



Royal New Zealand Plunket Society (Inc.)

## Submission to the Waitemata Local Board Annual Plan – Local Priorities

To: Chair, Waitemata Local Board  
Stephanie Shennan, GM Community Development & Volunteers, Plunket

Date: 24 March 2016

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**The Royal NZ Plunket Society does not wish to make an oral submission.**

## INTRODUCTION

1. The Royal NZ Plunket Society (Inc.) (“Plunket”) welcomes the opportunity to offer this submission to the Waitemata Local Board on the Annual Plan Local Priorities 2016-2017
2. Plunket is a national organisation that has been operating since 1907. It is the largest provider of Well Child Tamariki Ora health services in New Zealand. Plunket is in a unique position to observe and support parenting practices and family life across New Zealand, with qualified staff delivering well child services, parenting support and health promotion information both face to face and via our free phone service, Plunket Line. Plunket nurses deliver well child assessments to over 90% of live births nationally. Plunket collaborates with other services to achieve optimal child and family health outcomes. Our vision is ‘Together, the best start for every child’.
3. Plunket provides universal Well Child health services, parenting education and support services in the community to approximately 92% of families in New Zealand. Plunket provide 180 playgroups to families nationally. Plunket’s 7,000 volunteers represent a broad spectrum of New Zealand families working in centres from Invercargill to Northland. More than 650 professional staff deliver the Well Child Tamariki Ora national schedule to families with children aged from two weeks to five years., Plunket made 96,000 referrals to other organisations in 2013-2014.
4. Plunket has been a long-time advocate of strategies to improve child and family wellbeing. In 2007 and 2011 Plunket national conferences passed remits in support of child impact assessments: *“...all relevant government policies and initiatives are subject to a robust child impact assessment to ensure that the circumstances of children living in poverty and disadvantage in New Zealand are taken into account and improved.”*
5. Plunket is the largest Well Child provider to Māori whānau and Pacific peoples in Aotearoa. Culturally appropriate Well Child health, parenting support and early childhood education are known to alleviate some of the negative impact of poverty.
6. Plunket believes access to social services should be guided by the rights that children have under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: rights to adequate food, warm, safe housing and so forth. The overarching provision is Article 3:

*In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by **public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.***

## **PLUNKET'S ENGAGEMENT WITH PARENTS**

Plunket has recently led the inner city co-design project "Experiences of parents living in inner city Auckland" with SKIP and our partners YMCA, Auckland Library, KINZ and The Asian Network (TANI). This project work highlighted the high level of need parents have to connect to the community and feel that they are considered when decisions are made to improve and develop the inner city.

Parents would like to have:

Places for their children to play outside that:

- Are safe and clean
- Are smoke and alcohol free
- Provide shade from NZ's damaging sun particularly over playground equipment
- Are warm and dry in winter

Places where mums but also other parents and caregivers can:

- Change their children's nappies or clothing in clean, safe places
- Breastfeed freely and without discrimination
- Connect with other parents and kids in their community
- Access support and information
- Relax and enjoy the city
- Continue to embrace their culture and traditions, whilst learning Kiwiana.

Housing that connects families and community by:

- Providing community/social space in apartment blocks for residents to come together
- Providing centralised information points like a notice-board or apartment web page, face book page.
- Connecting families who are living in the same apartment block to each other

Our submission provides feedback to the Waitemata Local Board Annual Plan 16/17 on three areas;

1. Myers Park Upgrade stage 2
2. Ellen Melville Centre Re-development
3. Community led projects and place making

### **1. Myers Park Upgrade Stage 2**

Whilst Plunket supports the continued development of Myers Park, we would like to raise the issues of safety, security and child friendliness of the current playground and surrounding areas on behalf of residential inner city parents and visitors to Auckland city.

The playground although age appropriate for under 5s, is not a choice for many families who live in inner city Auckland. In fact, some parents would prefer to stay home, rather than use this facility.

The concerns of families are:

- The steep entrance to the park is difficult for mums who have both a pram and a toddler to restrain.
- The playground is isolated within the gully and there is a feeling of being trapped and unable to retreat quickly if the need should arise.



- The playground section of the park is not fenced from the rest of the park or from the driveway that is behind KINZ. Children can easily move into these spaces if not watched carefully.
- Smoking is permitted in the park and this is not the environment parents wish for their children.
- Although there is an inner city ban on alcohol, parents have come across groups drinking and broken bottles in the park and near the playground.
- Currently there is no sufficient sun-shade on the playground.
- Baby change and feeding facilities are at the minimum level within the public toilets and although there is seating around the park, mums often do not feel comfortable feeding baby in a public space.



The topography of this park is not easy to change, and the new access way through the tunnel from Aotea Square may alleviate the need for parents to negotiate the steep walkway. However, we have identified key areas of concern that we would like the Board to address in their future plans for Myers Park. The following recommendations would contribute to the Board’s aim of becoming accredited under the UNICEF Child Friendly City Initiative.

**Recommendations:**

Improvement	Benefit
<b>Make the park smoke free</b>	Improve the reduction in second hand smoke, decrease rubbish from cigarette paraphernalia.
<b>Highlight the alcohol free space via better signage</b>	More prominent signage will promote this park to parents as a safe and welcoming environment, reduce the number of drinkers and discarded bottles and assist in the development of the world's most liveable city.
<b>Provide sufficient sun shade to the playground</b>	Create a sun safe environment reducing the potential for melanoma.
<b>Improve the baby change and feeding spaces</b>	Promotes and encourages breastfeeding in the community and may increase the proportion of infants who are breastfed, in accordance with the Ministry of Health’s breastfeeding aims.  Enables parents to leave their home confidently knowing there is suitable space to feed and change baby.
<b>Install a drink fountain for Myers Park patrons</b>	Reduces waste from plastic drink bottles and provides better amenities to the community.

