

Wellington Shire Early Years Infrastructure Plan 2021 - 2031



Image: Glassford Kindergarten. Source:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Wellington Shire Council would like to acknowledge and thank everyone who has contributed to the development of the Early Years Infrastructure Plan. In particular, we would like to thank everyone who participated in the consultation and engagement program including:

- Families who completed the online survey
- Early years services operating in Wellington Shire.
- Council officers.

The Early Years Infrastructure Plan has been prepared for Council by Planning for Communities Pty Ltd.

VERSION CONTROL

Version	Issued By	Date
Version 1	Michelle Read – Planning for Communities	8 April 2021
Version 2	Michelle Read – Planning for Communities	19 April 2021
Version 3	Michelle Read – Planning for Communities	3 May 2021
Version 4	Mark Benfield – Wellington Shire Council	21 December 2021

Contents	Page No.
Executive Summary	1
Section 1: Introduction	10
1.1 What is Early Years Infrastructure?	11
1.2 Why an Early Years Infrastructure Plan?	11
1.3 Scope of the Plan	12
Section 2: Strategic and Community Context	13
2.1 Importance and Benefits of Investing in the Early Years	14
2.2 Strategic Context	15
2.3 Community Profile	18
2.4 Impact of Emergencies upon Early Years Services and Supports	21
Section 3: Community Infrastructure in Wellington Shire	22
3.1 Existing Early Years Services and Infrastructure	23
3.1.1 Loch Sport to Seaspray and District	25
3.1.2 Heyfield and District	26
3.1.3 Maffra and District	27
3.1.4 Rosedale and District	29
3.1.5 Sale and District	31
3.1.6 Stratford and District	35
3.1.7 Yarram and District	36
Section 4: Consultation and Engagement Outcomes	37
4.1 Engagement Program	38
4.2 Key Findings	38
Section 5: Demand Analysis	41
5.1 Scope of the Demand Analysis	42
5.2 Overall Themes	42
5.3 Findings by District	43
5.3.1 Loch Sport to Seaspray and District	43
5.3.2 Heyfield and District	44
5.3.3 Maffra and District	45
5.3.4 Rosedale and District	46
5.3.5 Sale and District	47

5.3.6	Stratford and District	49
5.3.7	Yarram and District	50
Section 6: EYIP Framework		51
6.1	Overview	52
6.2	Guiding Principles	52
6.3	Project Prioritisation Model	53
6.4	Facility Hierarchy	53
6.5	Priority Areas	55
Section 7: Recommendations and Measuring Outcomes		56
Section 8: Attachments (Provided Separately)		61
Attachment A: Background Research		
Attachment B: Infrastructure Inventory by District - Excel Spreadsheets		

Executive Summary



Image: Heyfield Kindergarten. Source: Uniting Victoria Tasmania

The EYIP Plan

The Early Years Infrastructure Plan has been developed to assess the capacity of existing early years infrastructure in Wellington Shire to support the delivery of early years services that are responsive to the needs of children and families.

Early years infrastructure plays a critical role in supporting the delivery of services, programs and resources for children and families in Wellington Shire. Typically, services and programs delivered from these facilities and spaces include:

- Kindergarten
- Childcare (occasional, long daycare, outside school hours care)
- Maternal and child health services
- Immunisation
- Community and supported playgroups
- Toy libraries
- Parent or family support.

There are also many facilities and spaces which are universally accessible to the whole community and are highly valued by children and families. They are often also some of the places they use the most. Key examples are:

- Parks and playgrounds
- Libraries
- Swimming pools and leisure centres
- Walking and cycling paths.

The Early Years Infrastructure Plan explores the current and future early years needs of children and families across seven districts in the Shire of Wellington including:

- Loch Sport to Seaspray and District
- Heyfield and District
- Maffra and District
- Rosedale and District
- Sale and District
- Stratford and District
- Yarram and District.

Existing Early Years Services and Infrastructure

19 services offer kindergarten	7 services offer childcare
4 services offer kindergarten integrated with childcare	Maternal and Child Health Services are offered in 8 locations
Supported playgroups are offered in 2 locations (3 groups)	Early years services are available in every district but are very limited in some

In total there are 33 different buildings hosting early years services and supports in Wellington Shire. Some early years services are located in standalone buildings, while others are integrated or co-located with other early years services, community activities or resources. Kindergarten and childcare services are most likely to be located in standalone buildings.

Service	Co-located or Integrated	Number of Sites
Kindergarten	Standalone	7
	Co-located or Integrated	8
Integrated childcare and kindergarten	Standalone	3
	Co-located or Integrated	1
Childcare (no kindergarten)	Standalone	3
Occasional Care	Co-located or Integrated	3
Outside School Hours Care	Co-located or Integrated	4
In Venue Family Daycare	Co-located or Integrated	1
Maternal and Child Health	Co-located or Integrated	8
Supported Playgroup	Co-located or Integrated	2

Early years services are delivered from a mix of facilities owned by Council and local health services. The infrastructure is managed by community-based committees of management, early years managers, local schools, and local health services in the Shire of Wellington.

While Wellington Shire has a range of infrastructure supporting early years services and programs, **some critical changes are needed to the condition, functionality, location, and in some instances the scale of the facilities** to respond more effectively to the needs of children and families. Examples include:

- Addressing the poor condition and functionality of a number of early years buildings, particularly in Sale.
- Moving away from single room kindergarten facilities to support the roll out of funded 3-year-old kindergarten and support other early years activities such as occasional care and playgroups.
- Pursuing the integration and co-location of early years services, potentially with other community facilities and activities.
- A need for maternal and child health services to be located so they are more accessible to the community,
- Expanding the capacity of facilities where community demand is unable to be accommodated.

Summary of Key Issues and Findings

The early years in a child's life are critical: The life experiences and circumstances of a child impacts significantly upon how the brain develops and upon the health, social and education outcomes for children. Early years services and supports including kindergarten, childcare, maternal and child health services, immunisation, parenting and family support programs, and intervention services for children with additional needs, are all critical to the health and wellbeing of children and families.

There will be **INCREASED demand over the next decade for early years services, programs and resources** in Wellington Shire because of consistent population growth and the roll out of funded 3-year-old kindergarten. The increased demand for kindergarten can be accommodated in Maffra, Sale and Rosedale through changes to service models and programs, additional infrastructure will be needed are Stratford, Heyfield and Yarram.

A lack of access to childcare is a key constraint in many communities across Wellington Shire including Heyfield. Maffra, Stratford, Rosedale, Sale and Yarram. Alternate service models

There is a HIGH level of AWARENESS of early years services, programs and resources in Wellington Shire. The most well-known are swimming pools/leisure centres, libraries, kindergarten, parks and playgrounds, maternal and child health services, free immunisation session, and centre based childcare.

The services, programs or resources families are **MOST likely to experience difficulty accessing** are, **childcare, parks and playgrounds, swimming pools / leisure centres and playgroups**. Followed by maternal and child health services, free immunisation, toy libraries, kindergarten, community events, libraries, family / parent support and parent education sessions.

For families, it is MOST important to have the following early years services and facilities **within 20 mins drive of home.**

1. Parks and playgrounds
2. Kindergarten, swimming pools / leisure centres, MCH, Libraries, free immunisation
3. Centre based childcare.

It is **less important** for families to have access to early years services, programs and resources **close to where they work, study or volunteer.**

State and Federal Governments have a strong commitment to children and families: In the last decade, they have implemented significant policy changes to improve outcomes for children and families e.g. national standards for the provision of early years services, universal access to kindergarten for 4 year old children, changes to the childcare benefit system, a focus upon vulnerable families and children. The most recent State Government policy initiative means all 3-year-old children have access to funded kindergarten from 2022.

There is **significant variability in the availability and accessibility of early years services** for families across Wellington Shire. For example, Sale has a wide range of services, while smaller communities like Loch Sport, Seaspray and District have no kindergarten or childcare services in their communities and consequently, the kindergarten participation is very low. This increases the disadvantage these communities already experience.

Communities where the **co-location and integration of early years infrastructure should be actively pursued** are Heyfield, Maffra and Sale. The integration of maternal and child health services with other early years services is a key priority.

Universally accessible facilities and spaces are HIGHLY VALUED and extensively used by children and families including parks and playgrounds, libraries, swimming pools and leisure centres. Parks and playgrounds, swimming pools and leisure centres also some of the early years infrastructure the community would most like to see improved.

The **key challenges or DIFFICULTIES** families experience accessing early years services, programs and resources are: **Lack of information** about services or programs, **limited availability** of services (childcare), the **cost** of accessing services, the **limited opening hours** of services (kindergarten) and **travel distances**. The difficulties or challenges are different for each service, program or resource.

The early years services and resources, **families would MOST like to see improved**

1. Playgrounds, open space and walking and cycling paths
2. Kindergarten facilities in Sale
3. MCH facilities in Maffra, Heyfield and Yarram
4. Swimming pool facilities
5. Improved available of childcare including outside school hours care and access to centre based childcare and longer kindergarten sessions.

Early years services and resources, **service providers MOST want to see improved**

1. Move away from single room (e.g. kindergarten) or single purpose facilities
2. The poor condition, functionality and accessibility of old kindergarten facilities
3. Provide space for nature-based kindergarten programs
4. Increase training and development opportunities for educators
5. Increase the number of early years educators, especially because of the roll out of funded 3-year-old kindergarten.

High Level Findings by District

Loch Sport to Seaspray and District	There will be significant population decline in Loch Sport to Seaspray and District between 2021 and 2031, including the 0 – 8-year-old population. This is following a significant increase during 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic. The only early years' service families have access to in the district is MCH with families travelling 40 minutes or more to access kindergarten. With 30 to 40 children aged 3- and 4-years old living in the district over the next decade, access to kindergarten must be improved as a priority.
Heyfield and District	While the district will experience a relatively small increase in the 0 – 8-year-old population between 2021 and 2031, the demand for kindergarten services will increase significantly due to the roll out of funded 3-year-old kindergarten, and the existing infrastructure will not be able to support this. Other factors impacting upon the district are the poor location of the MCH service and the fragmented location of community infrastructure in Heyfield itself. The key need to be addressed in Heyfield is increasing the service capacity and associated infrastructure for kindergarten. Key opportunities to explore are the co-location of kindergarten and MCH services together and / or co-location of these services with other community infrastructure, and improving access to childcare.
Maffra and District	There will be a relatively small increase in the 0 – 8-year-old population between 2021 and 2031, and despite the significant increase in demand for kindergarten services that will occur, the district has sufficient infrastructure to respond to this demand. Other factors impacting upon the district are the poor location of the MCH service and the high demand for long day childcare. The sole operator in Maffra attracts families from Heyfield, Maffra and Stratford, due to the limited services in Heyfield and no childcare services in Stratford. The key opportunities in Maffra are to pursue opportunities to co-locate Maffra Queen Street Kindergarten and Occasional Care Service with other early years services and community facilities and services and looking at ways to improve access to childcare in Stratford and Heyfield to reduce the demand in Maffra.
Rosedale and District	Higher population growth in Rosedale and district, particularly amongst children aged 0 – 8 years, combined with the increased demand from the roll out of funded 3-year-old kindergarten indicates Rosedale will experience higher demand for early years services between 2021 and 2031. But many families access services in Sale or Traralgon because this is where they work or because there is limited availability in Rosedale (e.g. childcare). Changes to the existing kindergarten and in venue family daycare service models, will allow the Rosedale Community Hub to accommodate increased demand. The key opportunities for Rosedale are to monitor the demand for kindergarten services and explore options to improve the childcare offerings in the community. In Gormandale the key opportunities are to explore alternate service models to accommodate 3-year-old kindergarten and to explore to provide childcare.
Sale and District	Higher population growth, particularly amongst children aged 0 – 8 years, combined with the increased demand from the roll out of funded 3-year-old kindergarten means Sale and district will experience a notable increase in demand for early years services. As the main business and residential centre of Wellington Shire, Sale offers a wide range of early years services and supports. Kindergarten services are also located at Longford and Wurruk. An assessment of the population data and service offerings in Sale suggests there is sufficient capacity in the service system to accommodate the increased demand for kindergarten, but there may not be capacity to accommodate the increased demand for childcare. Key issues to be addressed in Sale are the prevalence of single room or single purpose early years facilities, many of which are old and in poor condition. Investment in the development of early years / community hubs in Sale should be a priority.
Stratford and District	Stratford itself does not have sufficient infrastructure to respond to the increased demand from a large increase in the 0 – 8-year-old population between 2021 and 2031 and the significant increase in demand for kindergarten services. By contrast, the kindergarten facilities at Briagolong will have sufficient capacity to cater for the increased demand they will experience because of 3-year-old kindergarten. The other key area of need in Stratford is the lack of childcare services, with families travelling to Maffra or Sale to access childcare. Both the childcare and kindergarten needs of the community need to be addressed.
Yarram and District	While population growth in Yarram will be moderate between 2021 and 2031, families living in the district have limited access to childcare and kindergarten services. The single childcare / kindergarten provider is already operating at capacity and cannot accommodate the increased demand which will occur from 3-year-old kindergarten. As a priority, additional infrastructure is needed to support the kindergarten and childcare needs of the community.

