



Wollongong City Council

Wollongong State of the Children Report 2023



Acknowledgement

Wollongong City Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which this city is built, Dharawal Country. We recognise and appreciate their deep connection to the land, waters and the greater community.

We acknowledge and pay respect to Elders past, present and those emerging and extend our respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who call this city home.

We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first people to live in this area. We respect their living cultures and recognise the positive contribution their voices, traditions and histories make to the city.



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Cover image: Children of ECTARC Keiraview Education and Care Service
Image left: Regional NAIDOC Awards Dinner, photo by Bernie Fischer



Lord Mayor message

I'm proud to present the second State of the Children report for the City of Wollongong. This document provides a snapshot of the experiences of children and families living in our community. It presents data that tells the story of children's overall development and well-being related to physical and mental health, participation in community life, learning and development and home environment.

It provides important insights in what areas children are doing well, and where we can direct our attention to support growth, change and improvement. It highlights the suburbs where we need to be doing more to support children and their families.

At Wollongong City Council, children are our priority. We focus on delivering programs, services and initiatives that keep the city's children informed, engaged and part of this community. This can be through programs in our libraries, planning for future playgrounds and open spaces and working with them on environmental initiatives.

We are a Child Safe Organisation, which means we have made a commitment to ensure that children and young people are respected, empowered and safe. We listen to their views and will keep them safe in all that we do. We follow the Child Safe Standards – and are committed to working within the principles of the Child Friendly City Framework. In line with this UNICEF initiative, we recognise the voices, needs, priorities and rights of children are an integral part of public policy, programming and decision making.

I encourage everyone in our community to read this State of the Children report and consider what steps they might take – and how we can work together – to provide the right opportunities, support and initiatives to give our future generations the best start so they can thrive.

Wollongong City Lord Mayor Councillor
Gordon Bradbery AM



Purpose

This is the second Wollongong State of the Children Report. Like the first, this report is intended as a resource to inform and support the work of the local child and family services and community services sectors. This report presents updated data to show how children in the Wollongong Local Government Area (LGA) are developing in comparison to New South Wales (NSW) benchmarks.

Feedback from children

In 2023, 105 children from 10 services/ organisations participated in activities to inform this report. Children shared their thoughts on the important things that contribute to their development, health, safety and wellbeing by drawing a picture and finishing the sentences below.

Their responses and artworks have been included throughout this report. A compilation of all comments shared by children can be found in Appendix 1, at the end of this document.

I feel happy when...

Learning is fun when...

I feel loved when...

I feel safe when...

I feel part of my community when...

I feel healthy when ...



How to read this report

This report focuses on children aged between 0 to 14 years old and presents data for the Wollongong Local Government Area, unless stated otherwise.

Some data gaps have been identified throughout the report to show the importance of collecting or sourcing this data in the future. This will help in gaining a better understanding of the experiences of children and families and better enable the monitoring of progress over time.

The report presents a mix of publicly available data and data sourced from government agencies. The primary data sources include:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)- Census of Population and Housing.
- NSW Health - HealthStats NSW.
- Australian Early Development Census - Australian Early Development Census (AEDC).

- Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority - National Assessment. Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN).
- Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) - Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

The information has been presented under five areas:

- **Health**
- **Learning**
- **Family**
- **Home**
- **Participation**

Data has been grouped in this way to help identify areas of focus to make Wollongong a better place for children to live, grow and play. Introductory information is provided for each area to outline the importance to children's development.

Data has been presented in comparison to NSW benchmarks. Results have been colour-coded to make the data easier to understand and compare:

Currently performing well against the NSW benchmark*

Close to the NSW Benchmark*
(less than 1% above or below the benchmark)

Areas for improvement

Data not currently available

*NSW benchmark means the results for the state of NSW

Summary of indicators

Health

Indicator	Comparison to NSW Benchmark	Page
Maternal smoking during pregnancy		14
Maternal overweight and obesity - Healthy Weight		14
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**Indicators in this section of the report reflect the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District (ISLHD)

Learning

Indicator	Comparison to NSW Benchmark	Page
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*AEDC indicators have been compared to NSW average

Family

Indicator	Comparison to NSW Benchmark	Page
Couples with children		40
One parent families with children		40
Children in out of home care*		42
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care*		42
Culturally and linguistically diverse children in out of home care*		43
Home ownership		44
Labour force participation rate		44
Unemployment		45
Median household income		45
Low income households		46
Households without a car		47

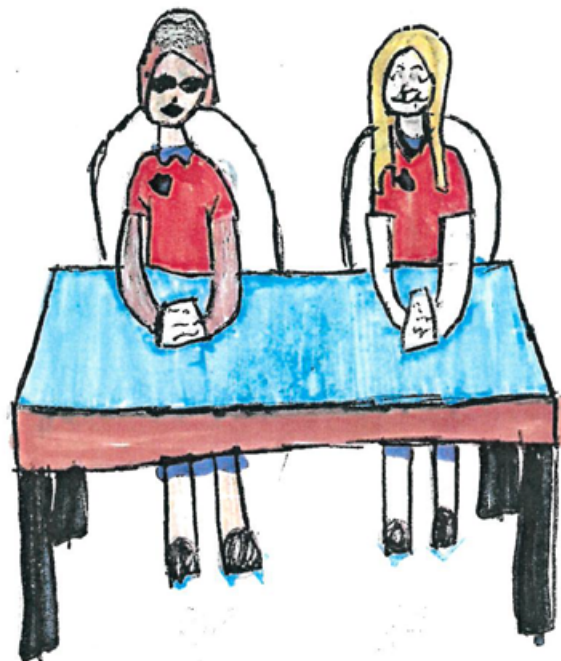
*Indicators reflect figures for Wollongong and Shellharbour LGA's

Home

Indicator	Comparison to NSW Benchmark	Page
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Participation

Indicator	Comparison to NSW Benchmark	Page
Active Kids voucher uptake		58
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Volunteer work		58



I feel safe when... *“I’m with my best friend’s Róisín, Indie, Maddi, Rora and Macy!”*

Haleigh, 11 years, Mount Kembla Public School

Wollongong demographics

In 2021 **214,564*** people lived in the Wollongong LGA.¹

*Usual Resident Population

17.5% or **37,703** of the people living in Wollongong are aged 0 – 14.¹

By 2041 the number of children aged 0-14 is predicted to increase by **29%**.¹

5.9% or **2,210** children aged 0-14 identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.²



4.9% or **1,856** children aged 0-14 were born overseas.¹

3.6% or **1,341** children aged 0-14 had a need for assistance, meaning they need help with their day to day lives due to disability.³



29.3% of households are couples with children.¹

25% of households are couples without children.¹



11.2% of households are one parent families.¹

	2021		2031		2041		Predicted change 2021 - 2041
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
0 - 4	12,083	5.6	14,519	6	15,558	5.8	+3,475
5 - 9	12,688	5.9	15,042	6.2	16,463	6.1	+3,775
10 - 14	12,932	6	14,842	6.1	16,714	6.2	+3,782

*The table above uses Census Usual Resident Population data for the 2021 period. 2031 and 2041 periods use population estimates which are calculated using Estimated Resident Population data.



(1) .id Community Demographic Resources 2023, 2021 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, compiled and presented by .id.

This material is a derivative of ABS Data that can be accessed from the website of the Australian Bureau of Statistics at www.abs.gov.au, and which data can be licensed on terms published on the ABS website.

(2) Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021, AGE5P Age in Five Year Groups by INGP Indigenous Status by LGA (UR), Census TableBuilder, viewed 17 January 2023.

(3) Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021, ASSNP Core Activity Need for Assistance by AGE5P Age in Five Year Groups by LGA (UR), Census TableBuilder, viewed 17 January 2023.

Health





The first 2,000 days of a child's life, from conception to the time they start school, is a crucial period for their physical, social, and emotional health. Exposure to stressors before birth, and in the early years of childhood, increase the likelihood of poor health in the future. The greater the number and significance of stressors experienced before birth, the greater the risk to the child's long-term health and wellbeing. Experiences during these early years have deep and long-lasting effects, predicting outcomes like:

- How a child will learn
- Future employment prospects
- Lifelong health and likelihood of experiencing disease
- Adolescent pregnancy
- Risk of substance abuse and criminal behaviour

A mother's health and lifestyle before, during, and after pregnancy can have a significant impact on her child's development. It is important to stay active, eat well, and receive routine antenatal health checks to maintain the health of both mother and baby (NSW Government 2021, pp. 1-3).

Healthy babies and children have their physical, mental, and emotional health needs met. They have access to appropriate health services, regular developmental checks, immunisations, and nutritious food (Goodhue, R., Dakin, P., Noble, K. 2021, p. 5). They also have opportunities to play and be active, which support their growth and development (NSW Government 2021, p. 3).

Most indicators in this section of the report reflect the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District (ISLHD), area shown in the map below.



Maternal smoking during pregnancy

	2021	2018
Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District	10.9%	12.1%
NSW	7.9%	9.1%

Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence

In 2021, the proportion of local mothers who said they smoked during the first or second half of their pregnancy was higher than the NSW benchmark.

Smoking is associated with poorer perinatal outcomes, including low birthweight, being small for gestational age, pre-term birth and perinatal death. Some groups of expectant mothers are reported as being more likely to smoke than others, these include:

- Teenage mothers (aged under 20)
- Young mothers aged between 20-24
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers
- Mothers living in very remote areas of the country
- Mothers who live in areas of disadvantage

(Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2022).

Maternal overweight and obesity

Healthy Weight

	2021	2018
Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District	54%	55.7%
NSW	54%	56.6%

Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence

Overweight or Obese

	2021	2018
Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District	43.8%	40.6%
NSW	43%	39.6%

Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence

In 2021, the proportion of local expectant mothers who were either overweight or obese during pregnancy was close to the NSW benchmark.

Being obese during pregnancy can lead to higher chances of health problems, complications and death for both the mother and/or baby. Obese pregnant women have a greater likelihood of experiencing conditions such as thromboembolism, gestational diabetes, pre-eclampsia, emergency caesarean section delivery, post-partum haemorrhage and wound infections. Babies born to mothers who are obese have a higher risk of congenital abnormalities, pre-term birth and stillbirth compared to those born to mothers with a healthy weight (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2022).

First antenatal visit by gestational age

First Visit by 14 Weeks

	2021	2018
Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District	90.8%	90.8%
NSW	80.1%	77.6%

Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence

First Visit by 20 Weeks

	2021	2018
Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District	96.9%	91.3%
NSW	92.8%	92%

Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence

In 2021, the proportion of local expectant mothers attending their first antenatal visit before 14 weeks and 20 weeks of pregnancy was above the NSW benchmark.

Regular antenatal care in the first trimester is associated with better maternal health in pregnancy, fewer interventions in late pregnancy and positive child health outcomes. National guidelines recommend that a woman has her first antenatal visit within the first 10 weeks of pregnancy. Women less likely to attend an antenatal visit earlier in their pregnancy include women who:

- Live in remote areas
- Identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- Are aged under 20

(Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2022).

