

THE VOICES OF
MALLEE CHILDREN
FINDINGS SNAPSHOT



“When I was asked to be involved in the Voices of Children project, I couldn’t think of a better to way to hear from children than through the use of free play with loose parts. Children are naturally creative, curious and capable and loose parts play empowers them by giving them a safe space to explore, take risks, connect and express who they are. For this project we asked 350 local children to create “the best town ever” and the feedback we received through their creations and their play was inspiring. Everything from trains to rock climbing walls, secret tunnels to protected areas for wildlife. Children, like adults, have many and varied ideas and opinions and it is our responsibility to provide them with opportunities to express them. It is also our responsibility to take what they have to say and do something with it”

Claire Rorke

WHAT IS THE VOICES OF MALLEE CHILDREN?

In 2019, Hands Up Mallee and the Mildura Rural City Council (MRCC) Early Years Planning Team, with the help of Early Years Educators and friends, set out to ask children aged 3-8, who live in the Northern Mallee, what they did and didn't like, and what they wanted for their future.

The project aimed to hear from at least 375 children aged 3-8 Years, who live in the Mildura LGA. The project reached over 450 children, with 375 giving us their consent to use their thoughts and creative works to help shape our community into a better place for everyone.

The work has been used to create a storybook based on what the children have told us, to inform systems mapping for Best Start to Life, and will inform the MRCC Municipal Early Years Plan, and be shared back to children and the broader community.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT CHILDREN HAVE A SAY?

Children have rights under the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child. Rights are things that every child should have or be able to do. All children have the same rights. To meet local children's rights under article 12 of the convention we need to ensure we honour *children's right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and have their opinions taken into account.*

The Voices of Children Project is an important step towards making sure our community, listens to, values and acts on what local children have to say about the choices we make and how this affects them.

WHY AIM TO SPEAK TO 375 CHILDREN?

There are approximately 4,400 children aged 3-8 years living in the Mildura LGA. In order to ensure that the information we collected had a minimal margin for error we aimed to reach 375 children.

Respondents Needed at Error of $\pm 3\%$, $\pm 5\%$, & $\pm 10\%$			
Population	$\pm 3\%$	$\pm 5\%$	$\pm 10\%$
500	345	220	80
1,000	525	285	90
3,000	810	350	100
5,000	910	370	100
10,000	1,000	385	100
100,000	1,100	400	100
1,000,000	1,100	400	100
10,000,000	1,110	400	100

WHO PARTICIPATED?

The following education settings participated:

- De Garis Kindergarten
- Irymple Kindergarten
- Manangatang Kindergarten
- Merbein P-10 College
- Mildura Specialist School
- Murrayville Kindergarten
- Ouyen Kindergarten
- Ranfurly Primary School
- Underbool Kindergarten

Children were also invited to participate at:

- Little Day Out
- Loose Parts Playground
- Playalong

SNAPSHOT OF FINDINGS

Active play, the river and natural environment, certain shops, entertainment, parks, places to eat and time with family are the most popular places for children to go.

Some children don't like sport, entertainment or retail places that are noisy, or seeing rubbish left in the natural environment. They don't like long shopping trips because their legs get tired and there are no seats, or nearby toilets. Some are anxious about visiting health services and the Waves pool. They don't like being places where people are angry and hurt other people. Some don't like long car trips.

Playing in local parks and pools, enjoying the river and bush, playing with mud, doing things together with family, enjoying places with games and entertainment, and having treats are favourite things that children like to do.

Children aspire to become skilled at sport, engage in active and imaginative play, going to school, have their own ipad, iphone or computer and own a pet. They also aspire to have an occupation

Children's aspiration for an occupation covered a wide range with sport and fitness being the most popular, followed by retail, caring for animals, transport, police and emergency services, raising a family, and fantasy.

Children look forward, when they are older, to be able to go to school, go shopping, visit parks and pools, traveling to different parts of the country and overseas. They also look forward to going to places for sport and entertainment, museums, and places like Disneyland and Legoland.