Strategic Framework

Future decision making about the provision, management, activation, and investment in community infrastructure will be guided by:

- Guiding Principles
- Project Prioritisation Model.
- Priority Areas

The Guiding Principles are:



PRIORITY AREAS	
Priority Area 1	Child and Family Friendly Communities Prioritise initiatives which will improve the livability of local communities for children and families.
Priority Area 2	Contemporary and Integrated Services and Facilities Prioritise infrastructure improvements which will deliver contemporary and integrated early years' service and facility outcomes.
Priority Area 3	Collaborative and Flexible Responses Work collaboratively with service providers to respond to changing community needs.
Priority Area 4	Advocacy and Equitable Access Advocate for and partner with others to provide equitable and accessible early years services and supports.

Recommendations

Priority Area 1

Child and Family Friendly Communities

Prioritise initiatives which will improve the livability of local communities for children and families.

- 1.1 Increase opportunities for children and families to travel safely around their communities with a focus upon increasing opportunities for walking and cycling, through implementing Council plans such as the Healthy Wellington Plan and Urban Paths Plan.
- 1.2 Develop more contemporary, accessible, and safe play spaces for children and families, particularly nature-based play opportunities that reflect the priorities of plans such as Council's Open Space Plan and Access and Inclusion Plan and the changing needs and expectations of the community.
- 1.3 Consistent with Council's Community Engagement Strategy, actively involve children and families in the planning and development of community and early years places and spaces.

Priority Area 2

Contemporary and Integrated Services and Facilities

Prioritise infrastructure improvements which will deliver contemporary and integrated early years' service and facility outcomes.

- 2.1 Develop service standards to confirm the size, quality, condition, and functionality requirements for infrastructure to support the delivery of early years services.
- 2.2 Review Council's Project Prioritisation Model to determine how early years infrastructure will be captured and assessed within the Model. Aspects to be addressed are:
 - Responding to increased demand for kindergarten services by developing multi-room early years facilities that can support kindergarten and other early years services and activities such as occasional care, playgroups, toy libraries and maternal and child health.
 - The importance of actively pursuing opportunities to integrate, co-locate and rationalise early years services and infrastructure, and explore opportunities to locate early years services with complementary community facilities and activities.
 - The need to improve access to early years services, support the financial viability of service providers, and deliver positive environmental benefits.

Priority Area 3**Collaborative and Flexible Responses**

Work collaboratively with service providers to respond to changing community needs.

- 3.1** Support service providers to identify and implement alternate service models and programming initiatives to respond to the increasing demand for kindergarten.
- 3.2** Work with service providers to pursue options to increase the availability of childcare through service initiatives such as increasing operating hours and days of existing services, identifying opportunities for in-venue family daycare services, and offering wrap-around care associated with kindergarten.
- 3.3** Support service providers to pursue options to increase the availability of outside school hours care.
- 3.4** Review and update lease, license, and service system agreements to support and facilitate change in early years' service models and programming.

Priority Area 4**Advocacy and Equitable Access**

Advocate for and partner with others to provide equitable and accessible early years services and supports.

- 4.1** In partnership with early years managers and service providers, advocate to the State Government to increase the investment in early years infrastructure, where community and service needs are not being met.
- 4.2** Work with current and potential service providers to respond to the childcare needs of smaller and more remote communities.
- 4.3** Work with service providers to ensure infrastructure and service models are responsive to the needs of all families and children.

SECTION 1: Introduction



Image: Sale North Kindergarten. Source: Sale Combined Kindergartens

1.1 What is Early Years Infrastructure?

Early Years Infrastructure is generally any facility or space where services or programs are delivered from, to support children aged 0 – 8 years and their families. Services and programs typically delivered from these facilities and spaces include:

- Kindergarten
- Childcare (occasional, long daycare, outside school hours care)
- Maternal and child health services
- Immunisation
- Community and supported playgroups
- Toy libraries
- Parent or family support.

The facilities or spaces may be dedicated to support early years services and programs or could be shared or multi-use e.g. consulting suites that support maternal and child health services as well as other allied health services. The spaces are often publicly owned and operated, but they may also be privately owned and operated, particularly in the case of childcare and kindergarten.

There are also many facilities and spaces which are universally accessible to the whole community and are highly valued by children and families. They are often also some of the places they use the most. Key examples are:

- Parks and playgrounds
- Libraries
- Swimming pools and leisure centres
- Walking and cycling paths.

For families and children, Council's investment in these facilities and spaces is just as critical as its investment in dedicated early years infrastructure.

1.2 Why an Early Years Infrastructure Plan?

The Early Years Infrastructure Plan has been developed to assess the capacity of existing early years infrastructure in Wellington Shire to support the delivery of early years services which will respond effectively the current and future needs of children and families.

Council has a strong commitment to enhancing community life and ensuring the community has access to services and facilities that meet their needs. The provision of infrastructure which supports the delivery of services, programs and activities for families and children, is key to Council delivering on these commitments.

The Community Managed Facilities Strategy 2020 – 2025 provides important guidance about how Council will support the management and operation of community facilities. The Early Years Infrastructure Plan along with the Community Infrastructure Plan, and the Sporting Infrastructure Plan, provide Council with a clear assessment of existing infrastructure and the value and importance of it to local communities. Vitally, the Early Years Infrastructure Plan identifies how early years infrastructure may need to be changed or improved to respond more effectively to the needs of children and families.

1.3 Scope of the Plan

The Community Infrastructure Plan is **underpinned by extensive research** about:

- The strategic and policy context for the provision and operation of early years infrastructure in Wellington Shire.
- The demographic profile of the Wellington community, particularly children and families.
- The early years infrastructure available in Wellington Shire, its condition, functionality, accessibility, and location.
- An assessment of current and future demand for early years services and infrastructure in Wellington Shire.
- The results of a program of consultation and engagement with the Wellington community and key stakeholder agencies to understand what and how the community accesses early years services and spaces, what they value about it, what impacts on their ability to access it, and their aspirations, ideas and priorities for improving community infrastructure.

A summary of the research outcomes is provided as part of this document, and Background Report is provided as a separate attachment.

The Plan considers the current and future community infrastructure needs across seven districts in the Shire of Wellington. These are:

- Loch Sport to Seaspray and District
- Heyfield and District
- Maffra and District
- Rosedale and District
- Sale and District
- Stratford and District
- Yarram and District.

The Plan identifies five priority areas and recommendations to assist Council to respond to current and emerging needs for early years services and infrastructure.

SECTION 2: Strategic and Community Context



Image: Hyland Community Kindergarten. Source: Sale Combined Kindergarten

2.1 Importance and Benefits of Investing in the Early Years

The life experiences and circumstances of a child and young person impacts significantly upon how the brain develops and upon the health, social and education outcomes for children and young people. Central to healthy brain development are supportive family relationships and positive learning experiences, along with universal access to services, and additional support where families are faced with stressful circumstances and lower levels of resilience.¹

From pregnancy through early childhood (0 – 8 years), all environments in which children live and learn, and the quality of their relationships with adults and caregivers, have a significant impact on their cognitive, emotional and social development. Significant adversity such as poverty, abuse or neglect, parental substance abuse or mental illness, and exposure to violence in early childhood can lead to lifelong problems.² Early intervention is key to preventing or minimising the impact of adversity in a child's early years, and economic modelling shows the cost of investing in the early years provides significant long-term savings and benefits, such as higher levels of educational attainment and increased employment options, reduce crime, and improved health outcomes.³

Early years services and supports such as kindergarten, childcare, maternal and child health services, immunisation, parenting and family support programs, and intervention services for children with additional needs, are all critical to the health and wellbeing of children and families. Many of these services and supports are delivered or facilitated by local government highlighting the important role Councils play in the health and wellbeing of children and families.

In particular, the involvement of local government in kindergarten and childcare is important to workforce participation. Research about formal and informal childcare draws the link between workforce participation and the availability of quality, affordable childcare at times that families need access to care. The 2015 Productivity Commission inquiry into the childcare and early childhood sector in Australia looked specifically at the link between the availability of affordable quality childcare and workforce participation, and the contribution access to childcare makes to optimising children's learning and development. The Inquiry identified that formal and informal childcare plays a vital role in enabling parents to work and estimates that there may be up to '165,000 parents (on a full-time equivalent basis) who would like to work but are not able to do so because they are experiencing difficulties with the cost of, or access to, suitable childcare.'⁴

¹ Centre on the Developing Child (2007), The Science of Early Childhood Development (In Brief). Available at: <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/InBrief-The-Science-of-Early-Childhood-Development.pdf> and City of Boroondara (2014), Draft Children and Young People's Strategy.

² Centre on the Developing Child (2007), The impact of early adversity on children's development (In Brief). Available at: <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/inbrief-adversity-1.pdf>.

³ Yoshikawa, H., Weiland, C., Brooks-Gunn, J., Burchinal, M., Espinosa, L., Gormley, W., Ludwig, J.O., Magnuson, K.A., Phillips, D.A., & Zaslow, M.J. (2013, August, September). Investing in our future: The evidence base for early childhood education. Society for Research in Child Development and Foundation for Child Development. Available: <http://fcd-us.org/sites/default/files/Evidence%20Base%20on%20Preschool%20Education%20FINAL.pdf>.

⁴ Australian Government Productivity Commission (2014), Childcare and Early Childhood Learning. Available at: <http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/childcare/report/childcare-overview.pdf>

2.2 Strategic Context

Over the past decade Federal, State and Local governments have shown they understand that children and families are an integral part of communities, and their needs, aspirations and voices are essential for building strong communities. Continuous improvement and quality underpin planning for early years services and infrastructure, and child friendly environments continue to be developed to support the health, wellbeing and social development of children and families.

Policy initiatives which have had a significant impact upon improving the health and wellbeing of children and families include:

- The introduction of national standards for the provision of early years services.
- Universal access to 15 hours of funded kindergarten for four-year-old children.
- A focus upon supporting vulnerable children and families.⁵
- Improving access to kindergarten through the establishment of kindergarten central registration and enrolment systems (CRES) in all local governments throughout Victoria, the introduction of School Readiness Funding, the continued investment in fee subsidies, Early Start Kindergarten and Kindergarten Inclusion Support funding for children and families with additional needs or experiencing disadvantage.

The most recent Victorian State government initiative is the provision of **universal access to 15 hours of funded 3-year-old kindergarten from 2022**. Under this policy, all children in Victoria will be eligible to access 5 hours of funded 3-year-old kindergarten each week from 2022, and by 2029 this will have increased to 15 hours per week. This initiative along with continued population growth, **will significantly increase the demand for kindergarten services and infrastructure in Wellington Shire**.

The Early Years Infrastructure Plan supports the directions of key Council plans and strategies including Wellington 2030, the Council Plan 2017 - 2021, Healthy Wellington, Wellington Community Early Years Plan 2017 – 2021 and Access and Inclusion Plan. There is consistency in the priorities Council and the community have identified, and acknowledgement of the importance of early years services and supports to the health and wellbeing of children and families. Wellington Shire Council has:

- A broad commitment to enhancing community life, the provision of services and facilities that respond to community needs, and a commitment to principles of equity.
- A consistent awareness of the important role community facilities (including early years facilities) play in building a friendly and safe community and in strengthening community identity.
- A strong commitment to the principles of access and inclusion and valuing diversity within the community. Council recognises that factors such as location, access and functionality of community facilities must be considered in a consistent way to ensure equity.