Pre-term births

	2021	2018
Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District	7%	8.4%
NSW	7.3%	7.7%

Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence

In 2021, the rate of local pre-term births was close to the NSW benchmark.

Babies born with a gestational age of less than 37 weeks are considered pre-term. Characteristics associated with increased likelihood of pre-term birth include:

- multiple births e.g., twins, triplets etc
- smoking or alcohol consumption during pregnancy
- babies born to mothers who live in remote or disadvantaged areas
- Babies born to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers
- younger (under 20) and older (over 40) mothers

(Department of Health and Aged Care 2019).

Low birth weight babies

	2020	2018
Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District	5.6%	6.5%
NSW	6.1%	6.4%

Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence

In 2020, the rate of local babies considered to have a low birthweight was close to the NSW benchmark.

Newborn babies weighing less than 2,500 grams are considered low birth weight. Birthweight is a key determinant of a baby's health and chance of survival. Babies with a low birthweight are more likely to experience:

- poor cognitive development
- poor physical development and reduced or delayed motor skills
- chronic diseases, such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease later in life

(Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2022).

Immunisation in children

1 Year

	2022	2018
Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District	94.3%	95.1%
NSW	93.8%	93.9%

Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence

2 Years

	2022	2018
Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District	93.4%	92%
NSW	91.9%	90.2%

Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence

5 Years

	2022	2018
Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District	95.8%	96.7%
NSW	94.2%	94.6%

Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence

Local immunisation rates are above or close to the NSW benchmark across the three age categories.



One or more long-term health conditions children 0-14 years

	2021	2016
Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District	10%	Not Available*
NSW	8.7%	Not Available*

Public Health Information Development Unit 2023

* Long term health conditions were a new variable reported by the ABS, following the 2021 Census. As it is a new variable, the comparative data for 2016 is not available.

The proportion of children experiencing one or more long-term health condition in the ISLHD is higher than the NSW benchmark.

Long-term health conditions are conditions diagnosed by a doctor or nurse, that last six months or longer. They include conditions that may recur from time to time; are being treated or controlled by medication; and/or are in remission. Examples of long-term health conditions include, but are not limited to:

- arthritis
- asthma
- cancer (including remission)
- diabetes (excluding gestational diabetes)
- heart disease (including heart attack or angina)
- kidney disease
- mental health conditions (including depression or anxiety)

(Public Health Information Development Unit 2021).

Long-term health condition - Asthma - Children 0-14 years

	2021	2016
Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District	7.5%	Not Available*
NSW	6.6%	Not Available*

Public Health Information Development Unit 2023

* Long term health conditions were a new variable reported by the ABS, following the 2021 Census. As it is a new variable, the comparative data for 2016 is not available.

The proportion of local children with asthma is close to the state benchmark.

Long-term health condition - Mental health condition (including depression or anxiety) - Children 0-14 years

	2021	2016
Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District	2.3%	Not Available*
NSW	1.9%	Not Available*

Public Health Information Development Unit 2023

* Long term health conditions were a new variable reported by the ABS, following the 2021 Census. As it is a new variable, the comparative data for 2016 is not available.

The proportion of children in the ISLHD with a mental health condition (including depression or anxiety) is close to the NSW benchmark.



Overweight and obesity – Children 5-16 years

	2019-2022	2017-2020
Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District	21.6%	22.9%
NSW	22.1%	21.9%

Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence

The proportion of local children considered overweight and obese is close to the NSW Benchmark. Overweight and obesity in children is typically caused by unhealthy eating habits, a lack of regular physical activity, a combination of the two, and in some cases genetic predisposition. Children who are overweight or obese are more likely to experience health related complications in their childhood years such as breathing difficulties, bone fractures, insulin resistance, early markers for cardiovascular disease, depression and low self-esteem. Childhood obesity is also closely linked to adult obesity, diabetes, coronary heart disease and some forms of cancer (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2022).

Fruit and vegetables: recommended daily consumption by children

Vegetables

	2020-2021	2017-2018
Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District	3.1%	2.7%
NSW	5.4%	6.7%

Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence

Fruit

	2020-2021	2017-2018
Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District	63%	59.3%
NSW	62.6%	64%

Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence

Local rates for the consumption of vegetables are below the NSW benchmark, while local rates for the daily consumption of fruit is above the NSW benchmark.

The daily minimum recommended number of serves ranges from 2.5-5.5 for vegetables and one to two for fruit, depending on a child's age (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2018).

Wollongong LGA wellbeing survey – Access to services – Access to affordable fresh food

	2021	2018
Dissatisfied (1-2)	6%	2%
Neutral (3)	13%	8%
Satisfied (4-5)	80%	69%

IRIS Research 2021, p. 34

Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction using a five-point scale where one meant 'very dissatisfied' and five meant 'very satisfied'. In 2021, 80% of respondents were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their level of access to affordable fresh food.

Physical activity by behaviour type - Adequate physical activity - Children 5-15 years

	2020-2021	2018-2019
Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District	18.1%	22%
NSW	17.8%	23%

Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence

The proportion of local children with adequate levels of physical activity is below is close to the NSW benchmark.

Australian guidelines recommend:

- Infants (birth to 12 months) are to be physically active several times a day in a variety of ways. This can include floor based play, tummy time and reaching and grasping for objects. It is also recommended that infants do not have any screen time.
- Toddlers (1-2 years) participate in at least 3 hours of activity throughout each day. This could include running, dancing and/or skipping. It is also recommended that toddlers don't have any screen time.
- Preschoolers (3-5 years) participate in at least 3 hours of physical activity throughout the day, including one hour of energetic play. This may include activities like going to the playground, running, throwing or dancing. It is also recommended that preschoolers have no more than one hour of screen time per day (Department of Health and Aged Care 2021).
- Children (5 to 14 years) participate in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day and have no more than 2 hours of screen-based activity per day.

(Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2022).



I feel part of the community when... "I walk in the community with my mum and baba."

Illustration: Eva, 4 years, Wollongong City Community Preschool

Physical activity by behaviour type – Sedentary behaviours – Children 5-15 years

	2020-2021	2018-2019
Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District	57.2%	55.3%
NSW	56.9%	47.2%

Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence

The proportion of local children with sedentary behaviours is close to than the state benchmark. Being sedentary is different from being physically inactive. Children who are sedentary may still meet the recommended requirements for moderate physical activity, however they spend long periods of time sitting or lying down throughout the day (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2018, p. 2).

Wollongong LGA wellbeing survey – Access to services – Availability and access to health services

	2021	2018
Dissatisfied (1-2)	5%	6%
Neutral (3)	17%	16%
Satisfied (4-5)	77%	78%

IRIS Research 2021, p. 34

Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction using a five-point scale where one meant 'very dissatisfied' and five meant 'very satisfied'. In 2021, 77% of respondents were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the availability and their level of access to health services.

Learning





Access to quality education and care during the early years of a child's life is vital in shaping their future. Participation in early education programs lead to improved outcomes for children, including better academic achievement, increased job prospects, and stronger connections to their families and the broader community (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2022).

Children learn through a range of formal and informal experiences in various settings such as the classroom, at home, and in their community. The early years of a child's life are crucial in shaping their self-esteem, resilience, healthy growth, and individual ability to learn. Exposing children to a range of formal and informal learning opportunities during the early years is essential in laying the foundation for lifelong development and learning. (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority n.d.)

Access and participation in quality education and care are integral to a child's well-being and overall development. Research shows that participation in quality preschool programs equip children with the social, cognitive, and emotional skills needed to help them continue learning as they grow. These skills are essential for children's overall development and success in school and beyond (NSW Government 2022).

Starting school is a key milestone in a child's life that can require significant adjustment. Studies have shown that children who are developmentally vulnerable on school entry are more likely to perform poorly on literacy and numeracy tests later in their schooling. This highlights the importance of early education in preparing children for the transition to school and the potential long-term impact it can have on their academic success (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2022).



Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)

The AEDC is conducted every three years and measures children’s development in five developmental domains by the time they start their first year of full-time school. The data provides information about where children are doing well and where they need more support. The five domains are:

- Physical health and wellbeing
- Social competence
- Emotional maturity
- Language and cognitive skills (school-based)
- Communication skills and general knowledge.

Understanding the data:

The AEDC uses the following terms to describe how children are developing:

	Developmentally on track: Children are developing well.
	Developmentally at risk: Children are experiencing some challenges that are interfering with their development.
	Developmentally vulnerable: Children are experiencing significant challenges that are impacting their development.

The early years of a child’s life are crucial in shaping their self-esteem, resilience, healthy growth, and individual ability to learn.

Learning is fun when...
“I’m with my friends at preschool.”

Illustration: Poppy, 4 years, ECTARC
Short Street child care centre





2,458 children across Wollongong LGA were surveyed as part of the 2021 AEDC. Below are the results for children living in the Wollongong LGA, regardless of where they go to school (Australian Early Development Census 2021, pp. 2-5).

More information is available on the Australian Early Development Census website www.aedc.gov.au

Parent/caregiver engagement with school

	2021	2018
Wollongong LGA	95.4%	93.9%
NSW	94%	94.1%

* The AEDC 2021 macrodata was acquired by application

Wollongong LGA performs above the state benchmark, with 95.4% of parents reported as being actively engaged with their child's school

Teachers completing the AEDC are asked to indicate the rate at which they see parents/caregivers actively engage with the school in supporting the child's learning. Examples of engagement include:

- reading with their child and marking they have read the readers taken home with their child
- speaking to the teacher about their child's learning
- speaking to the teacher about concerns they may have about their child
- attending parent/teacher information nights and interviews at the school

Australian Early Development Census 2021

Physical health and wellbeing

This domain measures children's physical readiness for the school day, physical independence, and gross and fine motor skills.

Developmentally on track:

	2021	2018
Wollongong LGA	75.4%	75.5%
NSW	78.1%	78.5%

Australian Early Development Census 2021, p.14

Five areas with highest proportion of children developmentally on track		Five areas with highest proportion of children developmentally vulnerable	
Area	%	Area	%
Coledale	100%	Koonawarra	36.2%
Russell Vale	94.7%	Warrawong	34.5%
Farmborough Heights	90.6%	Penrose and surrounds	23.1%
Mount Pleasant	90.1%	East Corrimal	20.6%
Austinmer	89.7%	Keiraville	20%

Australian Early Development Census 2021, pp. 22-23



The proportion of children who were developmentally on track in Wollongong LGA is below the NSW benchmark.

Children who are developmentally at risk (15%) or developmentally vulnerable (9.6%) may:

- be dressed inappropriately
- be frequently late, hungry or tired
- have poor coordination and/or poor gross and fine motor skills
- demonstrate average to low energy levels during the school day

(Australian Early Development Census 2021, p. 14).

The data collected under this domain of physical health and wellbeing has been presented in three sub-domains, outlined below. This has been done to help the community better understand the types of challenges children may experience in the development of their physical health and wellbeing.