WHAT CHILDREN WANT FOR THEIR COMMUNITY NOW

River

Better fishing spots. We can clean up plastic by having more bins
Down the river there needs to be playgrounds in the popular spots and more bins
More toilets near the river

Pools, Parks and Playgrounds

I would like a trampoline at the park. Bushes would be good for hide and seek
Waterslides Make a large slide I would like a curly slide to be added
Pool on top of a mountain.
A ferris wheel, and a permanent rock-climbing wall, and a skate park mountain

Merbein

Upgrade the goals and benches at the soccer field
Better oval at Merbein I don't like playing on that oval
I love playing basketball. We need more basketball courts in Merbein.
The hoops at the basketball court could be smaller for little people (like me)
I wish there was a McDonalds in Merbein
Toy library and book store at my school

Fantasy

I would like to have some ninjas in Mildura
I wish Mildura had a Unicorn world
I wish we had a Pokémon World.
I would like Mildura to have a fairy house

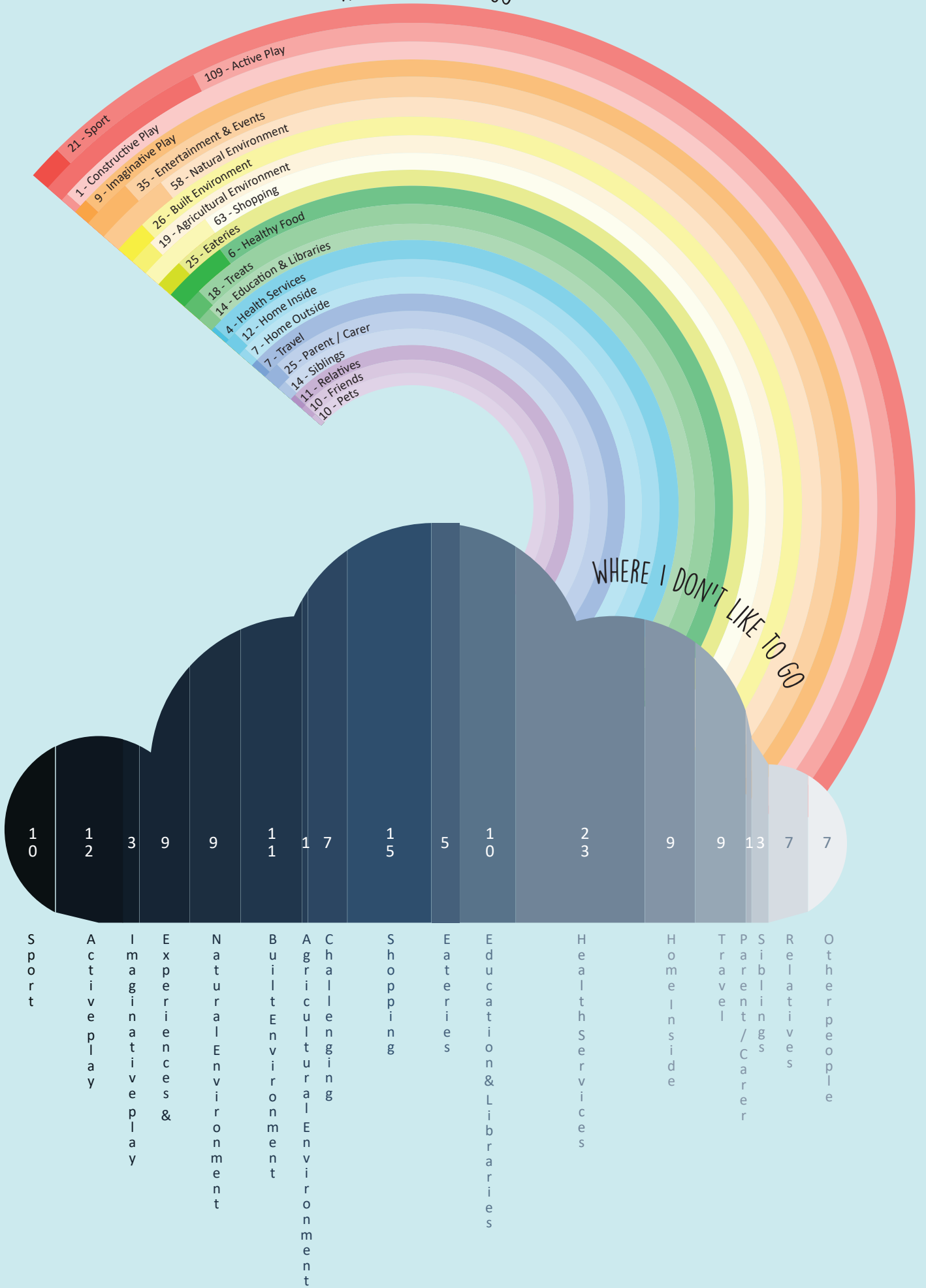
Murrayville

I wish it was a bigger town and had lots of people and I had neighbours
I wish we had a bike track
I wish we had a zoo and more birds
I wish Murrayville had dinosaurs
I wish Murrayville had a cinema or theatre,
I wish Murrayville had a restaurant