⁵ Victorian State Government, Education State,
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/educationstate/Pages/vision.aspx>

The Early Years Infrastructure Plan is an important component of extensive planning Council has undertaken about community infrastructure in recent years, including development of a Community Managed Facilities Strategy, a Community Infrastructure Plan and Sporting Infrastructure Plan. Combined these plans provide important guidance about priorities for community infrastructure including:

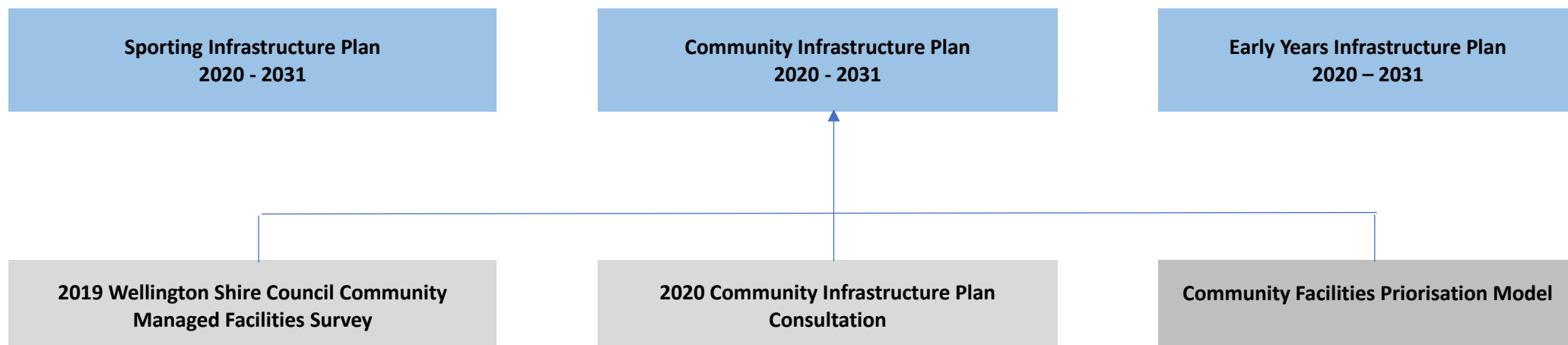
- A preference for shared use of facilities and / or the promotion of co-location and services integration to both manage resources effectively, and to enhance the accessibility of community services.
- The need to maximise the potential of existing assets prior to seeking to develop new facilities, and the use of business cases to assess the current and potential use of a facility, its role in the community, proximity and alternatives available.
- The need for Council to support community managed facilities.
- A high level of commitment to the natural environment and the challenges posed by climate change is evident, along with the broader notion of sustainability and the necessity to use scarce community resources wisely.



KEY STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS



KEY SUPPORTING PLANS



2.3 Community Profile

Located in the Gippsland region of Victoria, the Shire of Wellington covers an area of 10,924 square kilometres and is made up of over 30 different communities. The Shire extends from the Great Dividing Range and Victoria's High Country, through rich irrigated flats and some of the most productive grazing land in Australia to the internationally significant Gippsland Lakes and Wetlands and the Ninety Mile Beach and Bass Strait.⁶

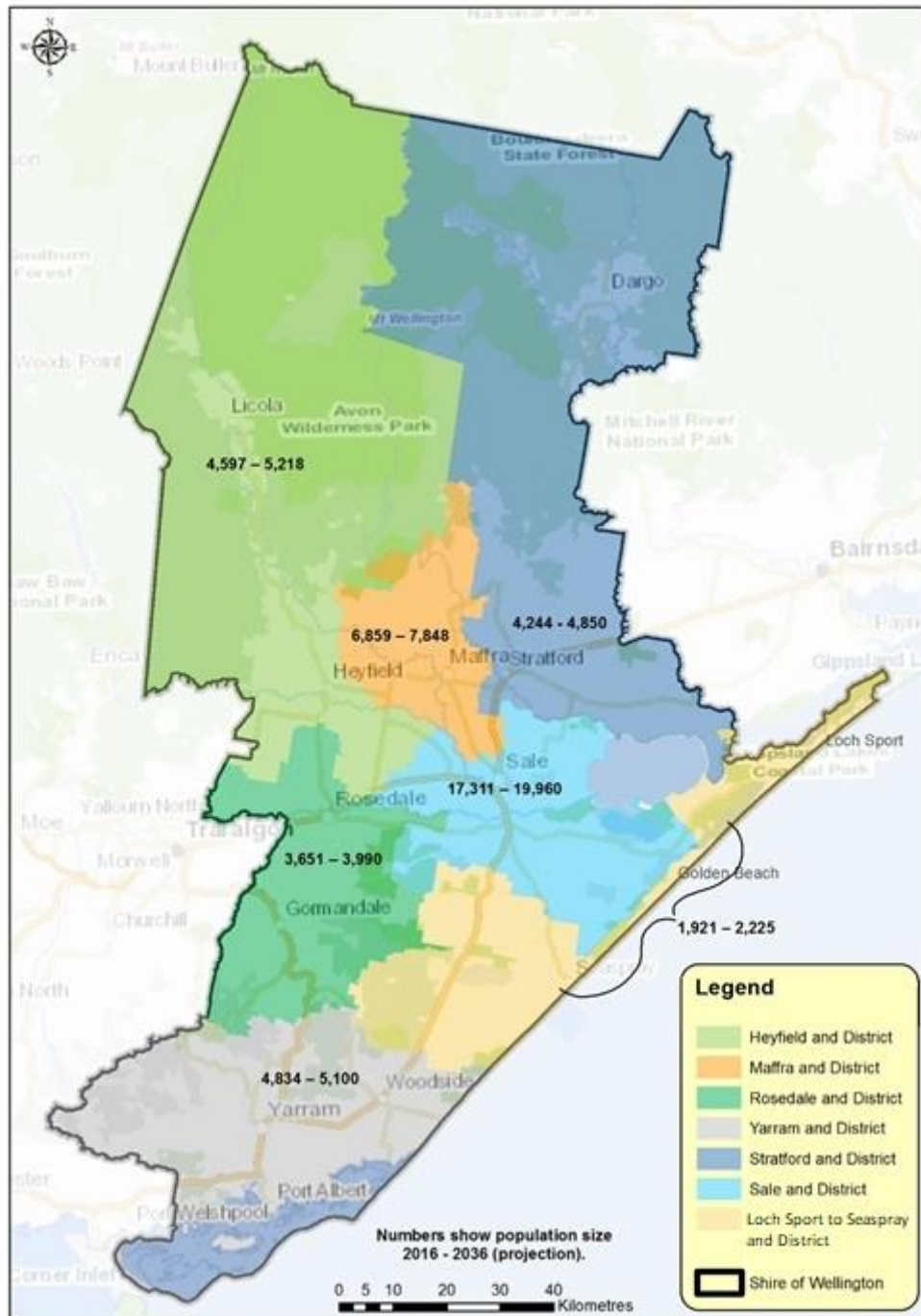
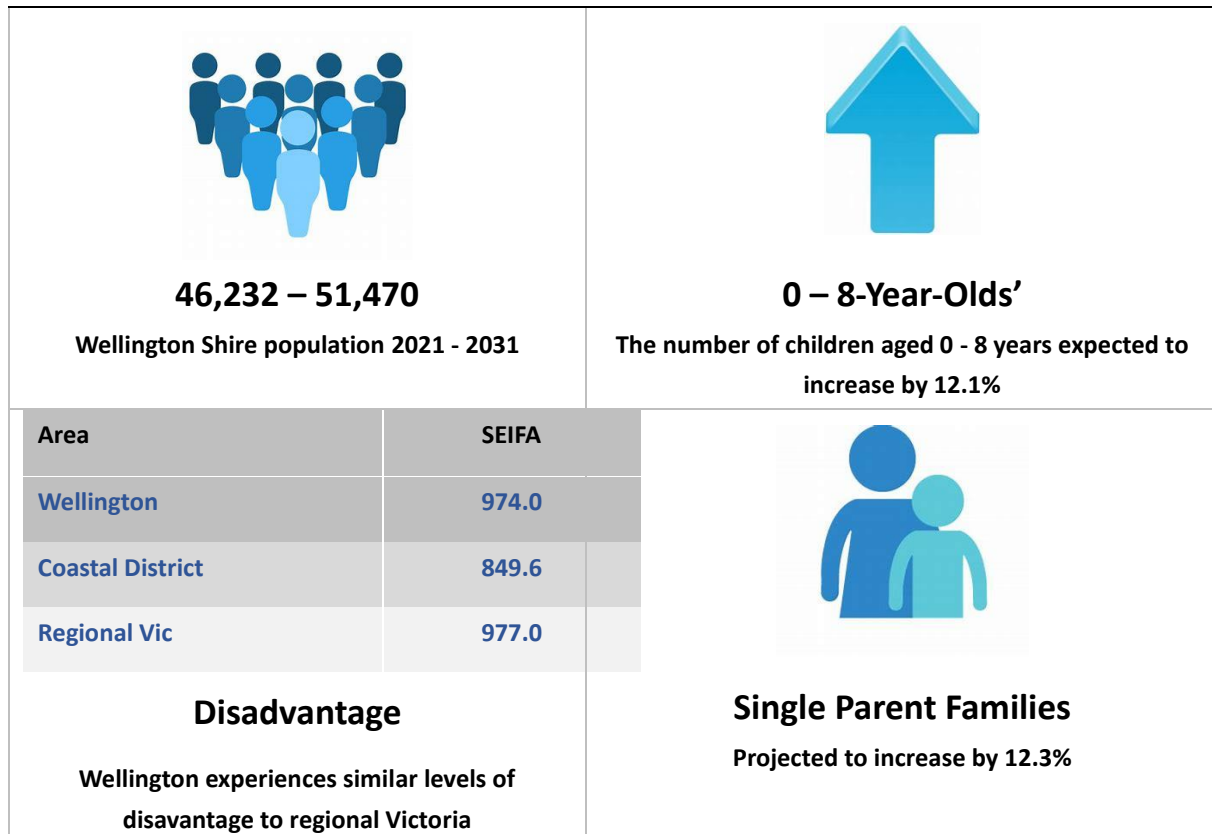


Diagram 1: Map of Wellington Shire and the 7 planning districts, and population size 2016 - 2036



⁶ Wellington Shire Council, 2020, Our Organisation. Available online: <https://www.wellington.vic.gov.au/category/our-organisation>

Overall, moderate population growth is expected to occur in Wellington Shire between 2021 and 2031, with the largest growth projected in Sale, Stratford and Rosedale Districts. Lower growth is projected in Maffra, Yarram and Heyfield Districts, while the population in the Loch Sport to Seaspray and District is expected to decline. Demographic characteristics relevant to the Early Years Infrastructure Plan are:

- **Low to moderate increases in the number of children aged between 0 and 8 years** of age across the Shire with the highest growth expected in Sale, Rosedale and Stratford Districts between 2021 and 2031. Very low levels of growth are projected in Heyfield, Maffra and Yarram Districts and the 0 – 8 population in Loch Sport to Seaspray and District is expected to decline.
- Consistent with this, **the number of households with children** across the Shire is projected to **increase moderately**, with Sale, Rosedale and Stratford Districts projected to experience the highest growth.
- **An increasing number of single parent families**, particularly in Rosedale District, and to a lesser extent Sale and Stratford Districts.
- The percentage of **children identified as being developmentally vulnerable** in their first year of school **increased** from 10 to 12 percent between 2012 and 2018. The communities where this increase is most evident are Briagolong/Boisdale/Licola, Denison/Nambrok and surrounds, Maffra/Tinamba, Stratford/Hollands Landing/Munro, and Yarram/Woodside.⁷
- **Disadvantage is variable across different districts and townships**, but it is highest in Loch Sport to Seaspray and District, and several communities in the Yarram District. Overall, disadvantage levels in Wellington Shire are consistent with regional Victoria.