Physical readiness for the school day

- 9% of children were considered developmentally vulnerable as, on several occasions, they came to school unprepared by being inappropriately dressed, late, tired and/or hungry.

Physical independence

- 7% of children were considered developmentally vulnerable as they have not developed either one or more of the following - independence, handedness or coordination.

Gross and fine motor skills

- 8.7% of children were considered developmentally vulnerable as they could have poor fine and gross motor skills and/or poor overall energy levels during the day.

(Australian Early Development Census 2021, p. 15).

Social competence

This domain measures children's overall social competence, responsibility and respect, approach to learning and readiness to explore new things.

Developmentally on track:

	2021	2018
Wollongong LGA	76.6%	77.6%
NSW	76.1%	77.1%

Australian Early Development Census 2021, p. 16

Five areas with highest proportion of children developmentally on track		Five areas with highest proportion of children developmentally vulnerable	
Area	%	Area	%
Mount Kembla and surrounds	100%	Koonawarra	36.2%
Stanwell Tops - Stanwell Park - Coalcliff	100%	Mangerton	20.7%
Austinmer	94.9%	Haywards Bay	20%
Tarrawanna - Fernhill	93.5%	Warrawong	19%
Balgownie	92.9%	Gwynneville	18.2%

Australian Early Development Census 2021, pp.24-25



Wollongong LGA is performing close to the NSW benchmark.

Children who are developmentally at risk (14.5%) or developmentally vulnerable (8.9%) may demonstrate:

- poor social skills – getting along with others and playing with other children
- lack of respect for other people and their things
- challenges with following instructions, rules and routines and adapting to change
- difficulties cooperating and working independently

(Australian Early Development Census 2021, p.16).

Emotional maturity

This domain measures children’s pro-social and helping behaviours and the absence of anxious and fearful behaviour, aggressive behaviour and hyperactivity and inattention.

Developmentally on track:

	2021	2018
Wollongong LGA	78%	79.5%
NSW	79.1%	80.2%

Australian Early Development Census 2021, p.17

Five areas with highest proportion of children developmentally on track		Five areas with highest proportion of children developmentally vulnerable	
Area	%	Area	%
Stanwell Tops - Stanwell Park - Coalcliff	100%	Koonawarra	29.8%
Tarrawanna - Fernhill	96.6%	Haywards Bay	20%
Balgownie	95.7%	Warrawong	19%
Mount Kembla and surrounds	93.8%	Gwynneville	18.2%
Cringila	92.6%	Berkeley	15.6%

Australian Early Development Census 2021, pp. 26-27

The proportion of local children who are developmentally on track in this domain is below the NSW benchmark.

Children who are developmentally at risk (13.5%) or developmentally vulnerable (8.6%) may demonstrate:

- difficulty helping others and/or being kind to others
- anxious behaviours
- challenges regulating their emotions e.g., temper tantrums
- aggressive behaviour
- inattention and/or hyperactivity

(Australian Early Development Census 2021, p. 17).



Language and cognitive skills (school-based)

This domain measures children's basic literacy, advanced literacy, basic numeracy, and interest in literacy, numeracy and memory.

Developmentally on track:

	2021	2018
Wollongong LGA	86.1%	87.5%
NSW	84.9%	87.2%

Australian Early Development Census 2021, p. 18

Five areas with highest proportion of children developmentally on track		Five areas with highest proportion of children developmentally vulnerable	
Area	%	Area	%
Coledale	100%	Penrose and surrounds	26.9%
Farmborough Heights	100%	Bellambi	26.3%
Mount Kembla and surrounds	100%	East Corrimal	20.6%
Russell Vale	100%	Koonawarra	19.1%
Stanwell Tops - Stanwell Park - Coalcliff	100%	Gwynneville	13.6%

Australian Early Development Census 2021, p.28-29

Wollongong LGA is performing above the NSW benchmark in this domain.

Children who are developmentally at risk (7.7%) or developmentally vulnerable (6.2%) may demonstrate:

- difficulty reading, identifying some letters and the sounds attached to them
- challenges writing their name, simple words or sentences
- an inability to recognise shapes, numbers or count to 20
- a lack of interest in books, reading, maths and numbers

(Australian Early Development Census 2021, p. 18).



Communication skills and general knowledge

This domain measures children's communication skills and general knowledge, based on broad developmental competencies and skills measured in the school context.

Developmentally on track:

	2021	2018
Wollongong LGA	76.3%	74.7%
NSW	76%	76.8%

Australian Early Development Census 2021, p.19

Five areas with highest proportion of children developmentally on track		Five areas with highest proportion of children developmentally vulnerable	
Area	%	Area	%
Coledale	100%	Warrawong	27.6%
Mount Kembla and surrounds	100%	Lake Heights	21.1%
Farmborough Heights	96.2%	East Corrimal	20.6%
Cordeaux Heights	94.9%	Koonawarra	19.1%
Russell Vale	94.7%	Bellambi	15.8%

Australian Early Development Census 2021, p.30-31



The proportion of children who were developmentally on track in Wollongong LGA is close to the NSW benchmark.

Children who are developmentally at risk (16.2%) or developmentally vulnerable (7.5%) may demonstrate:

- difficulties listening, understanding and speaking English
- poor communication and articulation
- challenges telling a story or participating in imaginative play
- poor general knowledge

(Australian Early Development Census 2021, p. 19).

Children developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains

	2021	2018
Wollongong LGA	21.3%	18.9%
NSW	21.2%	19.9%

Australian Early Development Census 2021, p. 20

The proportion of local children developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains is close to the NSW benchmark.

Children developmentally vulnerable in two or more domains

	2021	2018
Wollongong LGA	10.1%	10.2%
NSW	10.5%	9.6%

Australian Early Development Census 2021, p. 20

In 2021, 235 (10.1%) local children were developmentally vulnerable in two or more domains, this is close to the NSW benchmark (Australian Early Development Census 2021, p. 20).





National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)

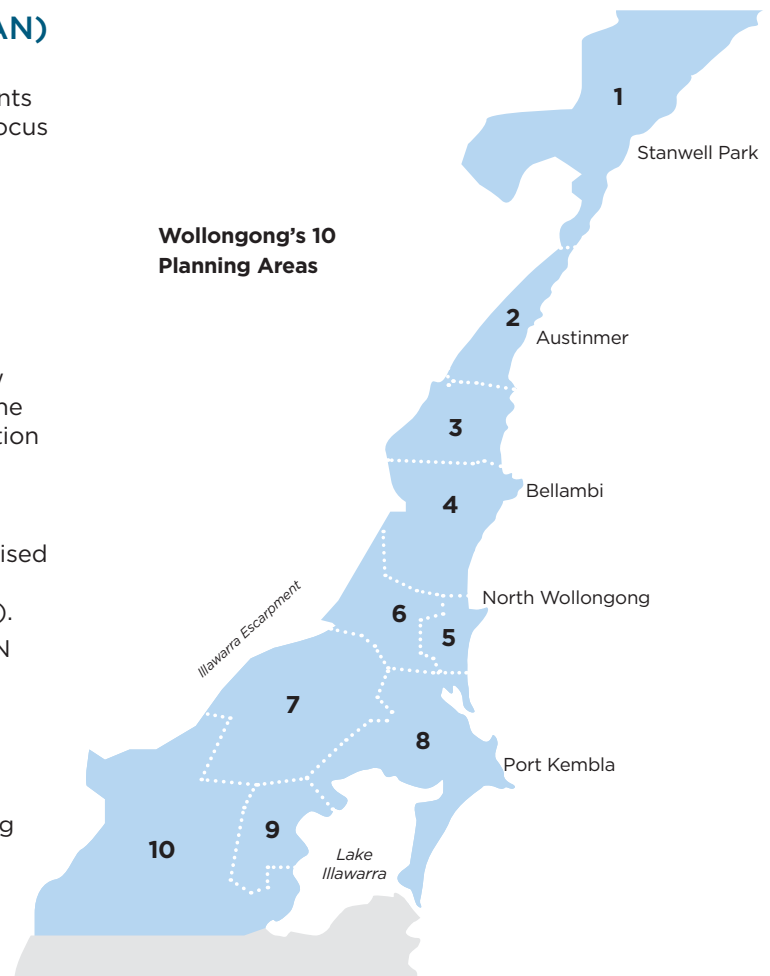
NAPLAN is an annual assessment of the literacy and numeracy proficiency of students in years three, five, seven and nine across focus areas, known as content strands:

- reading
- writing
- spelling
- grammar
- numeracy.

NAPLAN results provide a snapshot of how students are performing in these areas at the time the test is administered. This information is used to help governments, education authorities, schools, teachers and parents understand how education programs are working and which areas need to be prioritised for improvement (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority 2022).

The tables below present the 2018 NAPLAN results of year three and five students attending schools located within the Wollongong LGA. Below are the results of the selected schools' average scores, when compared to all Australian students. The data has been grouped and presented using Wollongong's 10 planning areas.

More information is available on the My School Website: myschool.edu.au



*When making comparisons across planning areas it is important to consider other demographic factors i.e. SEIFA index of advantage and disadvantage as there is a strong correlation between these demographic factors and NAPLAN scores.

Number of schools above or well above Australian average scores

Number of schools close to Australian average scores*

Number of schools below or well above Australian average scores

*Close to refers to differences that are not statistically significant differences or negligible in size (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority 2022).