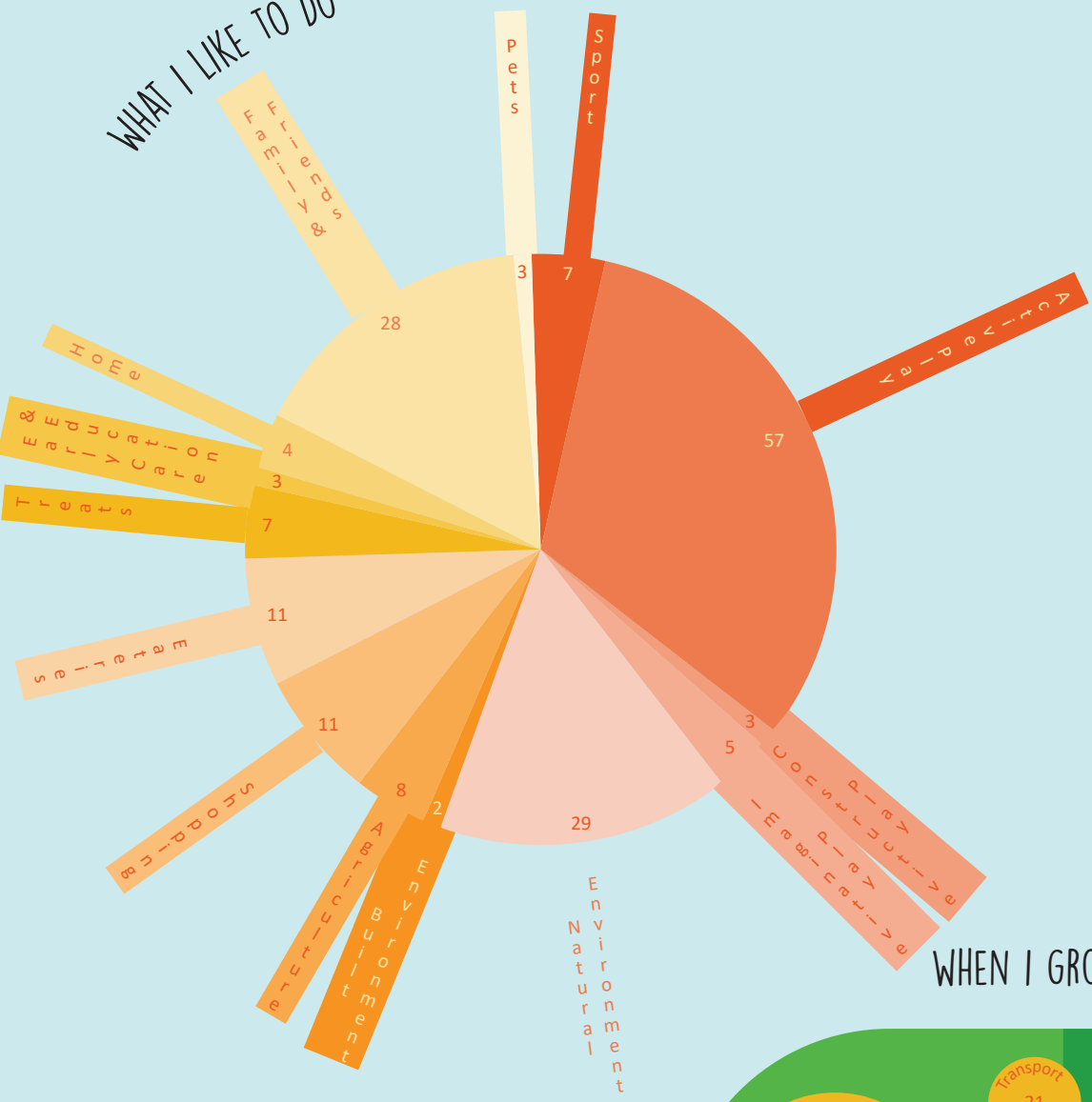
THEMING OUR CHILDREN'S VOICES

The information the local children agreed to share with us has been collated and grouped into themes and presented in the graphs on the following pages.