⁷ Commonwealth of Australia, 2019. Australian Early Development Census 2012 – 2018. Available online: [Australian Early Development Census \(aeadc.gov.au\)](https://aeadc.gov.au)

	Total Population 2021 - 2031 	0 – 8-Year-Old Population 2021 - 2031	Single Parent Families 2021 - 2031 	SEIFA Index of Disadvantage Wellington Shire 974
Loch Sport to Seaspray & District	Decline 2,952 – 2,609 (11.6 % decline)	Significant Decline 208 – 147 (29.3 % decline) Equal decline in 0 – 4 and 5 – 8-year-olds	Decline Projected to decline (17.2%) consistent with overall population decline	High levels of disadvantage in Loch Sport - 816 Paradise Beach - 824 Golden Beach - 830 Seaspray - 926
Heyfield & District	Small Increase 4,055 – 4,273 (5.4 % growth)	Small Increase 431 – 457 (6.0% increase) Higher growth in 5 – 8 year olds (6.5%)	Increase Projected to increase by <i>less</i> than Wellington Shire (7.1%)	Heyfield township has higher levels of disadvantage (929) than Wellington Shire
Maffra & District	Small Increase 6,473 – 7,036 (8.7 % growth)	Small Increase 782 – 838 (7.2% increase) Higher growth in 5 – 8 year olds (9.4%)	Increase Projected to increase by <i>less</i> than Wellington Shire (5.8%)	Maffra township has higher levels of disadvantage (955) than Wellington Shire
Rosedale & District	Moderate Increase 3,700 – 4,180 (13.0% growth)	Higher Increase 383 – 442 (15.4% increase) Higher growth in 5 – 8 year olds (16.4%)	Large Increase Projected to increase by <i>more</i> than Wellington Shire (28.1%)	Rosedale township has slightly higher levels of disadvantage (955) than Wellington Shire
Sale & District	Moderate Increase 19,232 – 22,399 (13.0 % growth)	Higher Increase 2,170 – 2,541 (17.1% increase) Higher growth in 0 – 4 year olds (18.3%)	Increase Projected to increase the <i>same</i> than Wellington Shire (16.5%)	All towns in the district have similar or lower levels of disadvantage (970) than Wellington Shire
Stratford & District	Highest Increase 5,174 – 5,943 (14.9% growth)	Highest Increase 627 – 752 (19.1% increase) Higher growth in 5 – 8 year olds (22.2%)	Increase Projected to increase by <i>less</i> than Wellington Shire (16.2%)	Dargo township has higher levels of disadvantage (925) than Wellington Shire
Yarram & District	Small Increase 4,646 – 5,030 (8.3 % growth)	Moderate Increase 444 – 484 (9.0% increase) Higher growth in 5 – 8 year olds (9.8%)	Increase Projected to increase by <i>less</i> than Wellington Shire (7.2%)	High levels of disadvantage across the district with Yarram and Port Albert experiencing the highest disadvantage

Preliminary Implications

While the demand analysis later in this Plan will assess the implications of these characteristics in more detail, key implications are:

- Possible increased demand for early years infrastructure, services and supports in communities where growth in the number of children aged 0 - 8 is most substantial, particularly Sale and surrounds, Stratford and Rosedale. This includes services such as maternal and child health, immunisation, childcare and kindergarten. It also includes infrastructure and services such as playgrounds, aquatic leisure facilities, libraries, community houses etc.
- A possible increased need for early years supports and services in communities where disadvantage is highest, particularly communities in Loch Sport to Seaspray and District, and Yarram and Port Albert. Early years supports and services are very limited in Loch Sport to Seaspray and District with no kindergarten, childcare or immunisation services available.
- The increasing number of single parent families, particularly in Rosedale, suggests there may be increased need for family and parent support services within the community.
- Likely increased demand for community places and spaces that are welcoming, free to access, and deliver social support services for all community members but particularly people experiencing disadvantage. In Wellington this is most likely to be people living in Yarram and District and some of the coastal communities.

2.4 Impact of Emergencies upon Early Years Services and Supports

Early years services have been critical to families and children during the COVID-19 pandemic. Childcare and kindergarten services have continued to operate throughout lockdowns and have supported essential workers to continue delivering services to the wider community. The reliance upon these services during times of crisis, demonstrates how critical it is to ensure the right early years services and associated infrastructure are available for all families and children in Wellington Shire.

Parks, playgrounds, walking and cycling paths have always been important to children and families but this has been highlighted even further through the pandemic, with the use of outdoor spaces increasing dramatically. As outlined later in this Plan, parks and playgrounds are highly valued by families, are the early years infrastructure families consider to be most important to have close to home, and one of the aspects they would most like to see improved. This demonstrates how important it is for Council to continue investing in parks, playgrounds, walking and cycling paths to support the health and wellbeing of children and families in Wellington Shire.

SECTION 3: Early Years Services and Infrastructure in Wellington Shire



Image: Gwenfa Hampton Kindergarten. Source: Sale Combined Kindertans

3.1 Existing Early Years Services and Infrastructure

In total there are 33 different buildings hosting early years services and supports in Wellington Shire. Some early years services are located in standalone buildings, while others are integrated or co-located with other early years services, community activities or resources. Kindergarten and childcare services are most likely to be in standalone buildings.

Service	Co-located or Integrated	Number of Sites
Kindergarten	Standalone	7
	Co-located or Integrated	8
Integrated childcare and kindergarten	Standalone	3
	Co-located or Integrated	1
Childcare (no kindergarten)	Standalone	3
Occasional Care	Co-located or Integrated	3
Outside School Hours Care	Co-located or Integrated	4
In Venue Family Daycare	Co-located or Integrated	1
Maternal and Child Health	Co-located or Integrated	8
Supported Playgroup	Co-located or Integrated	2

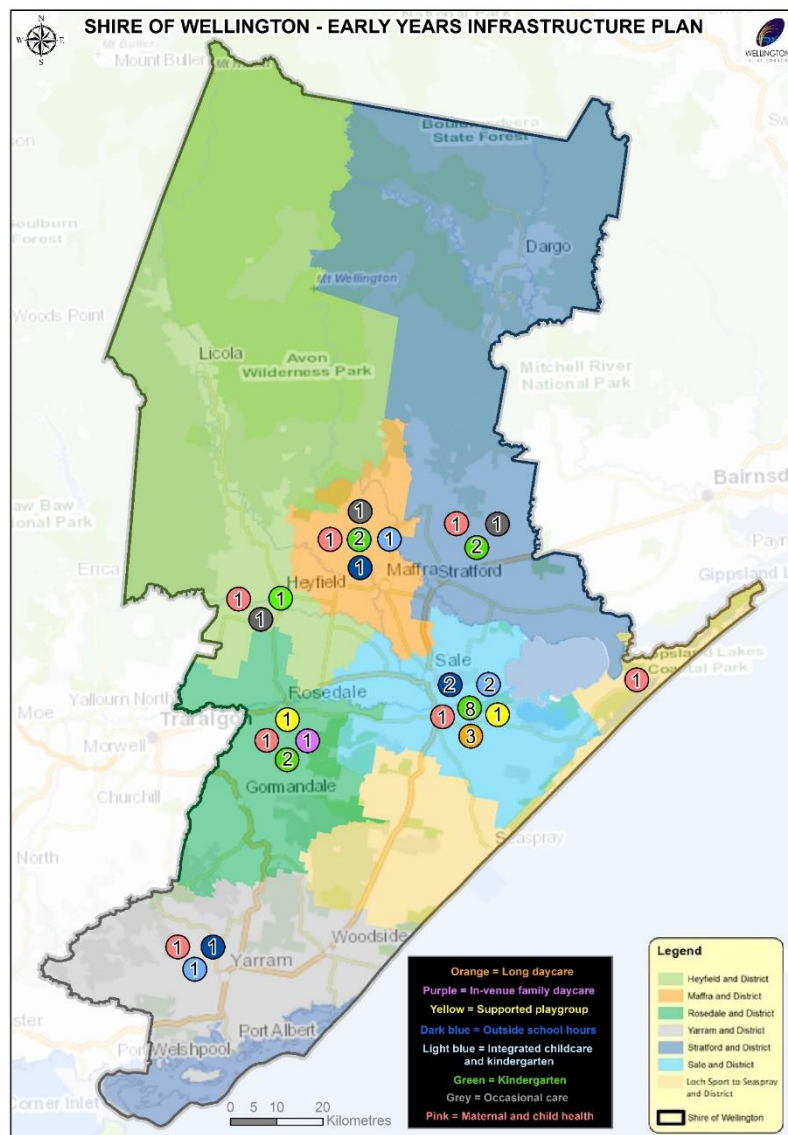
Table 3.1: Summary of Early Years Infrastructure in Wellington Shire, April 2021

Sections 3.1.1 to 3.1.7 provide a summary of the existing infrastructure where early years services are delivered from by district, outlining the number of program rooms or consulting suites, where it is located, whether it is co-located with other services or facilities, a general description of the condition, accessibility, functionality and location of the facility / service, opportunities for concurrent uses or co-location and any opportunities that may have been identified to expand the facilities. More detailed information about each of the facilities can be found in Attachment B.

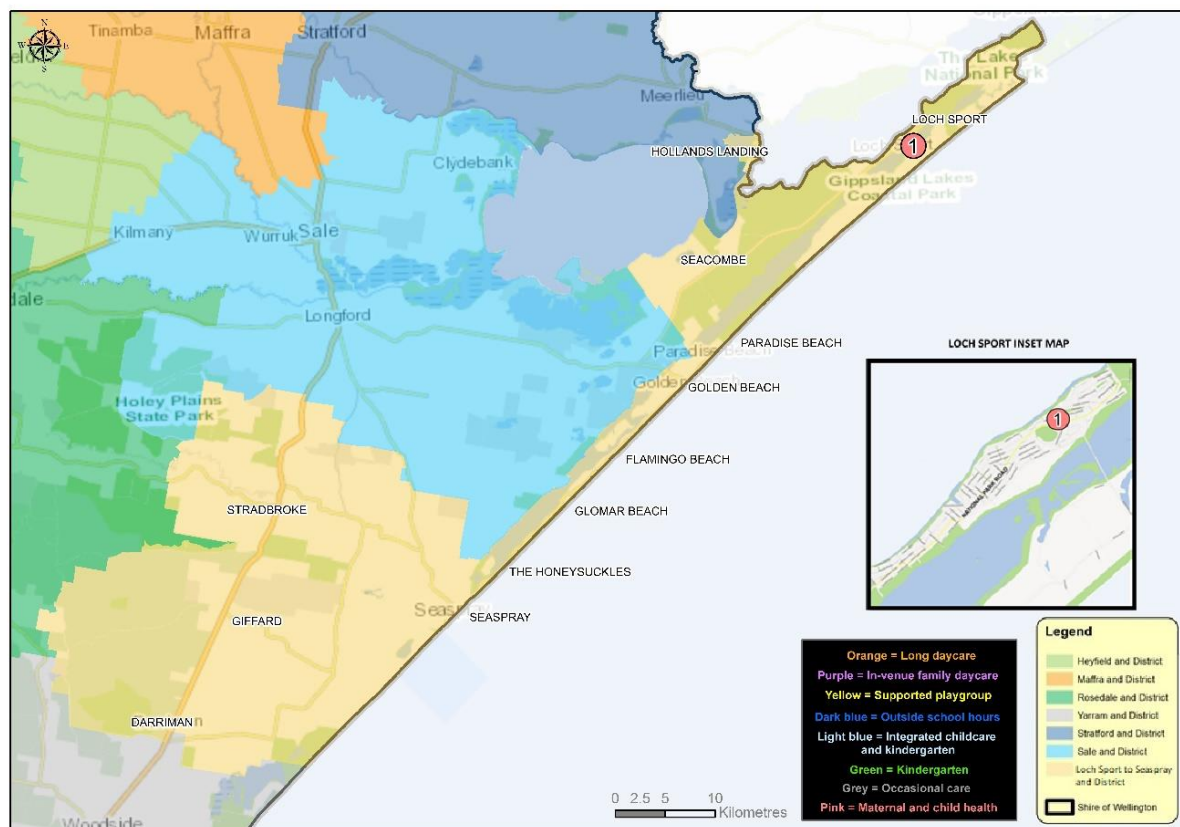
Overall:

- **There is significant variability in the provision of early years services and associated infrastructure across the 7 districts.** Loch Sport to Seaspray and District has the least access to early years services with only maternal and child health services available in the district. Sale and district has the largest number of services and associated infrastructure reflecting the large residential and worker population. Yarram and District has severely restricted access to kindergarten and childcare services with only one facility and service provider in the district.
- **A large portion of the infrastructure housing early years services is owned by Council,** but Central Gippsland Health and the State Government Department of Education and Training also have a significant footprint. Council's involvement is typically associated with kindergarten, childcare and supported or community playgroups, while Central Gippsland Health provides spaces for maternal and child health services, and the Department of Education and Training provides space for kindergarten and outside school hours care programs.