Planning Area / 1

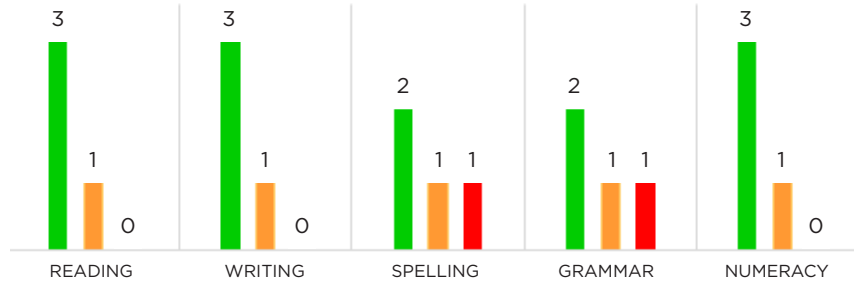
Suburbs:
Coalcliff, Darkes Forrest, Helensburgh, Lilyvale, Maddens Plains, Otford, Stanwell Park and Stanwell Tops

Government Schools: **3**

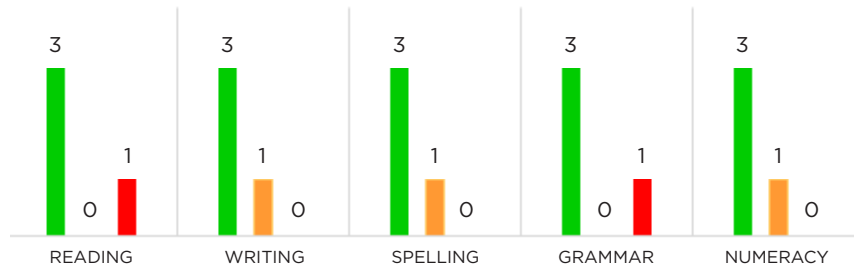
Non-Government Schools: **1**

Total number of students: **829**

Year 3



Year 5



Planning Area / 2

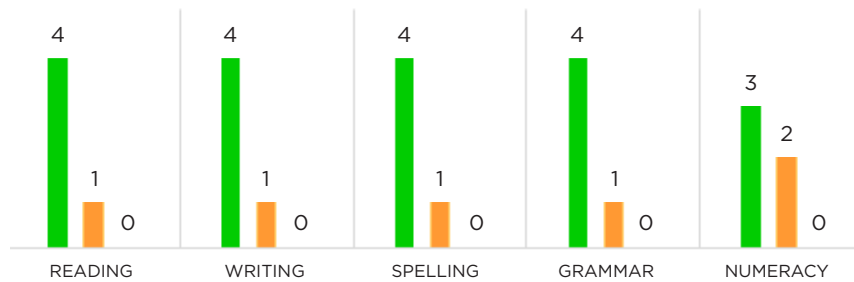
Suburbs:
Austinmer, Clifton, Coledale, Scarborough, Thirroul and Wombarra

Government Schools: **4**

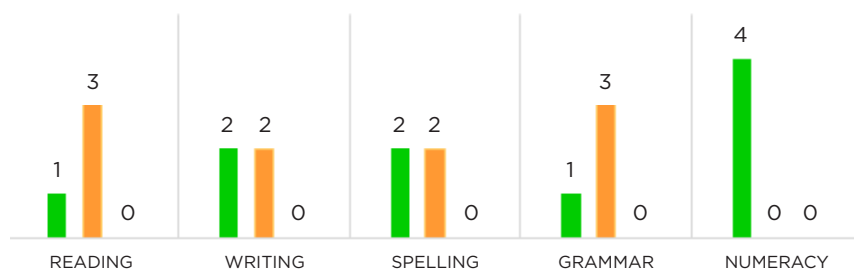
Non-Government Schools: **1**

Total number of students: **1,129**

Year 3



Year 5



One of the schools in this planning area only participated in the NAPLAN testing for year three students.



Planning Area / 3

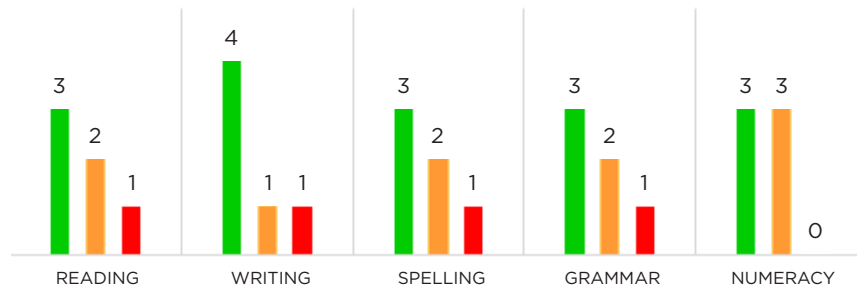
Suburbs:
Bulli, Reidtown,
Russell Vale and
Woonona

Government Schools: **5**

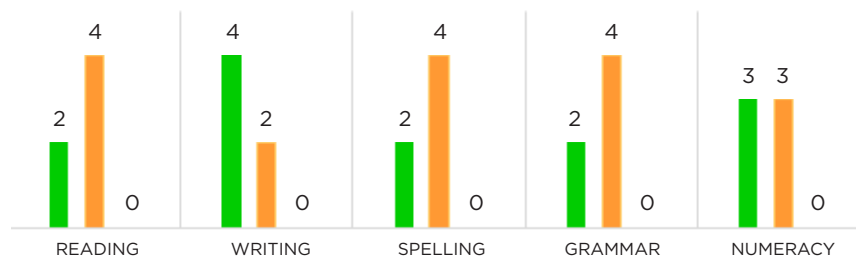
Non-Government
Schools: **1**

Total number of
students: **2,103**

Year 3



Year 5



Planning Area / 4

Suburbs:
Balgownie, Bellambi,
Corrimal, East Corrimal,
Fairy Meadow, Fernhill,
Mount Ousley, Mount
Pleasant, Tarrawanna
and Towradgi

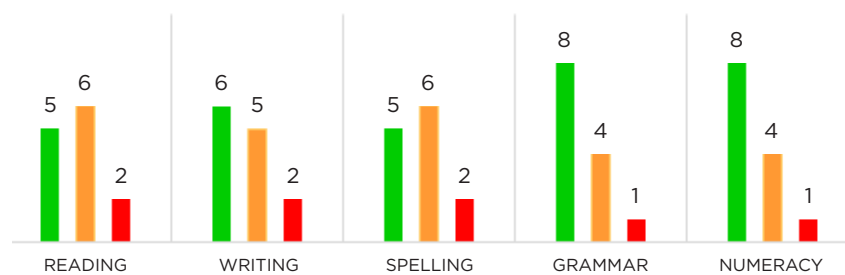
Government Schools: **9**

Non-Government
Schools: **4**

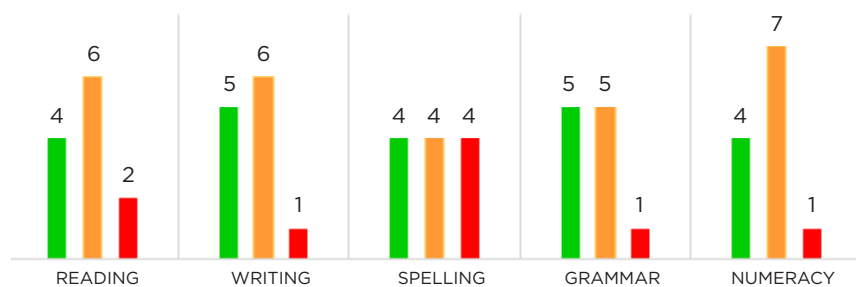
Total number of
students: **3,134**

*One of the schools in this
planning area only participated
in the NAPLAN testing for year
three students.

Year 3



Year 5





Planning Area / **5 & 6**

*combined due to the small number of schools in Planning Area Five

Suburbs:

Gwynneville, Keiraville, Mount Kiera, Mangerton, Mount St Thomas, North Wollongong, West Wollongong and Wollongong

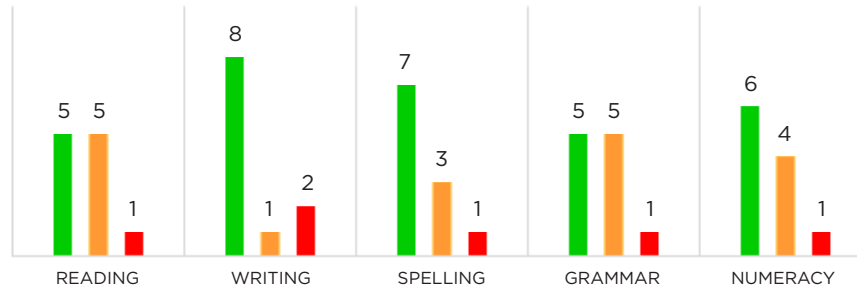
Government Schools: **9**

Non-Government Schools: **3**

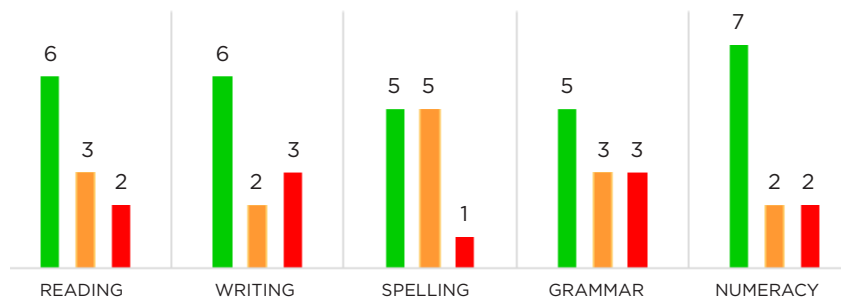
Total number of students: **3,599**

One of the schools in this planning area did not have published NAPLAN data.

Year 3



Year 5



Planning Area / **7**

Suburbs:

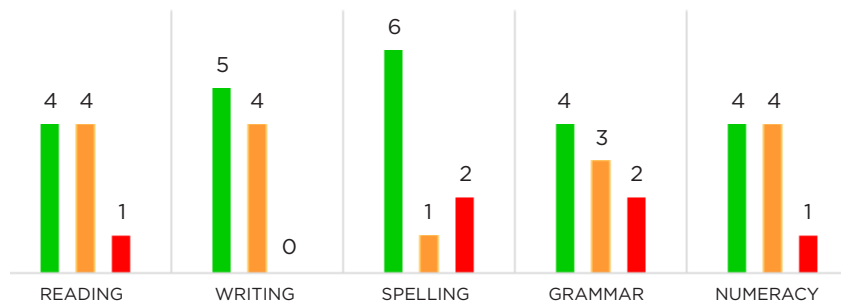
Cordeaux Heights, Farmborough Heights, Figtree, Kembla Grange, Kembla Heights, Mount Kembla, Nareena Hills and Unanderra

Government Schools: **6**

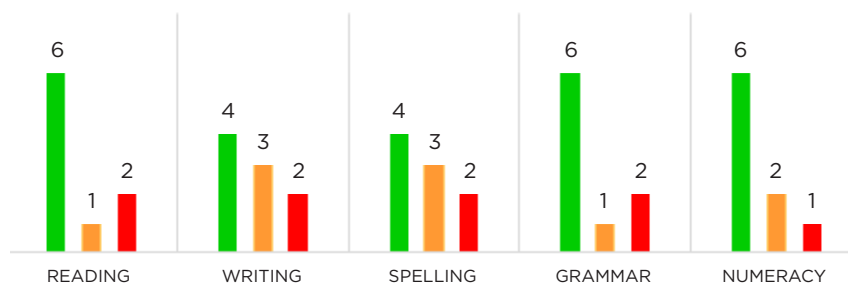
Non-Government Schools: **3**

Total number of students: **2,994**

Year 3



Year 5





Planning Area / 8

Suburbs:

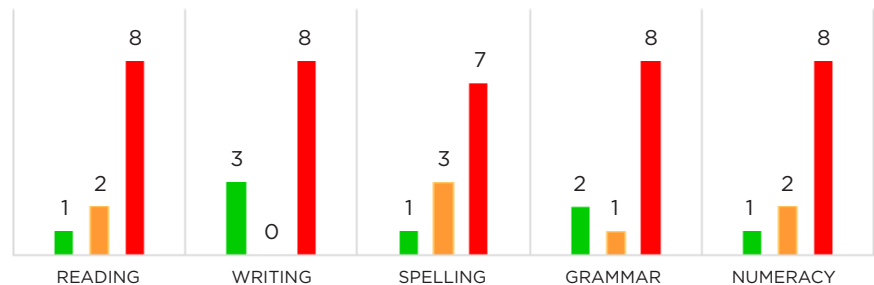
Berkeley, Cringila, Kemblawarra, Lake Heights, Port Kembla, Primbee, Springhill, Warrawong and Windang