## 2. Ellen Melville Centre Re-development

Plunket fully supports the re-development of the Ellen Melville Centre as a community space for families.

Families living within inner city Auckland are predominantly from other countries, they have come to NZ as students, as migrants or refugees. These families are looking for connectedness within their local community, but are struggling to find places in the city where people come together. The re-development of Ellen Melville Centre will provide a clean slate with regard to community space and gives the Waitemata Local Board the opportunity to develop a building that suits the needs of the community.

Families living in inner city Auckland would like:

- Space to celebrate and share their cultures and traditions.
- Space to learn and share knowledge.
- Space to have messy play for children.
- Space for pop-up play or a pop-up/permanent indoor playground.
- Crèche facilities.
- Space where they can go with their children when it is raining and they want to leave their apartment.
- Space for both resident parents and parents visiting Auckland to change and feed their children.

The winter months are particularly difficult for parents as their apartments are often small, and there is no suitable communal space within an apartment building to come together with other families or fellow residents.

### Recommendations:

Improvement	Benefit
<b>Include flexible and messy spaces in the design of Ellen Melville Centre.</b>	<p>Allows for large or small spaces for community groups and families to meet. Provides a warm, dry, and creative space for families to relax and enjoy.</p> <p>Larger spaces can be used for continued learning and cultural activities.</p>
<b>Provide a space that can be regularly used as a crèche or child minding service.</b>	<p>Provides a place for parents to leave their under 5 when they are shopping, or have appointments to attend.</p> <p>Under 5s are connected to other children within their community.</p> <p>Reduces the isolation parents and children are experiencing when they do not leave their apartment to connect with other families.</p> <p>Supports children in their development and their readiness for ECE and school.</p> <p>The St Lukes, Sylvia Park Crèche model may be appropriate.</p>
<b>Shared office to use for community service providers such as Well-Child Providers.</b>	<p>One-stop shop for families to see family health and service providers. Contributes to the Waitemata Local Board Child Friendly City strategy and registration.</p>

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**Baby change and feeding facilities for both residents and public use.**

Promotes and encourages breastfeeding in the community and increases the proportion of infants who are and may increase the proportion of infants who are breastfed, in accordance with the Ministry of Health's breastfeeding aims.

Provides a space for families visiting the city to feed and change baby.

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### **3. Community led projects and place making**

Plunket supports the Waitemata Local Board increasing the budget to support community-led projects and place making (\$15k to \$30k).

The inner city project work has highlighted the need for a warm, dry space during the winter months for parents to take their under 5s. Currently the only space available to families is the Auckland City Library, and parents do not feel this is a space conducive for play or running around. Ellen Melville Hall may provide this space within the next 2 years, in the meantime there are at least 828 under 5s living within the 1010 inner city postcode who require spaces to play and interact with other children. During the winter months children are cooped up inside or parents take them out of the city (if they have a vehicle) to indoor playgrounds such as Chipmunks.

The inner city project work has identified those children under 5 who are at home with mum, who have migrant parents and who are not registered with an Early Childhood Education service provider rarely leave their apartment or connect with other children in their apartment block or community.

These circumstances do not align with the Plunket vision of 'Together, best start for every child', as we know that isolation and disconnection can lead to increased stress, depression, low self-esteem, sleep disturbances and compromised immunity, none of which leads to positive health or parenting outcomes for mums and babies that we wish to encourage.

The inner city project highlighted the following areas of particular interest:

- Support, isolation and detachment still exist even though families are registered with a Well Child provider.
- Migrant families are isolated from the community at large, and mums in particular are feeling lonely and in some cases depressed.
- Migrant families have no extended family and no connection to other experienced parents.
- Dads have challenges and need support.
- Families want to keep their traditions and culture alive in their individual families, as well as fit in to the NZ way of living.
- Migrant families struggle to understand their rights in NZ.
- Families are invisible to the business community in inner city Auckland
- The city is not friendly and is not working for families with children under 5.

- There are few activities for children under 5 eg. no playgroups, no crèche facilities, no space at the three ECE providers within the city or age appropriate playgrounds that feel safe.
- Breastfeeding is not appropriate in the CBD and cafes do not welcome mums who breastfeed into their establishments.
- Parents are anxious in their own homes as other tenants complain about their crying baby and they feel their tenancy is at risk.
- Parenting challenges can be strongly linked to the mental well-being of parents.
- Parents do not feel confident that they have the right skills and knowledge to raise a child

The inner city project Design Team and Plunket would like to discuss the possibility of developing an inner city family facility (hub) that could be used by both residents and visitors to Auckland city. This hub could include a crèche, pop-up playground, space for families to relax, changing and feeding facilities and provide information to families. A joint venture such as this with Waitemata Local Board, inner city business and families could alleviate some of the issues facing our inner city families and at the same time contribute to the board's accreditation under the [UNICEF Child Friendly City Initiative](#). An opportunity to design space for families that improve health outcomes for our under 5s and bring together families, community agencies and business to tackle deeply entrenched and complex social problems would be a significant achievement.

We would be grateful for an opportunity to begin a conversation around an inner city facility for under 5s.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Waitemata Local Board annual plan. If you wish to discuss any elements of this submission further, please contact Clare Green on 027 230 5570 or Jacqui Arnold on 027 486 4206.