- **There are two good examples of early years services being delivered from community hub facilities** in Yarram and Rosedale. Council's investment in these facilities allows a mix early years and other community services or activities to be supported. While there are other examples of early years services being co-located or shared use of early years infrastructure, there is significant opportunity to improve this further to make services more accessible for the community.
- **The location of some services limit's accessibility to early years services** for the community. This is particularly an issue for maternal and child health services in Heyfield and Maffra.
- There are a number of instances where **infrastructure is in poor condition or its functionality does not effectively support the services** operating from the space. Examples include Briagolong Kindergarten, Maffra Queen Street Kindergarten, Hyland Community Kindergarten, Gwenfa Hampton Kindergarten, Kath Foley Children's Centre and Kindergarten. In addition, **there is a prevalence of single room kindergarten facilities** which will constrain the capacity of some services to respond to increased demand from the roll out of funded 3-year-old kindergarten. This is particularly issue in Sale, Stratford and Heyfield.

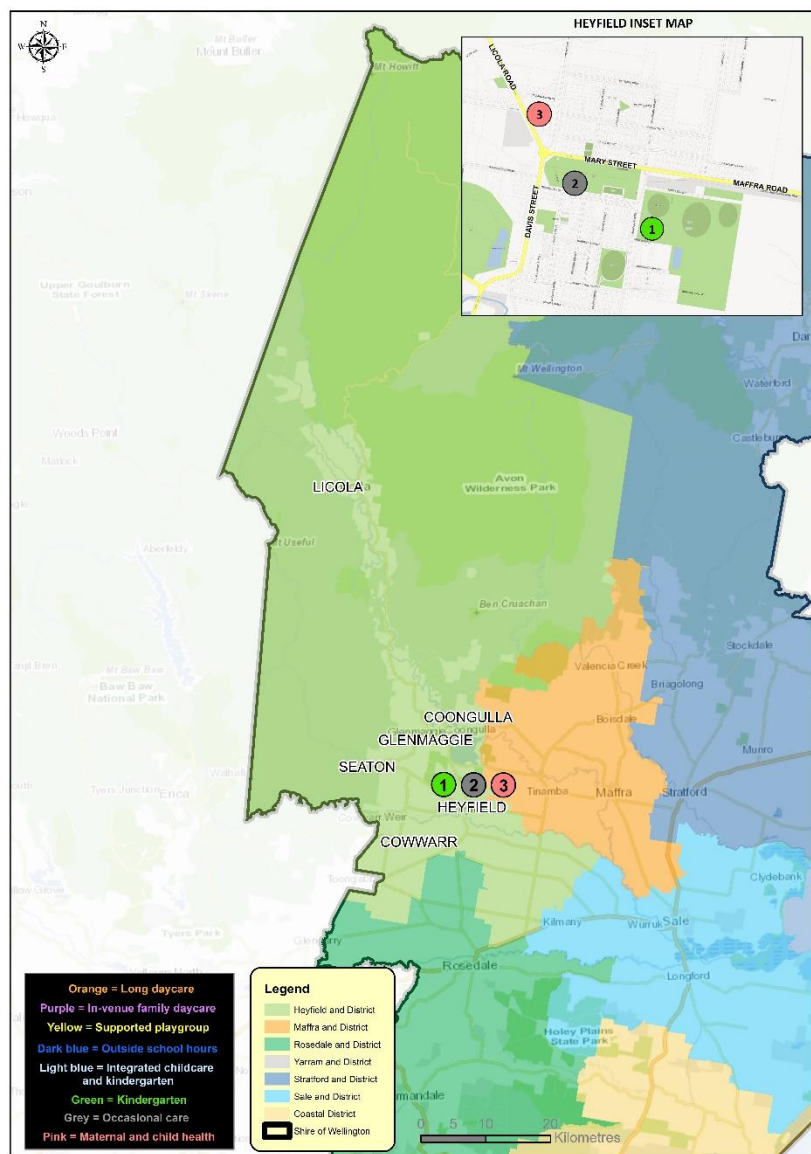


3.1.1 Loch Sport to Seaspray and District



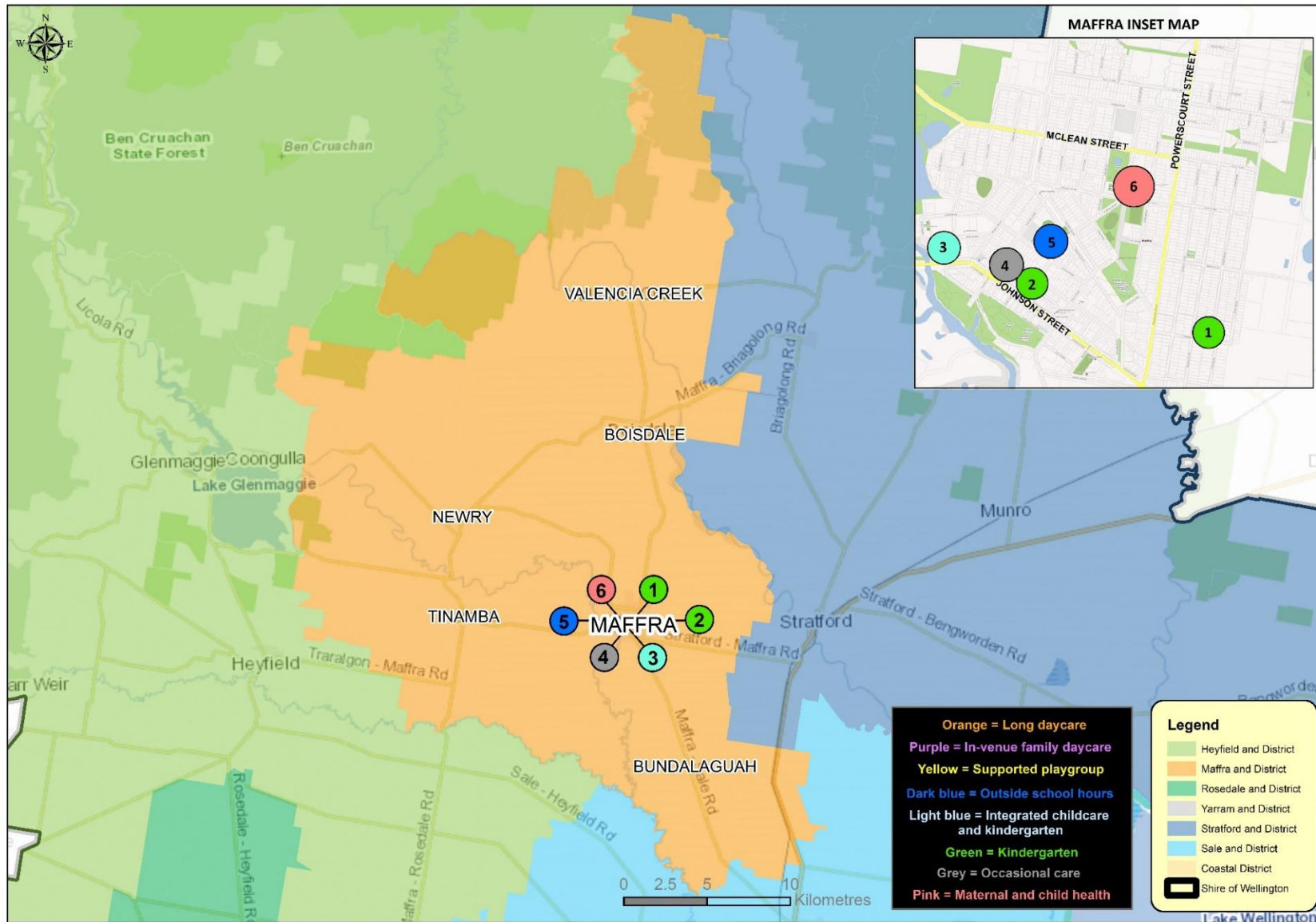
Number	1
Service	Maternal and Child Health
Rooms	1 consulting suit
Town	Loch Sport
Co-located	Yes - Loch Sport Community Health Service
Land / Building Owner	Central Gippsland Health
Service Provider	Central Gippsland Health
Facility Condition, Accessibility, Functionality	Unknown
Opportunity for Concurrent Uses	The service operates from the Loch Sport Community Health Service.
Opportunity for Co-location	Currently occurs
Opportunity to Expand Facilities	Unclear

3.1.2 Heyfield and District



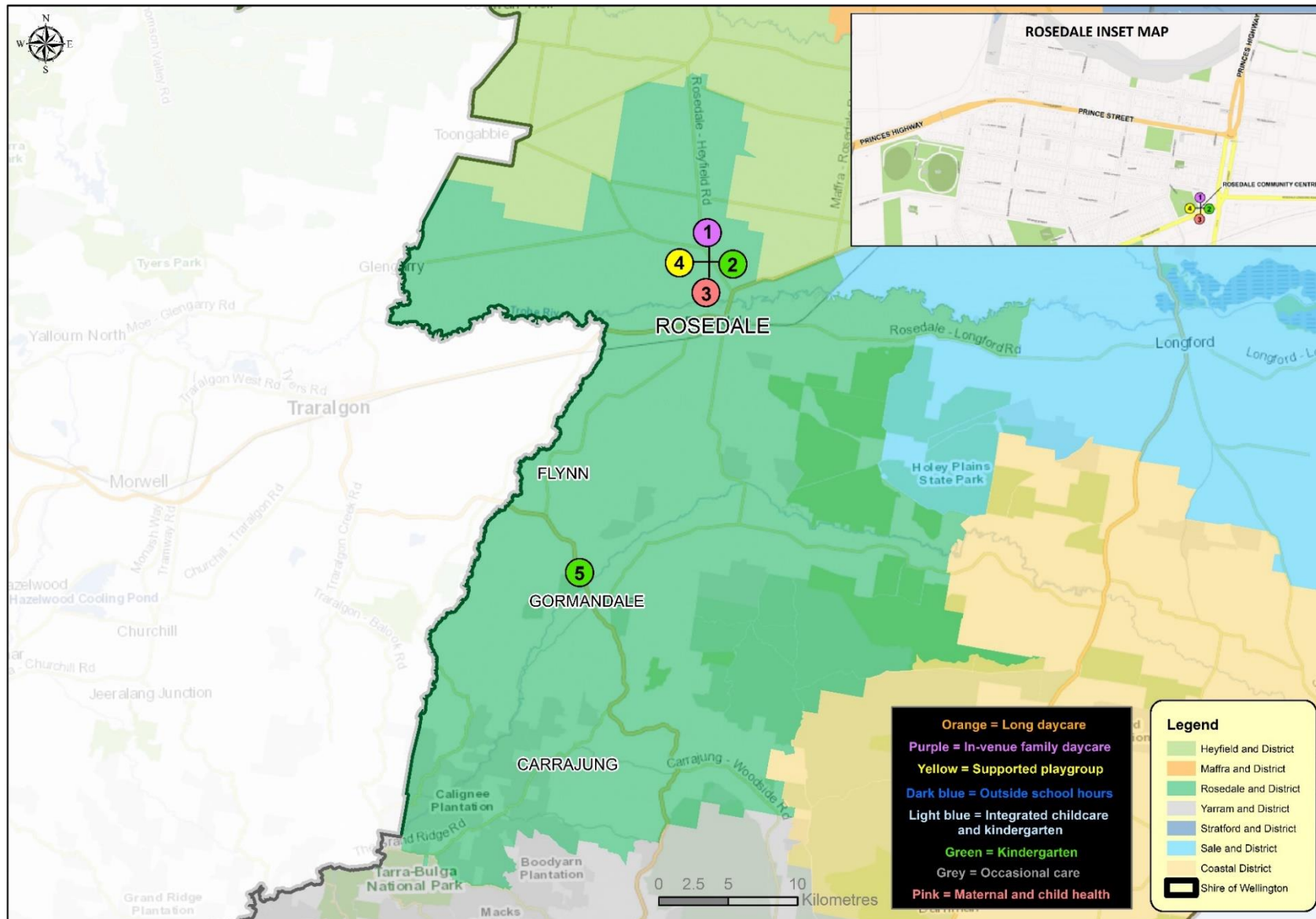
Number	1	2	3
Service	Heyfield Kindergarten	Occasional Care	Maternal and Child Health
Rooms	1 program room	1 program room	1 consulting suite
Town	Heyfield	Heyfield	Heyfield
Co-located	No	Yes – Heyfield Resource Centre	Yes- Heyfield Hospital
Land / Building Owner	Wellington Shire Council	Wellington Shire Council	Central Gippsland Health
Service Provider	Uniting Vic Tas	Heyfield Resource Centre	Central Gippsland Health
Facility Condition, Accessibility, Functionality	The facility is in good condition and is functional, but it is an isolated standalone facility.	The facility is in good condition and functional, and is centrally located.	Poorly located in Heyfield Hospital.
Opportunity for Concurrent Uses	No as it has a single program room.	Heyfield Resource Centre offers multiple activities and services concurrently including occasional care.	Currently occurs as the service is located at Heyfield Hospital.
Opportunity for Co-location	No	Currently occurs.	Currently occurs.
Opportunity to Expand Facilities	Yes	No opportunity for expansion.	No opportunity for expansion.