Government Schools: **9**

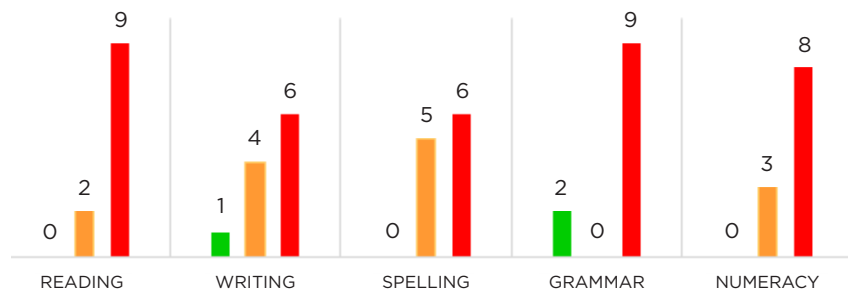
Non-Government Schools: **2**

Total number of students: **2,050**

Year 3



Year 5



Planning Area / 9 & 10

*combined due to the small number of schools in Planning Area 10

Suburbs:

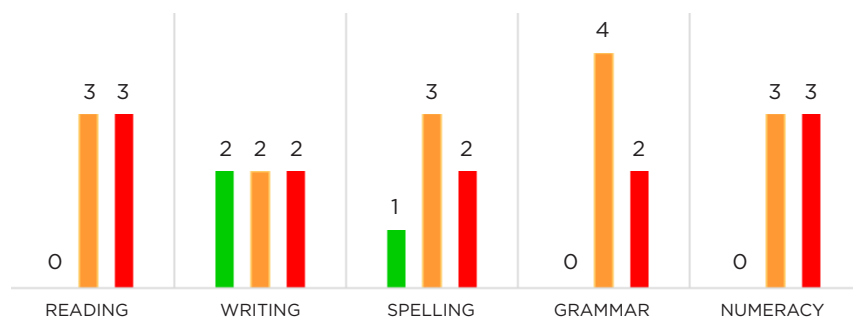
Avondale, Brownsville, Cleveland Dapto, Dombarton, Haywards Bay, Huntley, Kanahooka, Koonawarra, Marshall Mount, Wongawilli and Yallah

Government Schools: **5**

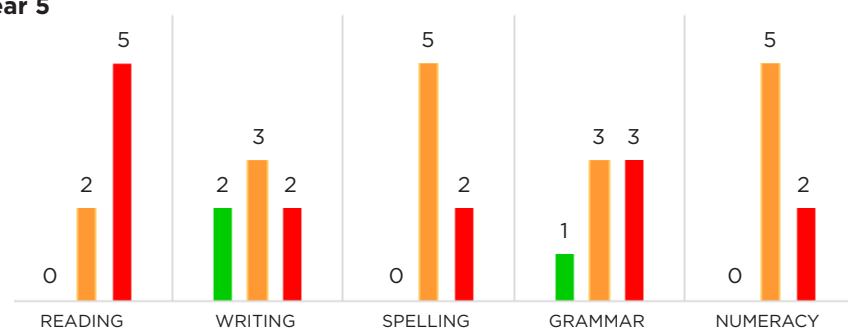
Non-Government Schools: **1**

Total number of students: **2,892**

Year 3



Year 5





Learning is fun when...
“I play blocks at preschool.”

Illustration: Amayra, 3 years,
Wollongong City Community Preschool





Planning area combined results:

Performing above Australian average scores	Performing close to Australian average scores	Performing below Australian average scores
Planning area one Planning area two Planning area five & six Planning area seven	Planning area three Planning area four Planning area nine & ten	Planning area eight

*Results based on combined median score for each planning area

Planning area performance against content strands:

Planning area	Performing above Australian average scores		Performing close to Australian average scores		Performing below Australian average scores	
	Year 3	Year 5	Year 3	Year 5	Year 3	Year 5
1	Reading Writing Spelling Grammar Numeracy	Reading Writing Spelling Grammar Numeracy				
2	Reading Writing Spelling Grammar Numeracy	Writing Spelling Numeracy		Reading Grammar		
3	Reading Writing Spelling Grammar Numeracy	Writing		Reading Spelling Grammar Numeracy		
4	Grammar Numeracy		Reading Writing Spelling	Reading Writing Spelling Grammar Numeracy		
5/6	Writing Spelling Numeracy	Reading Writing Numeracy	Reading Grammar	Spelling Grammar		
7	Writing Spelling	Reading Grammar Numeracy	Reading Grammar Numeracy	Writing Spelling		
8					Reading Writing Spelling Grammar Numeracy	Reading Writing Spelling Grammar Numeracy
9/10			Reading Writing Spelling Grammar Numeracy	Writing Spelling Grammar Numeracy		Reading

*Results based on median score for each year and content strand

Family





Healthy family relationships are essential to the wellbeing of children, individuals, families and communities. Every family is unique and family structures and caring responsibilities have the potential to change over time. It is important for children to maintain strong, positive relationships with their parents/carers and other close family members. These relationships are often indicative of the relationships they will have later in life (Australian Institute of Family Studies 2016).

A family's economic situation also has the potential to change over time. The availability of job opportunities, family income and employment status are closely linked to child development.

Work and income-related stressors may have negative effects on parents and can impact the quality of their parent-child relationships (Health Engine 2010).

Families experiencing financial stability are better placed to access essential services and provide a healthy lifestyle for their children. They often live in adequate and stable housing, have access to healthy food options and the means to participate in educational and recreational activities. Children in less financially secure families are more likely to experience lifelong disadvantage.

(Australian Research Alliance for Children and Young People 2018, p. 16).



**I feel loved when...
"Daddy cuddles me."**

Illustration: Zara, 4 years,
Kid's Uni Child Care Centre



Couples with children

	2021	2016
Total Number - Wollongong LGA	24,582	23,454
Wollongong LGA	29.3%	30.2%
NSW	30.8%	31.5%

.id Community Demographic Resources 2023

Areas with the highest number of couples with children

Area	Number
Woonona - Russell Vale	1,765
Figtree	1,758
Horsley	1,365
Dapto - Brownsville	1,295
Wollongong	1,200

.id Community Demographic Resources 2023

Areas with the highest proportion of couples with children

Area	%
Wongawilli - Dombarton - Huntley	54.9%
Cordeaux Heights - Mount Kembla - Kembla Heights	49.5%
Haywards Bay - Yallah - Marshall Mount	48%
Helensburgh - Lilyvale - Otford	47.4%
Horsley	43.9%

.id Community Demographic Resources 2023

Couples with children include registered marriages or de-facto relationship, opposite or same sex couples, with at least one child living in the family household. The children can be of any age and include stepchildren, adopted and foster children. When compared to the NSW benchmark, there was a smaller proportion of couples with children living in the Wollongong LGA (.id Community Demographic Resources 2023).

One parent families with children

	2021	2016
Total Number - Wollongong LGA	9,412	8,938
Wollongong LGA	11.2%	11.5%
NSW	10.6%	10.7%

.id Community Demographic Resources 2023



Areas with the highest number of couples with children

Area	Number
Wollongong	684
Dapto - Brownsville	659
Woonona - Russell Vale	607
Berkeley	512
Figtree	425

.id Community Demographic Resources 2023

Areas with the highest proportion of couples with children

Area	%
Koonawarra	21.1%
Cringila	20.2%
Bellambi	18.9%
Berkeley	17%
Warrawong	16.3%

.id Community Demographic Resources 2023

One parent families are a single parent with at least one child who is usually living in the family household. The family may also include other adults related to the lone parent. The dependent children can be of any age and include stepchildren, adopted and foster children. Compared to the NSW benchmark, there is a larger proportion of one parent families living in the Wollongong LGA (.id Community Demographic Resources 2023).

Wollongong LGA wellbeing survey – Personal wellbeing index – Your personal relationships

	2021	2018
Dissatisfied (1-2)	4%	4%
Neutral (3)	9%	7%
Satisfied (4-5)	87%	89%

IRIS Research 2021, p. 12

Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with an aspect of their life using a five-point scale where one meant 'very dissatisfied' and five meant 'very satisfied'. In 2021, 87% of respondents were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their personal relationships.

	2021	2018
Wollongong LGA	84.8*	84.7*
Australia	78.9	78.6

IRIS Research 2021, p. 14

* Mean scores of Wollongong City Council has been benchmarked out of 100 for comparative purposes.

The results for Wollongong LGA for this wellbeing indicator have also been benchmarked against the Australian results. Wollongong LGA outperforms the national benchmark for this personal wellbeing indicator.



Children in out of home care

These indicators reflect figures for Wollongong and Shellharbour LGA's as shown in the map above.

	2023	2019
Wollongong and Shellharbour LGAs - Number of children	612	902
Wollongong and Shellharbour LGA - Rate per 100,000*	285.1	307.3
NSW - Rate per 100,000*	152.8	208.7

(Department of Communities and Justice, pers. comm., 8 October 2019; Department of Communities and Justice, pers. comm., 3 March 2023)

*Rate per 100,000 was calculated using population figures sourced from ABS where 293,494 was the population for Illawarra and 8,046,100 for NSW.

Locally there was a higher proportion of children in out of home care, when compared to the NSW benchmark.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care

	2023	2019
Wollongong and Shellharbour LGAs - Number of children	268	320
Wollongong and Shellharbour LGA - Rate per 100,000*	124.9	109.0
NSW - Rate per 100,000*	83.5	83.7

(Department of Communities and Justice, pers. comm., 8 October 2019; Department of Communities and Justice, pers. comm., 3 March 2023)

*Rate per 100,000 was calculated using population figures sourced from ABS where 293,494 was the population for Illawarra and 8,046,100 for NSW.

Locally there was a higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care, when compared to the NSW benchmark.



Culturally and linguistically diverse children in out of home care

	2023	2019
Wollongong and Shellharbour LGAs - Number of children	161	Not Available
Wollongong and Shellharbour LGA - Rate per 100,000*	75	Not Available
NSW - Rate per 100,000*	26.8	Not Available

Department of Communities and Justice, pers. comm., 8 October 2019; Department of Communities and Justice, pers. comm., 3 March 2023

*rate per 100,000 was calculated using population figures sourced from ABS where 293,494 was the population for Illawarra and 8,046,100 for NSW.

The proportion of local culturally and linguistically diverse children in out of home care is above the NSW benchmark.

