

The number of children in Melbourne's north and west is forecast to grow by more than **50%** by 2031

The experiences during the early years of a child's life from conception to the end of the child's second year have lifelong consequences for health and wellbeing. This first 1000 days is the period of maximum developmental change, with the greatest potential to impact health and wellbeing over the child's life.

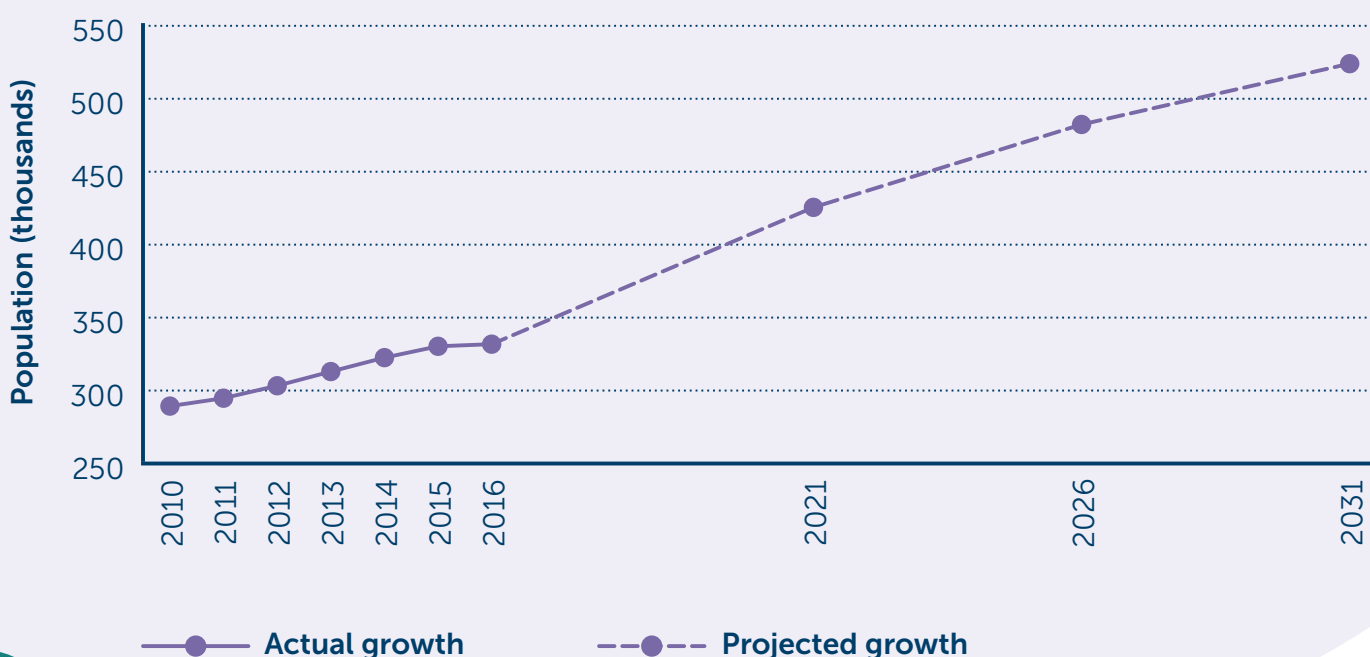
The primary health care system plays a key role in supporting parents to provide the nurturing environment that children need to develop to their greatest potential.

The North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network (NWMPHN) area has a high number of children and adolescents aged 0-17 years with an estimated population of more than 330,000. This is forecast to grow by more than 50 per cent to 520,000 plus people by 2031 (Figure 1).

The NWMPHN area is also experiencing significant change in the number and location of children and families:

- High volumes of additional children are forecast to live in the growth areas of Hume, Melton and Wyndham – with more than 70,000 additional children forecast to live in the municipalities of Melton and Wyndham by 2031
- Inner-city municipalities of Maribyrnong, Melbourne and Yarra are forecast to have a very high proportional change in children aged 0-17 years (80-160% growth).