3.1.3 Maffra and District



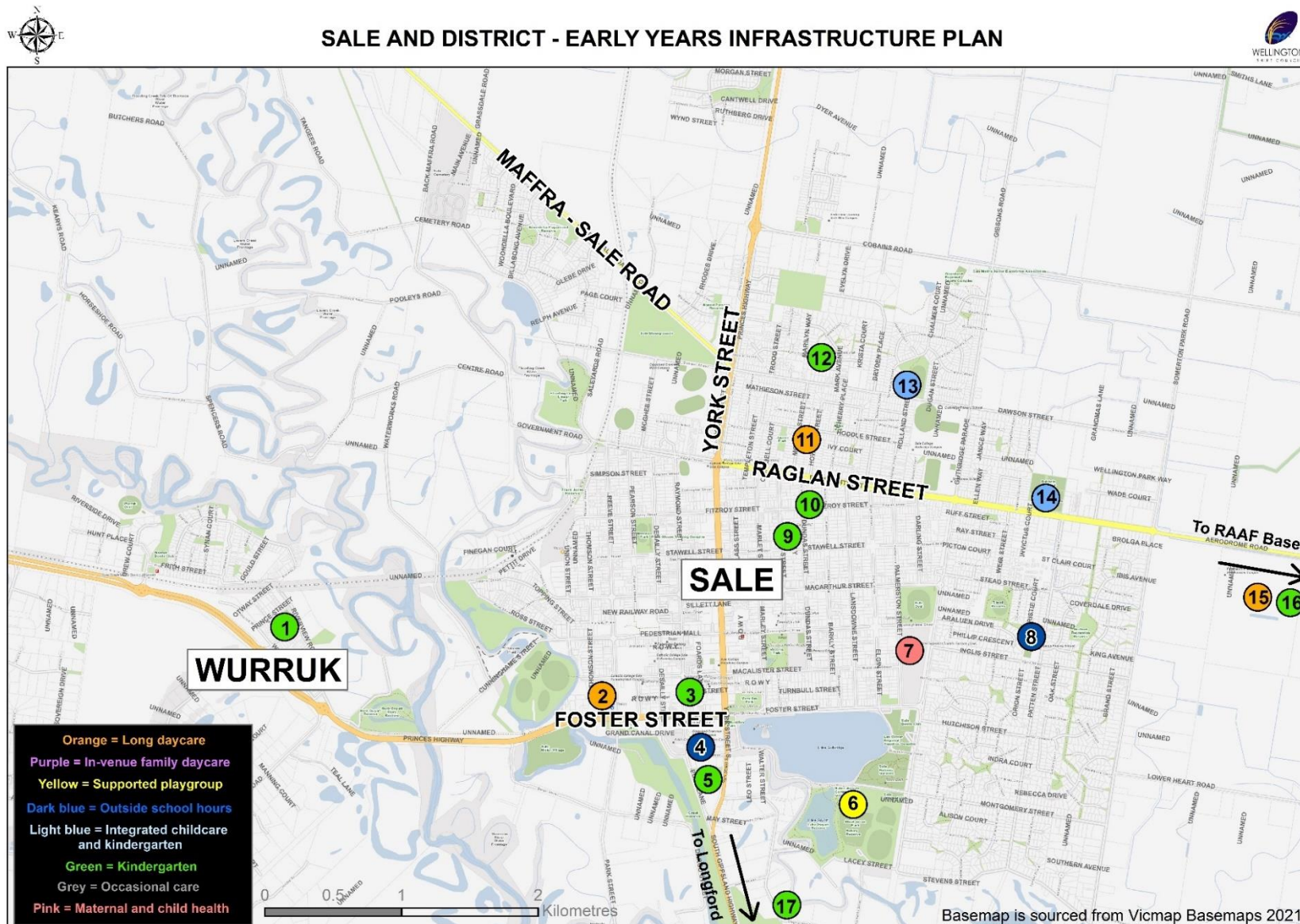
Number	1	2	3	4	5	6
Service	Glassford Kindergarten	Maffra Queen Street Kindergarten	Duke Street Children's Centre (Integrated Childcare and Kinder)	Occasional Care (at Maffra Queen Street Kindergarten)	Outside School Hours Care (at Maffra Primary School)	Maternal and Child Health (at Maffra Hospital)
Rooms	2 program rooms	1 program room	4 program rooms	1 program room	1 program room	1 consulting suite
Town	Maffra	Maffra	Maffra	Maffra	Maffra	Maffra
Co-located	No	No	No	No	Yes – Maffra Primary School	Yes – located at Maffra Hospital
Land / Building Owner	Wellington Shire Council	Wellington Shire Council	Privately owned	Wellington Shire Council	State Govt Dept. of Education and Training	Central Gippsland Health
Service Provider	Uniting Vic Tas	Uniting Vic Tas	G8 Education Limited	Uniting Vic Tas	Gumnuts OSCH Maffra	Central Gippsland Health
Facility Condition, Accessibility, Functionality	Functional and in good condition but remote from the centre of town.	The accessibility of the facility and the staff facilities are poor. The service is however centrally located and close to other community facilities.	The facility is generally in good condition with good accessibility. It is centrally located in Maffra close to other community facilities..	The accessibility of the facility and the staff facilities are poor. The service is however centrally located and close to other community facilities.	Unknown	The service is difficult to access because it is located in the hospital.
Opportunity for Concurrent Uses	Dual kinder rooms allows multiple kinder programs to occur at once.	No as it has a single program room.	Offers both childcare and kindergarten concurrently.	No as it has a single program room.	The service operates from Maffra Primary School outside school hours.	Currently occurs as the service is located at Maffra Hospital.
Opportunity for Co-location	Could be used by other early years services on non-kinder days.	Is currently used for occasional care on non kindergarten days (1 day per week)	No opportunity for co-location because of the site footprint.	Currently occurs, although concurrent uses are not possible.	The service operates from Maffra Primary School.	Currently occurs.
Opportunity to Expand Facilities	No opportunity for expansion	No opportunity for expansion.	No opportunity for expansion.	No opportunity for expansion.	Unknown.	No opportunity for expansion.

3.1.4 Rosedale and District



Number	1	2	3	4	5
Service	In Venue Family Daycare	Rosedale Neighbourhood Kindergarten	Maternal and Child Health	Supported Playgroup	Gormandale Kindergarten
Rooms	1 program room	1 program room	2 consulting suites	Unknown	2 program rooms
Town	Rosedale	Rosedale	Rosedale	Rosedale	Gormandale
Co-located	Yes – Rosedale Hub	Yes – Rosedale Hub	Yes – Rosedale Hub	Yes – Rosedale Hub	Yes – Gormandale Primary School
Land / Building Owner	Wellington Shire Council	Wellington Shire Council	Wellington Shire Council	Wellington Shire Council	State Govt Dept. of Education and Training
Service Provider	Uniting Vic Tas	Rosedale Neighbourhood House	Central Gippsland Health	Uniting Vic Tas	Uniting Vic Tas
Facility Condition, Accessibility, Functionality	The service operates from the Rosedale Community Hub which is in excellent condition and well located.	The service operates from the Rosedale Community Hub which is in excellent condition and well located.	The service operates from the Rosedale Community Hub which is in excellent condition and well located.	The service operates from the Rosedale Community Hub which is in excellent condition and well located.	Located in portable building which are functional and in reasonable condition. The service is well located on the school site encouraging close connection between the school and kinder.
Opportunity for Concurrent Uses	Currently occurs as part of the Rosedale Community Hub.	Currently occurs as part of the Rosedale Community Hub.	Currently occurs as part of the Rosedale Community Hub.	Currently occurs as part of the Rosedale Community Hub.	The service has 2 rooms but currently only uses 1. Concurrent uses could occur.
Opportunity for Co-location	Currently occurs as part of the Rosedale Community Hub.	Currently occurs as part of the Rosedale Community Hub.	Currently occurs as part of the Rosedale Community Hub.	Currently occurs as part of the Rosedale Community Hub.	The service operates from Gormandale Primary School.
Opportunity to Expand Facilities	Yes	The program room allocated to in venue family daycare could be used for kindergarten if required.	Yes, but it is unlikely to be required.	Yes, but it is unlikely to be required.	No.