Out of home care services aim to provide a safe environment for children and young people who are unable to live with their families. Foster carers take on the responsibilities of a parent and provide care until children can safely return home (Department of Communities and Justice 2019). Children placed in out of home care are likely to have experienced a significant life disruption and loss and will require support to catch up on some developmental stages (Family Matters 2016).

The length of time children spend in out of home care can vary. Where children are unable to live with their birth parents, the DCJ will try in the first instance to locate the child with a member of their extended family (Department of Communities and Justice 2019).



I feel safe when...
"I'm cuddled up in my bed."

Illustration: Shervone, 9 years,
Big Fat Smile Balarang Fun Club



Home ownership

	2021	2016
Wollongong LGA	33.1%	33.4%
NSW	30.3%	30.7%

.id Community Demographic Resources 2023

Areas with the highest proportion of home ownership		Areas with the lowest proportion of home ownership	
Area	%	Area	%
Kanahooka	49.1%	Bellambi	18.5%
Cordeaux Heights - Mount Kembla - Kembla Heights	46%	North Wollongong	18.6%
Mount Ousley - Mount Pleasant	45.4%	Wongawilli - Dombarton - Huntley	18.6%
Windang - Primbee	45.3%	Wollongong	23%
Austinmer	44.6%	Unanderra - Kembla Grange	23.9%

.id Community Demographic Resources 2023

In 2021, the proportion of households that fully owned their dwellings was higher than the NSW benchmark.

Labour force participation rate

	2021	2016
Wollongong LGA	58.3%	56.9%
NSW	58.7%	59.2%

.id Community Demographic Resources 2023

Areas with the highest labour force participation rate		Areas with the lowest labour force participation rate	
Area	%	Area	%
Wongawilli - Dombarton - Huntley	75.1%	Warrawong	38.7%
Helensburgh - Lilyvale - Otford	69.7%	Cringila	42.1%
Horsley	68.5%	Windang - Primbee	45.3%
Haywards Bay - Yallah - Marshall Mount	66.8%	Berkeley	48.7%
Cordeaux Heights - Mount Kembla - Kembla Heights	66.1%	Kanahooka	49.2%

.id Community Demographic Resources 2023

The proportion of people participating in the labour force in the Wollongong LGA is close to the NSW benchmark.

People participating in the labour force are those aged 15 and over who, in the week before Census night, were either working full-time or part-time, or who did not have a job but were actively looking for and available to start work. High labour force participation rates indicate areas with good access to jobs and a high working age population (.id Community Demographic Resources 2023).



Unemployment

	2021	2016
Wollongong LGA	4.9%	7.2%
NSW	4.9%	6.3%

.id Community Demographic Resources 2023

Areas with the lowest unemployment rate		Areas with the highest unemployment rate	
Area	%	Area	%
Cleveland - Avondale	2.6%	Warrawong	9.3%
Wongawilli - Dombarton - Huntley	2.7%	Gwynneville*	9.2%
Haywards Bay - Yallah - Marshall Mount	2.9%	North Wollongong*	8.6%
Mount Ousley - Mount Pleasant	3%	Cringila	8.5%
Towradgi	3%	Keiraville - Mount Keira	7.7%

.id Community Demographic Resources 2023

*Note: these areas have high student populations.

The proportion of people who were unemployed was the same as the NSW benchmark.

Unemployed people are those who are aged 15 and over who, in the week before Census night, did not have a job but were actively looking for and available to start work (.id Community Demographic Resources 2023).

Median household income

	2021	2016
Wollongong LGA	\$1,637	\$1,339
NSW	\$1,849	\$1,486

.id Community Demographic Resources 2023

Areas with the highest median household income.		Areas with the lowest median household income.	
Area	\$	Area	\$
Stanwell Park - Stanwell Tops - Coalcliff and surrounds	\$2,775	Warrawong	\$902
Wombarra - Coledale - Scarborough - Clifton	\$2,740	Windang - Primbee	\$1,104
Cordeaux Heights - Mount Kembla - Kembla Heights	\$2,601	Cringila	\$1,114
Austinmer	\$2,593	Bellambi	\$1,128
Mount Ousley - Mount Pleasant	\$2,526	Berkeley	\$1,166

.id Community Demographic Resources 2023

In 2021, the median household income for the LGA was \$1,637, which was below the NSW benchmark.

The median household income is the level at which there are as many households earning below that amount as above i.e., it represents the mid-point (.id Community Demographic Resources 2023).



Low income households

	2021	2016
Wollongong LGA	23.7%	20.8%
NSW	21%	17.8%

.id Community Demographic Resources 2023

Areas with the lowest proportion of low-income households		Areas with the highest proportion of low-income households	
Area	%	Area	%
Wongawilli - Dombarton - Huntley	5.3%	Warrawong	42.3%
Austinmer	10.4%	Windang - Primbee	38%
Stanwell Park - Stanwell Tops - Coalcliff and surrounds	11.2%	Cringila	35.1%
Wombarra - Coledale - Scarborough - Clifton	11.7%	Bellambi	33.4%
Cordeaux Heights - Mount Kembla - Kembla Heights	12%	Berkeley	32.4%

.id Community Demographic Resources 2023

When compared to the NSW benchmark, the proportion of low income households in Wollongong LGA was higher.

In 2021, low income households were households with a combined income of less than \$800 per week before tax (.id Community Demographic Resources 2023).

Wollongong LGA wellbeing survey - Access to services - Availability and access to community services

	2021	2018
Dissatisfied (1-2)	7%	4%
Neutral (3)	32%	25%
Satisfied (4-5)	61%	70%

IRIS Research 2021, p. 36

Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction using a five-point scale where one meant 'very dissatisfied' and five meant 'very satisfied'. In 2021, 61% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the availability and their level of access to community services.



Households without a car

	2021	2016
Wollongong LGA	8.2%	8.8%
NSW	8.7%	8.8%

.id Community Demographic Resources 2023

Areas with the lowest proportion of households without a car		Areas with the highest proportion of households without a car	
Area	%	Area	%
Haywards Bay - Yallah - Marshall Mount	0	Warrawong	18.3%
Wongawilli - Dombarton - Huntley	0	Wollongong	14.1%
Cordeaux Heights - Mount Kembla - Kembla Heights	1.5%	Bellambi	13.5%
Wombarra - Coledale - Scarborough - Clifton	1.5%	Cringila	13.1%
Stanwell Park - Stanwell Tops - Coalcliff and surrounds	1.9%	Port Kembla - Spring Hill	12.9%

.id Community Demographic Resources 2023

The proportion of local households without a car was close to NSW benchmark.

The Census asks respondents how many motor vehicles are owned or used by the household, this includes company vehicles and those used or owned by visitors to the household who were staying there on Census night. The data below shows the proportion of houses which indicated they had no motor vehicles falling into these categories on Census night (.id Community Demographic Resources 2023).

Access to private transport is strongly linked with child development. Families who don't have access to their own car and rely on walking and public transport to get around are considered transport disadvantaged. These families often face difficulties accessing services, doing their grocery shopping, and participating in child related activities such as playgroups, school and after school activities. Parents and children who experience transport disadvantage tend to have fewer relationships and a poor sense of connection and belonging to their community (Australian Institute of Family Studies 2011).

Wollongong LGA wellbeing survey - Public transport - Satisfaction

	2021	2018
Dissatisfied (1-2)	12%	17%
Neutral (3)	26%	26%
Satisfied (4-5)	62%	57%

IRIS Research 2021, p. 48

Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction using a five-point scale where one meant 'very dissatisfied' and five meant 'very satisfied'. In 2021, 62% of respondents were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with public transport.

Home





Children have a right to grow up in safe, social home environments. A child's family environment powerfully shapes their lifelong outcomes. Children who grow up in loving and secure homes tend to be more confident, have a stronger sense of self-identity, and higher self-esteem. They also have positive role models, can form secure attachments, and are more resilient. (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth 2018, p. 10).

The home environment can also be a source of harm for children. Exposure to family violence, poverty, and intergenerational trauma are considered risk factors for developmental vulnerability and can significantly impact child development (NSW

Government 2021, p. 1). In the absence of safety and security in the home environment, Social Services may need to intervene to ensure a child's safety. A family home that is consistently nurturing and loving can provide the most important source of protection for children (Department of Social Services 2014, p. 2).

Child development and wellbeing is also influenced by the physical surroundings and the public domain. Living in clean neighbourhoods and having access to quality public open spaces, such as playgrounds and parks, can have a positive impact on children as these spaces provide opportunities for creative play, social interaction, and physical activity (Australian Institute of Family Studies 2021).

A family home that is consistently nurturing and loving can provide the most important source of protection for children.



Mortgage stress

	2021	2016
Wollongong LGA	14%	Not Available*
NSW	17.7%	Not Available*

.id Community Demographic Resources 2023

* Mortgage stress was a new variable reported by the ABS, following the 2021 Census. As it is a new variable, the comparative data for 2016 is not available.

Areas with the lowest proportion of households experiencing mortgage stress		Areas with the highest proportion of households experiencing mortgage stress	
Area	%	Area	%
Bellambi	10.4%	Lake Heights	22.8%
Mangerton	10.7%	Cringila	22.3%
Cordeaux Heights - Mount Kembla - Kembla Heights	10.9%	North Wollongong	19.2%
Farmborough Heights	11%	Koonawarra	19.1%
Towradgi	11.1%	Cleveland - Avondale	18.8%

.id Community Demographic Resources 2023

Locally, the proportion of households experiencing mortgage stress is lower than the NSW benchmark.

Mortgage stress can be defined as households spending more than 30% of their usual gross weekly income (after tax) on mortgage repayments (.id Community Demographic Resources 2023).

Rental stress

	2021	2016
Wollongong LGA	37.1%	Not Available*
NSW	35.5%	Not Available*

.id Community Demographic Resources 2023

* Rental stress was a new variable reported by the ABS, following the 2021 Census. As it is a new variable, the comparative data for 2016 is not available.

Areas with the lowest proportion of households experiencing rental stress		Areas with the highest proportion of households experiencing rental stress	
Area	%	Area	%
Stanwell Park - Stanwell Tops - Coalcliff and surrounds	22.7%	Cringila	51.4%
Wombarra - Coledale - Scarborough - Clifton	25.4%	Windang - Primbee	46%
Mount Ousley - Mount Pleasant	25.9%	Dapto - Brownsville	45.4%
Wongawilli - Dombarton - Huntley	27.5%	Port Kembla - Spring Hill	44.3%
Austinmer	28.3%	Lake Heights	43.2%

.id Community Demographic Resources 2023



Locally, the proportion of households experiencing rental stress is higher than the NSW benchmark. Rental stress can be defined as households spending more than 30% of their usual gross weekly income (after tax) on rent (.id Community Demographic Resources 2023).

Wollongong LGA wellbeing survey - Access to services - Access to housing to rent or buy

	2021	2018
Dissatisfied (1-2)	32%	40%
Neutral (3)	23%	22%
Satisfied (4-5)	34%	39%

IRIS Research 2021, p. 36

Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction using a five-point scale where one meant 'very dissatisfied' and five meant 'very satisfied'. In 2021, 34% of respondents were 'dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' with their level of access to housing that they could afford to rent or buy.

