-rich environments for babies and preschool children at home and in the community

Objectives:

- Support parents and carers in their roles in children's lives
- Promote language, literacy and numeracy
- Promote the value of home languages
- Advocate for more early learning resources and affordable pre-school opportunities

Measures:

All eligible children attend and participate in early years education

More resources available for quality early years education for all Brimbank children through targeted advocacy

Brimbank leads in celebrating and promoting bilingualism

Baseline measures will be established for each life stage in Year 1 of the Strategy.



Strategic Priorities for Life Stages

School Years (compulsory school age, 6-16)

Outcome: School aged children and teenagers in Brimbank have access to a broad range of engaging learning opportunities

Objectives:

- Enable and encourage additional learning support, such as family learning opportunities, out of school learning and study support
- Actively support and develop community linkages with schools
- Develop best transitions models with schools, families and community to support good transitions for children, young people and parents
- Advocate for more investment in Brimbank's public school system
- Encourage the development of a broad range of innovative educational opportunities in Brimbank
- Advocate for more resources and increased supports for students who are at risk of disengaging or have disengaged from school

Measures:

Percentage of Brimbank children successfully engaged at school increases

Percentage of Brimbank children making successful transitions across learning sectors increases

Number of out of school learning opportunities for Brimbank children increases

Brimbank's public schools offer students and the community exceptional learning facilities and opportunities



Strategic Priorities for Life Stages

Young People (post-compulsory school age, 17 to early adulthood)

Outcome: Young people have positive post-school education, employment and learning opportunities

Objectives:

- Support diverse learning & educational opportunities
- Promote career & training pathways and readiness for employment, and skills for adapting to changing work environments
- Encourage opportunities for active citizenship
- Focus on young people with priority needs and those facing barriers in accessing learning
- Support parents and carers in their roles in young people's lives
- Advocate for better supports for young people who have disengaged from education or training

Measures:

There is a diverse range of educational and training opportunities for young people in Brimbank

Percentage of young people actively engaged in community life

Percentage of young people facing particular challenges to accessing training and employment decreases



Increased supports for young people who have disengaged from education or training

Foundation for Young Australians notes that the top enterprising skills for the future of work include digital literacy, bilingualism, critical thinking and creativity⁶

Strategic Priorities for Life Stages

Adults (approx. 25 - 60 years)

Outcome: Adults participate in lifelong learning for quality of life, employment and citizenship

Objectives:

- Advocate for improved provision of diverse and affordable adult learning opportunities, co-developed by learners
- Promote formal training and informal learning opportunities
- Actively support the achievement of functional English language and literacy skills for all adults as well as maintaining home languages

Measures:

Increased investment and number of adult education courses and informal learning opportunities in Brimbank

Increased education level attainment of adults

Increased English language proficiency in adults

Increased number of learning opportunities are co-designed by learners



⁶ <https://www.fya.org.au/report/the-new-work-smarts/>
accessed May 21 2018

Strategic Priorities for Life Stages

Later Life (60 years and beyond)

Outcome: The community builds on the experience and wisdom of older adults, supports intergenerational innovation and lifelong learning is part of healthy ageing

Objectives:

- Create a range of accessible, formal and informal learning options for older citizens
- Create intergenerational learning opportunities
- Advocate for more informal learning opportunities

Measures:

Increased number and investment in later life learning opportunities in Brimbank for older adults

Increased number of intergenerational learning opportunities in Brimbank

Increased number of older adults are actively engaged in community life



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