WHERE I LIKE TO GO



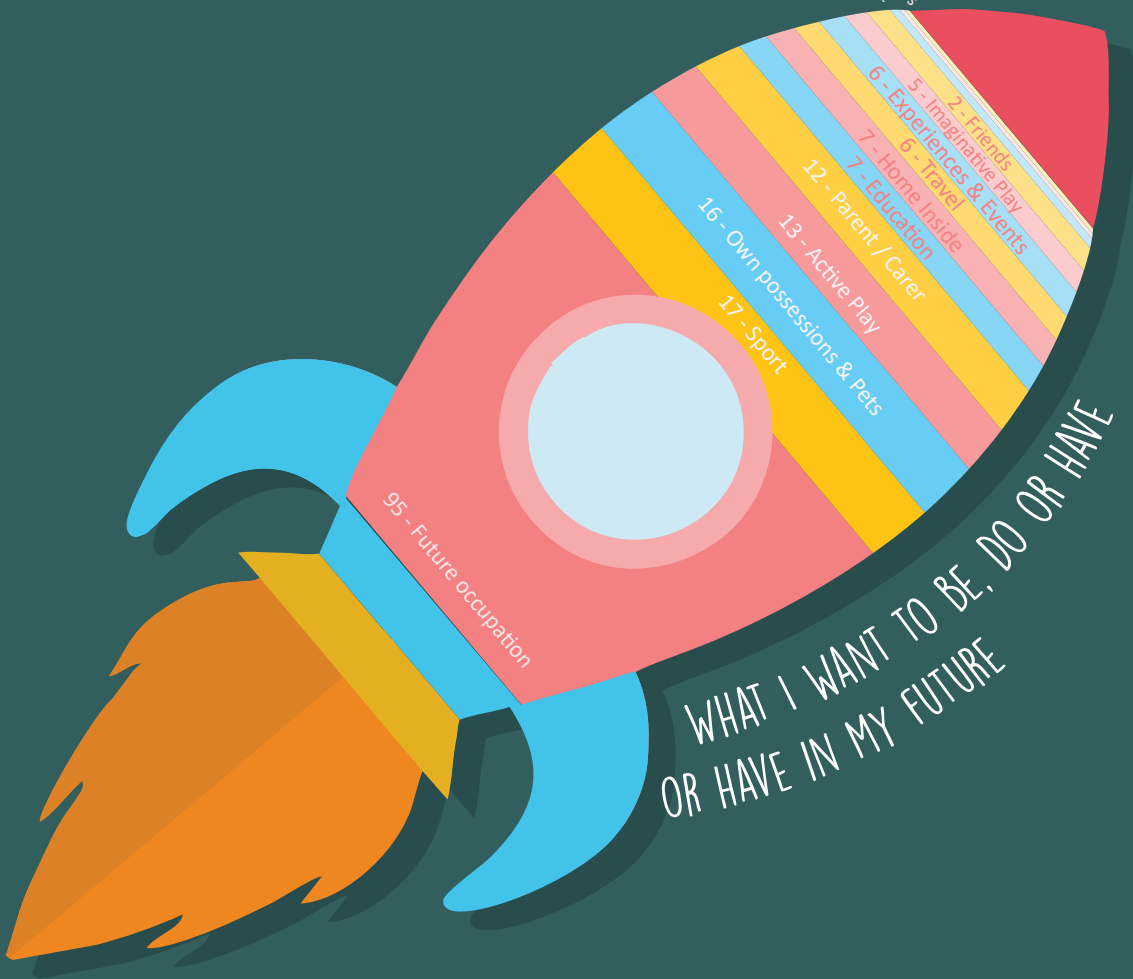
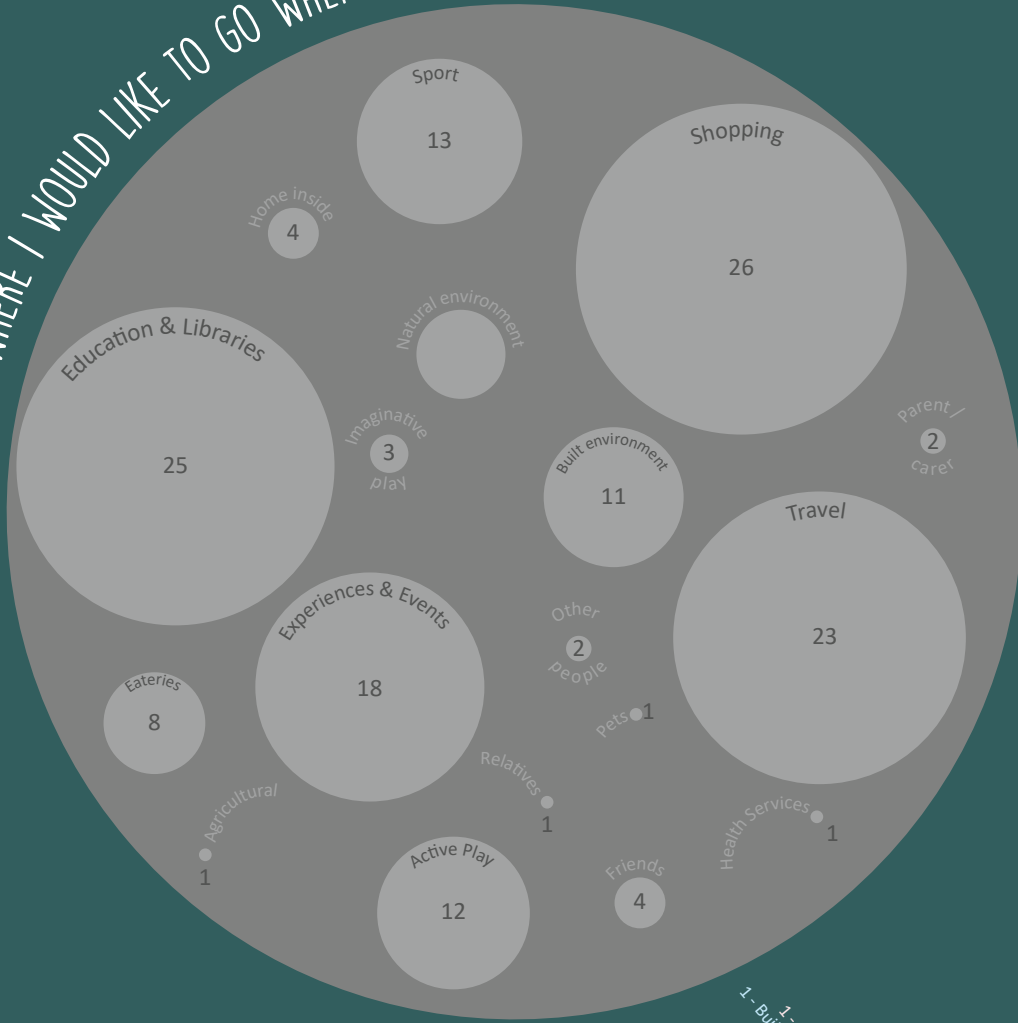
WHAT I LIKE TO DO



WHEN I GROW UP I WILL WORK IN



WHERE I WOULD LIKE TO GO WHEN I AM OLDER



WHAT I WANT TO BE, DO OR HAVE OR HAVE IN MY FUTURE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Voices of Children Project was led for our community by Hands Up Mallee and this document was created using images and information created by local children aged 3-8 years during the Voices of Children Project, and the support of Local Early Childhood Educators and Primary School Teachers.

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HANDS UP MALLEE