Households renting in social housing

	2021	2016
Wollongong LGA	6.8%	7.3%
NSW	4%	4.4%

.id Community Demographic Resources 2023

Areas with the lowest proportion of households renting in social housing		Areas with the highest proportion of households renting in social housing	
Area	%	Area	%
Haywards Bay - Yallah - Marshall Mount	0%	Bellambi	29.3%
Stanwell Park - Stanwell Tops - Coalcliff and surrounds	0%	Koonawarra	21.8%
Wombarra - Coledale - Scarborough - Clifton	0%	Berkeley	20.4%
Wongawilli - Dombarton - Huntley	0%	Warrawong	18.5%
Cringila	0.4%	Unanderra - Kembla Grange	18.3%

.id Community Demographic Resources 2023

When compared to the NSW benchmark the proportion of local households renting in social housing is higher.

Social housing includes all dwellings which are rented by a resident of the household, and where the landlord is a State/Territory Government housing authority (generally referred to as public housing) and households renting from a community housing provider (.id Community Demographic Resources 2023).



Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) - Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD)

The IRSAD ranks areas using a number called a 'score'. These scores are created using information about the economic and social conditions of people and households within an area. The IRSAD is used to get a general view of the relative level of disadvantage or advantage in one area compared to another.

A low score indicates a relatively greater level of disadvantage and a lack of advantage in an area. Where a high score indicates a relative lack of disadvantage and greater advantage.

The IRSAD is created using indicators that broadly reflect disadvantage, like:

- low income
- low educational attainment
- high unemployment
- jobs in relatively unskilled occupations and
- overcrowded dwellings

And indicators that broadly reflect advantage, like:

- households with high incomes
- high education levels
- large dwellings
- high numbers of motor vehicles
- spare bedrooms
- professional occupations

(id Community Demographic Resources 2023)



In 2021, the IRSAD score for Wollongong LGA was below the NSW benchmark.

	2021
Wollongong LGA	1,000.3
NSW	1,016.0

.id Community Demographic Resources 2023

Areas with the highest IRSAD scores		Areas with the lowest IRSD scores	
Area	Score	Area	Score
Stanwell Park - Stanwell Tops - Coalcliff and surrounds	1,126.8	Warrawong	800.9
Austinmer	1,125.2	Cringila	823.3
Wombarra - Coledale - Scarborough - Clifton	1,121.1	Koonawarra	860.2
Thirroul	1,104.8	Bellambi	868.7
Mount Ousley - Mount Pleasant	1,101.0	Berkeley	877.0

.id Community Demographic Resources 2023

Children can witness or become victims of crime, whether it be in their home or within the broader community. The experience of crime at a young age can potentially have negative impacts on a child's health, safety, and development. Crime can take many forms, ranging from non-violent offenses like theft or fraud, to highly violent crimes such as assault or homicide.

Living with domestic and family violence can have a significant impact on children, and often affect them for the rest of their lives. The following have been closely linked with children who experienced domestic or family violence:

- homelessness
- reduced social participation
- physical and psychological disorders (including suicidal ideations)
- behavioural difficulties
- experiencing difficulties at school and reduced learning outcomes
- future victimisation and/or violent offending

(Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2022).

Domestic Violence Related Assault Incidents January-December

	2022	2019
Wollongong LGA - Number of Reports	667	686
Wollongong LGA - Rate per 100,000	303.5	317.5
NSW - Rate per 100,000	409.1	390.4

NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research 2023



The rates of reported domestic of domestic violence related assault incidents are lower when compared to the NSW benchmark. The rates of incidents have remained stable in Wollongong LGA over both a 24 and 60-month period, while the number of incidents reported in NSW have seen a 3% increase during the last 60 months.

Domestic Violence Related Assault Victim Reports 0-17 Years January-December

	2022	2019
Wollongong LGA - Number of reports	90	75
Wollongong LGA - Rate per 100,000*	41.9	34.7
NSW - Rate per 100,000*	55.9	48.1

NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research 2023

*Rate per 100,000 was calculated using population figures sourced from ABS where in 2021, 214,657 was the population for Wollongong LGA and 8,193,500 for NSW and in 2019, 216,071 was the population for Wollongong LGA and 8,046,100 for NSW.

Gender breakdown of the reported victims in the Wollongong LGA

	2022	2019
Female	52	46
Male	38	29
Total	90	75

NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research 2023

The rates of reported domestic of domestic violence related assault incidents for people 0-17 years are lower when compared to the NSW benchmark.

Sexual Offences Victim Reports 0-17 Years January-December

	2021	2019
Wollongong LGA - Number of Reports	267	269
Wollongong LGA - Rate per 100,000*	124.4	124.5
NSW - Rate per 100,000*	123.6	125.7

NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research 2023

*Rate per 100,000 was calculated using population figures sourced from ABS where in 2021, 214,657 was the population for Wollongong LGA and 8,193,500 for NSW and in 2019, 216,071 was the population for Wollongong LGA and 8,046,100 for NSW.

Gender breakdown of the reported victims in the Wollongong LGA

	2021	2019
Female	209	201
Male	58	68
Total	267	269

NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research 2023

The rates of reported sexual offences committed towards people 0-17 years are lower when compared to the NSW benchmark.



I feel part of the community when... "I draw me."

Illustration: Luna, 4 years, Robertson St Kindy

Wollongong LGA wellbeing survey – Personal wellbeing index – How safe you feel

	2021	2018
Dissatisfied (1-2)	2%	3%
Neutral (3)	8%	9%
Satisfied (4-5)	89%	87%

IRIS Research 2021, p. 12

Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with an aspect of their life using a five-point scale where one meant 'very dissatisfied' and five meant 'very satisfied'. In 2021, 89% of respondents were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with how safe they felt.

	2021	2018
Wollongong LGA	85.5	82.5
Australia	84.4	80.3

IRIS Research 2018, p. 19

* Mean scores of Wollongong City Council has been benchmarked out of 100 for comparative purposes.

The results for Wollongong LGA for this wellbeing indicator have also been benchmarked against the Australian results. Wollongong LGA performs above the national benchmark for this personal wellbeing indicator.

Participation





Children who are actively involved with their family, friends and broader community tend to have a stronger connection to their community. Through participation in sports, activities and community decision making, children learn self-expression, empowerment and ultimately develop greater self-esteem (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth 2018, p. 42).

Encouraging children and young people to participate involves creating a safe environment where they feel comfortable to express themselves, and where their opinions and ideas can be heard and are valued. It's about giving children opportunities to a voice and to be involved in decision-making processes that affect them, be it at home or in the wider community. By participating in society in meaningful ways, children and young people can develop valuable skills and become more active and engaged citizens (Goodhue, Dakin & Noble 2021, p. 7).

It's important to be mindful that children and young people who experience

disadvantage, abuse, discrimination and/or poor health may have a history of feeling powerless, particularly when decisions are made without their input. Because of this they may find it difficult to participate in activities and share their thoughts and ideas (Office of the Children's Guardian 2021, p. 11).

Organisations working with children and young people have an obligation to empower and to uphold their human right to participate in decision-making that affects them (Office of the Children's Guardian 2021, p. 5). Different types of organisations will have different levels of responsibility when it comes to engaging with children and enabling their participation, depending on the type of service they provide. The Office of the Children's Guardian have developed resources to guide these organisations to enable the participation of children and young people in a way that is safe and responsive to their varying needs (Office of the Children's Guardian 2021, p. 29).

Encouraging children and young people to participate involves creating a safe environment where they feel comfortable to express themselves



Active Kids voucher uptake

	2022	2019
Wollongong LGA	66%	69%
NSW	72%	64%

Office of Sport 2023

The proportion of local children accessing Active Kids vouchers is lower than the NSW benchmark. The Active Kids program aims to increase participation of children in sport and physical activity. Parents, guardians and carers of school-enrolled children can access one voucher per child to use towards sport and active recreation costs each year (Office of Sport 2023).

Engaging in sport has many benefits for children as it provides a safe environment to increase their physical fitness, build strong social networks and learn how to work as part of a team. Team sports also foster the development of important life skills such as cooperation, sharing, resilience, goal setting and good sportsmanship. Children who participate in organised sporting activities are more likely to live active, healthy lives as they age (Team Kids 2018).

Creative Kids voucher uptake

	2022	2019
Wollongong LGA	Data gap	Data gap
NSW	Data gap	Data gap

Currently, there is no data publicly available for this indicator.

The Creative Kids program, launched in 2019, helps NSW families with the cost of enrolling their kids in creative and cultural activities. Parents, guardians and carers can claim a \$100 voucher to put towards the cost of registration, participation and tuition costs (NSW Government 2023).

Research has shown that children's participation in creative activities has positive effects on many aspects of their development – intellectual, social and emotional. Children who participate in creative activities tend to:

- engage better with their imagination and generate new and unique ideas
 - remain open to unique and interesting experiences
 - are motivated to achieve their goals
 - understand how to work with others and develop an understanding for working in a team.
- (NSW Government 2023)

Volunteer work

	2021	2016
Wollongong LGA	13.2%	18.6%
NSW	13%	18.1%

.id Community Demographic Resources 2023

Local rates of volunteering were close to the NSW benchmark.



The Census asks respondents to indicate if they spent any time doing formal voluntary work through an organisation or group in the last 12 months. This includes assisting at events or with sports organisations, assisting at schools, churches, hospitals, nursing homes and emergency services (.id Community Demographic Resources 2023).

Wollongong LGA wellbeing survey - Community participation - Volunteering

	Yes	No
Volunteered in the last 2 years	60%	40%

IRIS Research 2021, p. 18

Respondents were asked to indicate if they had undertaken any volunteer work in the last 2 Years, 60% of respondents indicated they had volunteered in the last 12 months.

Of the people who volunteered, 36% volunteered for sports and physical recreation clubs, 32% for welfare or community groups and 26% for education or training organisations.

(IRIS Research 2021, p. 19).

Wollongong LGA wellbeing survey - Personal wellbeing index - Feeling part of the community

	2021	2018
Dissatisfied (1-2)	9%	9%
Neutral (3)	23%	23%
Satisfied (4-5)	68%	68%

IRIS Research 2021, p. 12

Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction using a five-point scale where one meant 'very dissatisfied' and five meant 'very satisfied'. In 2021, 68% of respondents were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with feeling part of the community.

	2021	2018
Wollongong LGA	71.8	72
Australia	70.6	72.4

IRIS Research 2021, p. 14

* Mean scores of Wollongong City Council has been benchmarked out of 100 for comparative purposes

The results for Wollongong LGA for this wellbeing indicator have also ben benchmarked against the Australian results. Wollongong LGA performs above the national benchmark for this personal wellbeing indicator.