3.1.5 Sale and District

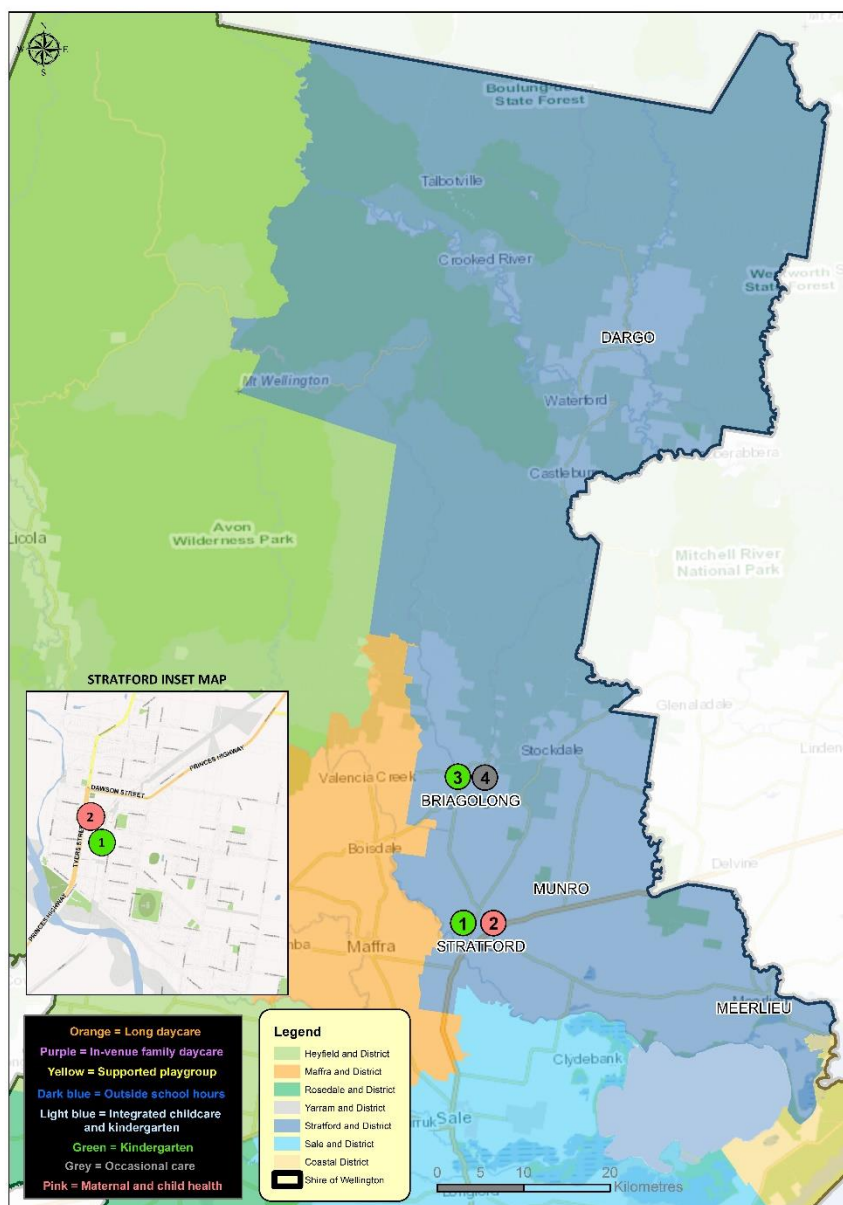


Number	Service	Rooms	Town	Co-located	Land / Building Owner	Service Provider	Facility Condition, Accessibility, Functionality	Opportunity for Concurrent Uses	Opportunity for Co-location	Opportunity to Expand Facilities
1	Wurruk Kindergarten	1 program room	Wurruk	Yes – at Wurruk Primary School	State Govt Dept. of Education and Training	Uniting Vic Tas	Newly developed and in good condition.	As it is co-located with the school concurrent uses occur.	Currently co-located with Wurruk Primary School	No.
2	Long daycare (at Reeve Street Children's Centre)	4 program rooms	Sale	No	Private ownership	G8 Education Ltd	In good condition and functional. Centrally located in the middle of Sale.	No	No	No
3	St Columba's Kindergarten	1 program room	Sale	No	Uniting Church	Uniting Vic Tas	Poor accessibility but otherwise in good condition. Centrally located in the middle of Sale.	No with only 1 program room concurrent uses cannot occur	No	No
4	Outside School Hours Care (In 2 Learn Grammar)	Unknown	Sale	Yes – at Gippsland Grammar	Gippsland Grammar	Unknown	Unknown	As it is co-located with the school concurrent uses occur.	Currently co-located with Gippsland Grammar	Unknown
5	Kindergarten (Gippsland Grammar Early Learning Centre)	2 program rooms	Sale	Yes – at Gippsland Grammar	Gippsland Grammar	Gippsland Grammar	Some accessibility issues but overall, the facility is in good condition and well located.	As it is co-located with the school concurrent uses occur.	Currently co-located with Gippsland Grammar	Yes
6	Supported Playgroup (at Seed Community Garden)	Outdoor space	Sale	Occurs at Seed Community Garden	Wellington Shire Council	Uniting Vic Tas	Newly developed and in excellent condition.	N/A	N/A	N/A
7	Maternal and Child Health	2 consulting rooms	Sale	Yes – at Central Gippsland Health Community Services site.	Central Gippsland Health	Central Gippsland Health	Effectively located and easy to access. The facilities are in good condition.	Co-located with other community services delivered by Central Gippsland Health	It is already co-located with other community services	Unknown
8	Gumnuts Outside School Hours Care	Unknown	Sale	Yes – at Araluen Primary School	State Govt Dept. of Education and Training	Gumnuts	Unknown	As it is co-located with the school concurrent uses occur.	Currently co-located with Araluen Primary School	Unknown

Number	Service	Rooms	Town	Co-located	Land / Building Owner	Service Provider	Facility Condition, Accessibility, Functionality	Opportunity for Concurrent Uses	Opportunity for Co-location	Opportunity to Expand Facilities
9	Hyland Community Kindergarten	1 program room	Sale	No	Wellington Shire Council	Sale Combined Kindergarten	Overall, the facility is in poor condition, and has poor accessibility. It is located next door to some other community facilities	No	No, but the space could be used when kindergarten is not occurring.	Yes, the front garden area could be developed upon.
10	Gwenfa Hampton Kindergarten	1 program room	Sale	No	Wellington Shire Council	Sale Combined Kindergarten	Overall, the facility is in poor condition and has a number of constraints. It is located close to schools and others services.	No	No, but the space could be used when kindergarten is not occurring.	No
11	Long Daycare (at Paisley Park)	4 program rooms	Sale	No	Private ownership	Private operator	In good condition, accessible and welcoming. W	No	Unknown	No
12	Sale North Kindergarten	1 program room	Sale	No	Wellington Shire Council	Sale Combined Kindergarten	Generally in good condition and welcoming. Well located to support residents in North Sale.	No	No, but the space could be used when kindergarten is not occurring.	Unknown
13	Integrated Childcare and Kindergarten (Kath Foley Children's Centre and Kindergarten)	4 program rooms	Sale	No	Wellington Shire Council	Kath Foley Children's Centre & Kindergarten Inc	The building is in poor condition and is not functional. It's current location is not ideal.	Currently supports childcare and kindergarten services.	No	No
14	Integrated Childcare and Kindergarten (Gumnuts Early Learning Centre)	5 program rooms	Sale	No	Wellington Shire Council	Gumnuts Early Learning Centre Inc	Facility is accessible and fit for purpose but more space is needed for 3 year old kinder, especially outdoor space.	Currently supports childcare and kindergarten services.	No	Neighbouring property has been purchased to expand the service

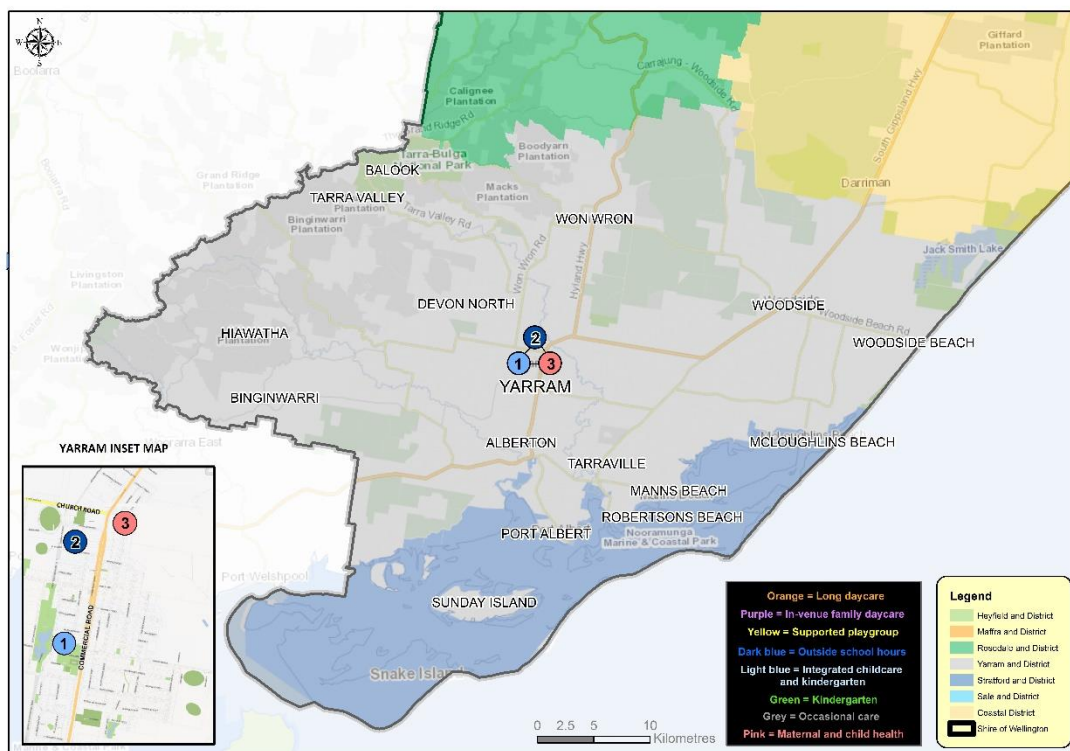
Number	Service	Rooms	Town	Co-located	Land / Building Owner	Service Provider	Facility Condition, Accessibility, Functionality	Opportunity for Concurrent Uses	Opportunity for Co-location	Opportunity to Expand Facilities
15	Long daycare (One Tree Defence Childcare Unit)	4 program rooms	East Sale	No but close to the East Sale Kindergarten	Commonwealth Govt Dept of Defence	One Tree Community Services Inc	The building is accessible and the layout is suitable, but the service is at capacity.	No	No	Possible additional land available behind the centre but this needs further investigation.
16	East Sale Kindergarten	1 program room	East Sale	No but close to the One Tree Defence Childcare Unit	Commonwealth Govt Dept of Defence	Uniting Vic Tas	Overall, the facility is in good condition, accessible and well maintained. It is well located to support families in East Sale and surrounds.	No	No	No
17	Longford Kindergarten	1 program room	Longford	No	Crown Land	Uniting Vic Tas	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown

3.1.6 Stratford and District



Number	1	2	3	4
Service	Stratford Kindergarten	Maternal and Child Health	Briagolong Kindergarten	Briagolong Occasional Care (at Briagolong Kindergarten)
Rooms	1 program room	1 consulting suite	1 program room	1 program room
Town	Stratford	Stratford	Briagolong	Briagolong
Co-located	No	Yes- Stratford Hub	No	No
Land / Building Owner	Wellington Shire Council	Wellington Shire Council	Wellington Shire Council	Wellington Shire Council
Service Provider	Uniting Vic Tas	Central Gippsland Health	Uniting Vic Tas	Uniting Vic Tas
Facility Condition, Accessibility, Functionality	In good condition, functional and well located.	Newly developed facilities in excellent condition and well located.	Building is aging and in need of upgrade. It is well located.	Building is aging and in need of upgrade. It is well located.
Opportunity for Concurrent Uses	No	Concurrent uses occur in the Stratford Hub	No as it has a single program room.	No as it has a single program room.
Opportunity for Co-location	Located next door to the old kindergarten which now supports playgroups	Service is co-located in the Stratford Hub	Currently occurs, although concurrent uses are not possible.	Currently occurs, although concurrent uses are not possible.
Opportunity to Expand Facilities	Yes, by repurposing the old kindergarten that is now used for playgroup.	No	Yes, but will not be needed.	Yes, but will not be needed.

3.1.7 Yarram and District



Number	1	2	3
Service	Integrated Childcare and Kindergarten (Yarram ELC)	Outside School Hours Care (Yarram P. School)	Maternal and Child Health
Rooms	4 program rooms	Unknown	1 program room
Town	Yarram	Yarram	Yarram
Co-located	Yes – Yarram Hub	Yes – Yarram Primary School	Yes – Yarram Hub
Land / Building Ownership	Wellington Shire Council	State Govt Dept. of Education and Training	Yarram and District Health
Service Provider	Yarram ELC Inc	Yarram ELC Inc	Yarram and District Health
Facility Condition, Accessibility, Functionality	Located at Yarram Hub. It is in excellent condition and well located.	Operates from Yarram Primary School	Condition unknown
Opportunity for Concurrent Uses	Currently occurs as part of the Yarram Hub.	Operates from Yarram Primary School outside school hours.	Operates from St Elmos Nursing Home and Crossley
Opportunity for Co-location	Currently occurs as part of the Yarram Hub.	The service operates from Yarram Primary School.	Currently occurs
Opportunity to Expand Facilities	No, unless an additional parcel of land is purchased.	Unknown.	No

SECTION 4: Consultation and Engagement Outcomes



Image: St Columba's Community Kindergarten. Source Uniting Victoria Tasmania

4.1 Engagement Program

The consultation and engagement program consisted of an online survey, visits to most of the sites where early years services are delivered from in Wellington Shire, conversations with early years providers and teachers during the site visits, an online workshop with Council's Early Years Network, discussions with key agencies and service providers and workshops or discussions with Council officers.