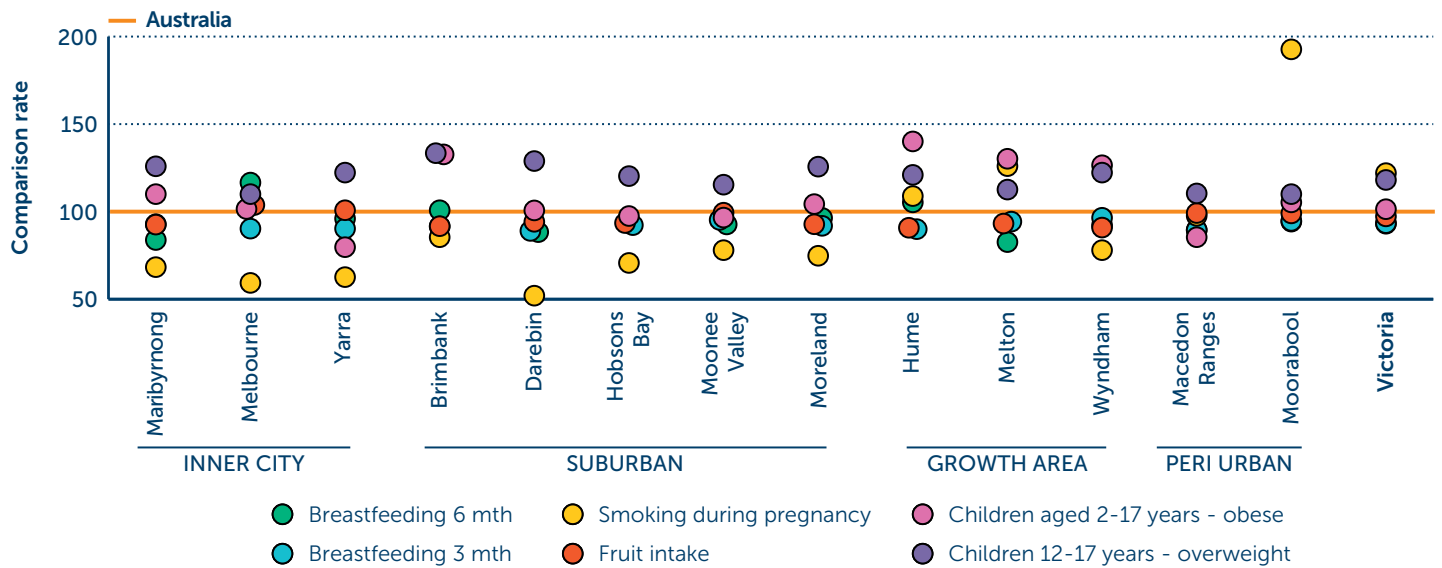
Figure 1: Projected growth in population of children 0–17 years of age, 2010 to 2031



Source: Victoria in Future 2016.

Good health depends on a number of factors including behavioural determinants. How these are managed can have a beneficial or detrimental effect on health. Figure 2 shows significant variation in behavioural measures across the region with many rates being worse than those for Victoria and Australia overall.

Figure 2: Behavioural and other determinants of health



Source: Public Health Information Development Unit (PHIDU), 2017.

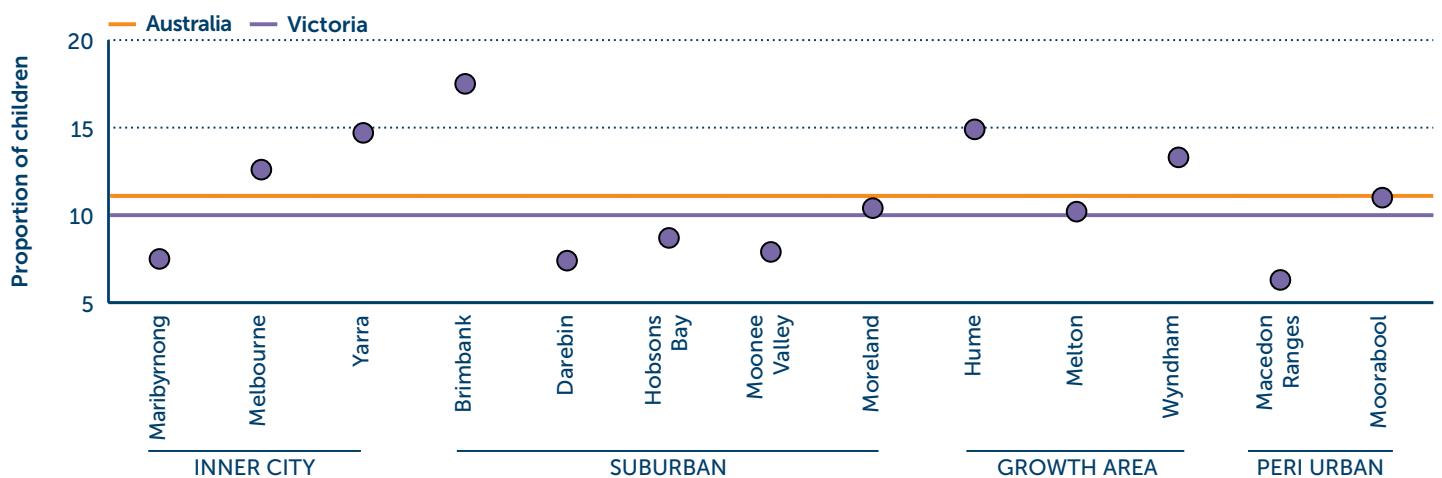
The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) collects data across five domains of early childhood development that have been shown to predict later health, wellbeing and academic success.

These include:

- Physical health and well being
- Social competence
- Emotional maturity
- Language and cognitive skills
- Communication skills and general knowledge.

Figure 3 illustrates the proportion of children that are identified as being developmentally vulnerable in two or more of the domains, with several of the municipalities reporting levels higher than the overall Victorian and Australian levels.

Figure 3: Children developmentally vulnerable in two or more domains



Source: AEDC 2015.

More information on children and families can be found at nwmpn.org.au/priority-area-topic/children-and-families/