Children have their say in their community

Council is committed to creating a Child Friendly Wollongong and implementing the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child. Our work is guided by the Child Friendly Cities principles and guidelines and we promote these to the community. Children in Wollongong LGA are given the opportunity to:

- influence decisions about where they live
- express their opinion on the city they want
- participate in family, community and social life
- be an equal citizen of their city, with access to every service, regardless of ethnic origin, religion, income, gender or disability

Local councils are in a unique position to directly impact the lives of children in their community. Councils can raise community awareness about issues important to children's development and assist in developing a culture that recognises children as equal citizens. Councils can ensure children's rights are considered and their voices are sought and listened to, when making important decisions that impact them. Giving children a voice to influence the world around them is an important way to foster active citizenship.

At Wollongong City Council, we believe the healthy development, active participation and inclusion of children is crucial to the future of our city. Council believes that to create a city that

is 'child friendly' it is critical that children have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives. Council seeks to create a city where the needs, rights and active participation of children is paramount. To achieve this, a 'whole of Council' approach is utilised to ensure that child-friendly principles are embedded across our practices and decision-making processes.

By including their voices in decision-making processes, children are:

- empowered to speak up for their rights and the rights of others in a positive way
- engaged and connected with their community
- heard and valued by participating in the civic process
- encouraged to be active and engaged citizens that understand how government (and the world) works.

Since 2010, Council has engaged almost 7,000 children to support decision making, policy development, town centre planning, art installations and the design of playgrounds, skate parks and other facilities. When working with children, Council uses age-appropriate engagement strategies to ensure meaningful engagement.

Further information about how Council engages with children can be found at Wollongong.nsw.gov.au/children





Wollongong City Council engagement with children – Case study

Council engages children to give them a voice in the decisions that impact them, from playground design to the Community Strategic Plan. One of Council's largest engagement with children was undertaken for the development of the Cringila Hills recreation space, including the playground design and artwork. 102 children aged 3-12 years were involved in this engagement.

Questions asked as part of the engagement include:

- Where do you like to play?
- Tell us about your favourite park? What made it a favourite park?
- If you are not a mountain bike rider, what could we include in the design of the whole recreation space that would encourage you and others to come and use the space?

This information was used to create a report to the architect for consideration in the design

process. The draft design was then taken back to the children as part of the "check-in" process to ensure their voices were reflected in the final design.

A further 64 children aged 2-12 years were involved in the creation of art installations throughout the playground. Workshops were conducted by an artist who created artworks with the children. The artworks centred around the suggestions from the initial engagement with children. They requested a focus on the rich multicultural and Aboriginal history of the area and the steelworks which was the reason many moved to the area and has provided employment for many families. A workshop was also held at Coomaditchie United Aboriginal Corporation to design and create the ceramic coolamons scattered throughout the playground.

Children involved in the process were invited to participate in the opening of the playground to celebrate their contribution to the design of the playground and recreation space.





Wollongong City Council community satisfaction survey - Children's playgrounds - satisfaction

	2021	2019
Can't Say	4%	4%
Dissatisfied (1-2)	4%	4%
Neutral (3)	23%	23%
Satisfied (4-5)	68%	69%

Taverner Research Group 2021, p. 28

Respondents who indicated they had used children's playgrounds were asked to rate their satisfaction with this facility. The level of satisfaction was measured using a five-point scale where one meant 'not at all satisfied' and five meant 'very satisfied'. 68% of respondents said they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with children's playgrounds.

	2021	2019
Wollongong LGA	73	77
Comparable Councils	68	68

Taverner Research Group 2021, p. 31

* Mean scores have been benchmarked out of 100 for comparative purposes.

Children's playgrounds provided by Wollongong City Council outperformed comparable NSW councils.

Wollongong City Council community satisfaction survey - Children services - Satisfaction

	2021	2019
Can't Say	45%	47%
Dissatisfied (1-2)	6%	5%
Neutral (3)	19%	17%
Satisfied (4-5)	30%	30%

Taverner Research Group 2021, p. 37



Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction of Council children services using a five-point scale where one meant 'not at all satisfied' and five meant 'very satisfied'. For the purpose of this survey, children's services included activities and services such as the Transition to School Picnic and Council engagement activities with children that help create a Child Friendly City. 45% indicated they couldn't say, while 30% of respondents indicated they were 'satisfied' with children services provided by Council.

	2021	2019
Wollongong LGA	65	68
Comparable Councils	64	65

IRIS Research 2019, p. 28; Taverner Research Group 2021, p. 40

* Mean scores have been benchmarked out of 100 for comparative purposes.

Wollongong City Council's children services are performing above the average of comparable NSW councils.

I feel safe when...
"I'm with my mummy."

Illustration: Uma, 4 years,
Kid's Uni Child Care Centre



Thank you

We would like to acknowledge and thank children who shared their thoughts, ideas and artwork for this report from:

- Big Fat Smile Balarang Fun Club
- Planet Child Care Coledale
- Kids Uni childcare centre
- ECTARC Short Street child care centre
- Your Kids Our Kids Unanderra
- Mount Kembla Public School
- Warrawong Community Preschool
- Wollongong City Community Preschool
- ECTARC Smith Street child care centre
- Robertson Street Kindy

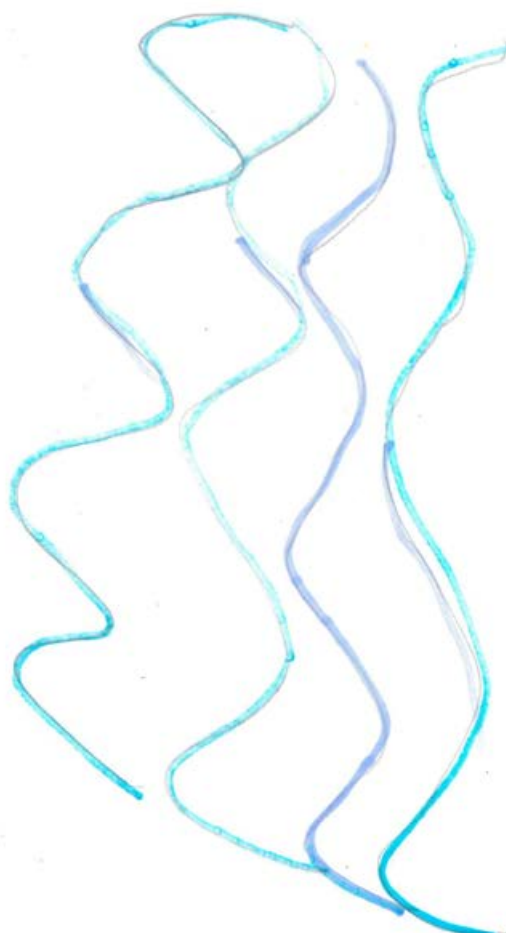
What's next?

This report has been developed as a resource for Council, local organisations and our community. Council will use this report to inform the planning and delivery of the programs and services we deliver for children and young people. We will share this report with local organisations and encourage them to do the same.



I feel healthy when...
"I'm swimming in the ocean."

Illustration: Mathew, 7 years,
Big Fat Smile Balarang Fun Club



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Appendix 1

Feedback from children

In 2023, 105 children from ten services/organisations participated in activities to inform this report. Children shared their thoughts on the important things that contribute to their development, health, safety and wellbeing by drawing a picture and finishing a sentence. Some of the images have been used throughout the report. Below is a collation of their responses to the sentences we asked them to complete.

I feel happy when...

I'm at the beach with my mummy and daddy
I fish with my dad at the river
I go shopping
I go home
My mummy picks me up from school
My mummy takes me to bed
I'm happy
I'm at home playing with my cars
I go to Jamberoo water park with mum and dad
Dad and I swim at the waterfall

I feel loved when...

I'm with my friends
I'm at the football with my family
I'm with my family
I'm with my family at the clean beach
I am with my friends
I play with my friends
Mummy and daddy kiss me and cuddle me
My brother kisses me
My daddy kisses me
When I draw love hearts
I draw a rose
My daddy and mummy cuddle me
I'm with my mum, dad and sisters

I am in my garden with mummy and daddy

I'm with my mum and dad

My mummy hugs me

My daddy and my mum hugs me

Mummy hugs me

I go on holidays

I have cuddles with my friend

I go for a swim in the big pool

I'm with my friends

I draw my family

Mum takes me and my brother to the pool

I go to the park with mum

Mum cuddles me on the couch

I was at grandma's house having lots of fun

I'm with my brother and sister

I'm snug in my house

When I draw a love heart

My family celebrates birthdays

My family and I go on holidays to Dubbo

I feel safe when...

I'm cuddled up in my bed

I'm at home with my family

I'm at the beach with my mummy, daddy, sister and brother

I'm at a clean beach and toucans are flying by

I'm at the beach with my family and French bulldog

I play with my friend

I am at the beach with my mummy

I do yoga

I'm with my best friends

Daddy cuddles me

I'm with my mummy
I went on a water slide
I'm at home with my family
My mum holds me on the special ferris wheel
I went on the Python waterslide with dad
Mum and dad look after me in the storms
I have my life jacket on jumping into a pool
I am with my adults
I'm at home and someone is with me
I'm at my grandma's house
My mum and dad kiss me
I go in my house

Learning is fun when...

We go to the beach
I'm at the beach with my family
I draw a phone
I am on an excursion to the beach with my friend
I'm riding my bike at preschool
My friends are at preschool
I draw a monster
I'm with my friends at preschool
I am at preschool
I play with my friend
I play in home corner at preschool
I draw a monster
I play blocks at preschool
I'm at preschool with my teachers and friends
I learn language at preschool
I draw me
I play with my best friend at preschool
I'm playing ta school with my friend
We play nicely together
You try to do everything you haven't done before

You get to play with your friends
When you get to play with the dolls and prams
I play in the park
I learn how to read books
I'm playing with paint
I cry
I play with my dog Sunny

I feel healthy when...

I'm swimming in the ocean
We play at the beach
I eat my butter chicken at school
I eat watermelon with my mum
It's the start of the night because I had something healthy for dinner
I eat cucumber
I draw an apple
I eat healthy foods
I eat carrot, cucumber, apple and tomato
I eat healthy food
I draw my hair

I feel part of my community when...

I draw me!
I'm at school
We make cards for the neighbours
We make presents for our neighbours
I go to the beach and see a crab
I draw Australia
I walk in the community with my mum and baba
I go to Little Athletics and run on the track with my mum and in the long grass with my brother
I'm picking flowers in my community
I go to the dentist
Mum takes me to new places
I feel loved from my family and friends
I draw a garbage truck



I feel happy when...
"I go home."

Illustration: Riley, 4 years,
Warrawong Catholic Primary school



Our Wollongong Our Future

From the mountains to the sea...

We value and protect our environment

We have an innovative and sustainable economy

Wollongong is a creative, vibrant city

We are a connected and engaged community

We are a healthy community in a liveable city

We have affordable and accessible transport



Wollongong City Council

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