159 People from 26 Communities completed the Online Survey	23 Sites where early years services are delivered from were visited	Conversations with early years services and teachers during the site visits
Council Officers Workshops and discussions with officers from Community Wellbeing, Community Facilities Planning, Community Committees, Social Planning and Policy	Early Years Network An online workshop was held with early years teachers and service providers	Key Agency Discussions Uniting Victoria Tasmania, Sale Combined Kindergartens, Department of Education and Training, Central Gippsland Health, Yarram and District Health Service

4.2 Key Findings

There is good awareness of early years services, programs and resources in Wellington Shire

- The most well-known are swimming pools/leisure centres, libraries, kindergarten, parks and playgrounds, maternal and child health services, free immunisation session, and centre based childcare.

Universally accessible facilities and spaces are highly valued and extensively used by children and families

- Including parks and playgrounds, libraries, swimming pools and leisure centres.
- Parks and playgrounds, swimming pools and leisure centres also some of the early years infrastructure the community would most like to see improved.

Services, programs or resources families are MOST likely to experience difficulty accessing are:

- Childcare, parks and playgrounds, swimming pools / leisure centres and playgroups.
- Followed by maternal and child health services, free immunisation, toy libraries, kindergarten, community events, libraries, family / parent support and parent education sessions.

Key difficulties or challenges families experience accessing early years services, programs and resources are:

- A lack of information about services or programs, limited availability of services, the cost of accessing services, the limited opening hours of services and travel distances. But the difficulties vary depending upon the service, program or resource. Key difficulties or challenges for:
 - **Childcare (centre based and family daycare):** The limited availability of care including waiting lists, lack of places available, no or limited family daycarers and difficulty accessing places for multiple children. Also limited hours of operation for centre-based care, difficulty accessing quality services, a lack of before and after school care, the cost of accessing centre-based childcare and the lack of information about family daycare.
 - **Parks and playgrounds:** The lack of fencing, public toilet facilities and family friendly toilet/change facilities, and the limited availability of parks and playgrounds in local communities.
 - **Swimming pools / leisure centres:** The opening hours, the travel distance, the lack of heated and / or indoor water space, the cost and car parking.
 - **Kindergarten:** The short hours of operation for kindergarten programs and /or the lack of wrap around care programs to supporting working parents. A lack of information, and cost and the availability of kindergarten programs were also identified as challenges.
 - **Maternal and Child Health and immunisation services:** A lack of information about the services and when they are available, the distance required to travel to access the services or the lack of services available locally, the limited operating hours and operating hours not supporting working parents, and the limited availability of appointments.
 - **Playgroups and toy libraries:** The lack of information about when and where they are offered, the lack of availability in local communities, not being available at times to support working parents and the limited operating hours / times.
 - **Family / parenting support, parent education sessions, and social support services:** The lack of information and services available, and the travel distance to access the services.
 - **Libraries:** The opening hours of the service, programs being available at that do not suit families and children, and the travel distance.
 - **Community events:** The lack of information and events being offered at times that do not suit working parents.

Families believe it is most important to have parks and playgrounds within 20 mins drive of home

- This is followed by kindergarten, swimming pools / leisure centres, MCH, Libraries, free immunisation AND centre-based childcare.
- Generally, it is less important for families to have access to early years services, programs and resources close to where they work, study or volunteer. Although, the community still believes it is moderately important to have access to centre based childcare, parks and playgrounds, kindergarten and swimming pools / leisure centres close to where they work, study or volunteer.

Early years services and resources, families would most like to see improved

- Playgrounds, open space and walking and cycling paths.
- Kindergarten facilities in Sale.
- Maternal and child health facilities in Maffra, Heyfield and Yarram.

- Swimming pool facilities.
- An improved and more permanent home for the Toy Library.
- The availability of outside school hours care, access to childcare (particularly in Stratford) and longer kindergarten sessions.

Early years services and resources, service providers most like to see improved

- Move away from single room (e.g. kindergarten) or single purpose facilities and develop integrated community hubs incorporating multiple early years services e.g. MCH, toy library, kindergarten, childcare, playgroup etc.
- Address the poor condition, functionality and accessibility of old kindergarten facilities. Large single room facilities make programming very difficult, and make it very difficult to support children with additional needs.
- Spaces to support nature-based kindergarten programs.
- More training and development opportunities for educators, particularly in relation to understanding and responding to trauma. A community of practice approach was suggested.
- Workforce planning to increase the number of educators, especially in response to the increased demand from 3-year-old kindergarten.

Key areas of concern about the demand for early years services and infrastructure

- A lack of infrastructure to support the roll out of funded 3-year-old kindergarten in Heyfield, Stratford and Yarram.
- The limited availability of childcare to support the communities of Heyfield, Maffra, Stratford, Rosedale and Yarram.
- The poor accessibility of maternal and child health services in Heyfield and Maffra.
- The lack of early years services in Loch Sport to Seaspray and District, and particularly the lack of access to kindergarten which means kindergarten participation rates are low in these communities.

SECTION 5: Demand Analysis



Image: Stratford Kindergarten. Source Uniting Victoria Tasmania

5.1 Scope of the Demand Analysis

The demand analysis seeks to assess the current and future need for early years infrastructure in Wellington Shire. A range of evidence and research informs the demand analysis including:

- The current and projected demographic profile of the Wellington population, particularly the 0 – 8-year-old population.
- The existing early years infrastructure available in Wellington including its location, its condition, fitness for purpose and physical accessibility.
- The capacity for shared use and the extent of use the early years infrastructure receives.
- Community expectations and aspirations for early years services and infrastructure.

In addition, principles from the Community Managed Facilities Strategy underpin the demand analysis including local identity and connection, access for all, multi-use, and evidence-based development.

5.2 Overall Themes

The demand analysis has examined the need for early years infrastructure for each of the seven districts. Key findings from the analysis are:

- The increased demand for kindergarten from the roll out of funded 3-year-old kindergarten can be accommodated in Maffra, Sale and Rosedale by implementing changes to service models and programs, but **additional infrastructure will be needed in** Stratford, Heyfield and Yarram.
- There is a need to **address the inequitable access to early years services experienced by the Loch Sport to Seaspray and District communities**. In particular, these communities need access to local kindergarten services.
- Communities where the **co-location and integration of early years infrastructure should be actively pursued** are Heyfield, Maffra and Sale. The integration of maternal and child health services with other early years services is a key priority.
- **A lack of access to childcare is a key constraint** particularly in Heyfield, Maffra, Stratford, Rosedale, Sale and Yarram. A range of strategies can be explored to respond to this such as providing wrap around care with kindergarten, establishing outside school hours care programs, working in partnership with private providers to establish childcare services, or facilitating the development of childcare facilities and services.

Section 5.2 below provides the findings for each district.

5.3 Findings by District

5.3.1 Loch Sport to Seaspray and District

While the population is small and is projected to decline, families and children living in Loch Sport to Seaspray and District experience significant disadvantage accessing early years services, with maternal and child health the only early years' service offered in the District.

- Families are currently required to drive 30 – 40 minutes to access services such as kindergarten, childcare, and immunisation, and many families would need to drive further than this.
- The levels of disadvantage in the district are significant and the kindergarten participation rates are very low compared with other parts of Wellington Shire.

Over the next 10 years there will be between 30 and 40 children annually who will need access to kindergarten.

Table 5.1 below provides a high-level summary of the findings from the Demand Analysis for early years services and infrastructure in the Loch Sport to Seaspray and district. Overall, improved access to early years services and supports, particularly kindergarten services is needed for the communities of Loch Sport to Seaspray and District. Options that could be considered include:

- Having a mobile or outreach kindergarten service as a temporary measure.
- Implementing a community or public transport initiative to support families to access kindergarten or childcare services in Sale or Longford.
- Pursuing the establishment of a kindergarten service and associated infrastructure with other community infrastructure in the District.

Service	No. of Existing Services	There is unmet demand	Demand can be met with changes to service models	Existing infrastructure in poor condition or poorly located	Minor - Moderate Works on Existing Infrastructure	Additional or New Infrastructure Required	Co-location options to be pursued	No Change Required	Continue to Monitor
Kindergarten	0	X				X	X With Loch Sport Primary School		
Childcare	0	X							X
MCH	1							X	
Playgroups	0	X							X

Table 5.1: High level summary of Demand Analysis for Loch Sport to Seaspray and district, Wellington Shire Early Years Infrastructure Plan

5.3.2 Heyfield and District

The Heyfield and District community will experience a relatively small increase in the 0 – 8-year-old population and has access to core early years services in the township of Heyfield, including kindergarten, childcare (occasional care), and maternal and child health. However:

- The kindergarten facility in Heyfield will be unable to cater for the increased demand from the roll out of funded 3-year-old kindergarten. While there is some uncertainty the impact the closure of the Timber Mill will have upon the future population, the existing single room facility has no capacity to accommodate increased demand and cannot support other early years services. e.g. playgroup, wrap around care.
- The occasional care service at the Heyfield Resource Centre offers limited childcare services for families, operating 9am – 2pm weekdays during school terms only. Families in Heyfield who need more care are required to travel a minimum of 20 minutes to access childcare in Maffra and Sale.
- The maternal and child health service is located in the Heyfield Hospital, which is remote from other community services or facilities, and requires families to navigate past the emergency and inpatient area of the hospital to access the maternal and child health services.

Table 5.2 below provides a high-level summary of the findings from the Demand Analysis for early years services and infrastructure in the Heyfield and District. Overall, community infrastructure in Heyfield is fragmented and dispersed across the township, and this includes the early years infrastructure. Key steps to be taken are:

- Provide additional infrastructure to support the increased demand for kindergarten.
- Pursue opportunities to co-locate early years services and supports together and / or with other community facilities and services, including maternal and child health services.
- Explore options to increase the availability of childcare services in Heyfield such as include increasing the operating hours of the occasional care service, establishing a wraparound care service with kindergarten or establishing an outside school hours care program.

Service	No. of Existing Services	There is unmet demand	Demand can be met with changes to service models	Existing infrastructure in poor condition or poorly located	Minor - Moderate Works on Existing Infrastructure	Additional or New Infrastructure Required	Co-location options to be pursued	No Change Required	Continue to Monitor
Kindergarten	1	X				X	X		
Childcare	1	X	X				X		
MCH	1					X	X		
Playgroups	1	X					X		

Table 5.2: High level summary of Demand Analysis for Heyfield and District, Wellington Shire Early Years Infrastructure Plan

5.3.3 Maffra and District

The Maffra and District community has access to core early years services in the township of Maffra including kindergarten, childcare (long daycare and occasional care), maternal and child health and outside school hours care. With 2 kindergarten facilities including one dual room service, there is capacity in the service system to meet the increased demand for kindergarten from the roll out of funded 3-year-old kindergarten and the moderate population growth projected. Other factors impacting upon the district are:

- The maternal and child health service is located at the Maffra Hospital means and is removed from other like services, reducing accessibility for families.
- The high demand for long day childcare. The sole operator in Maffra attracts families from Heyfield, Maffra and Stratford, due to the limited services in Heyfield and no childcare services in Stratford. At January 2021, the service had a waiting list of 70 children.
- The occasional care service operating from the Maffra Queen Street Kindergarten has limited enrolments because it operates only 1 day per week (when kindergarten is not operating).

Table 5.3 below provides a high-level summary of the findings from the Demand Analysis for early years services and infrastructure in Maffra and District. Key steps to be taken are:

- Pursue opportunities to co-locate Maffra Queen Street Kindergarten and Occasional Care Service with or with other early years services and community facilities and services e.g. maternal and child health, playgroups, neighbourhood house, seniors citizens.
- Explore options to increase the availability of childcare services in Heyfield and Stratford to reduce the demand in Maffra.

Service	No. of Existing Services	There is unmet demand	Demand can be met with changes to service models	Existing infrastructure in poor condition or poorly located	Minor - Moderate Works on Existing Infrastructure	Additional or New Infrastructure Required	Co-location options to be pursued	No Change Required	Continue to Monitor
Kindergarten	3		X	X Queen St Kinder, in poor condition			X Queen St Kinder, NH, MCH, P'groups		
Childcare	1	X						Address demand in Heyfield and Stratford	
MCH	1					X	X		
Playgroups	0						X		

Table 5.3: High level summary of Demand Analysis for Maffra and District, Wellington Shire Early Years Infrastructure Plan

5.3.4 Rosedale and District

The Rosedale and District community has good access to kindergarten, maternal and child health and supported playgroup at the Rosedale Community Hub. In addition, kindergarten services operate at the Gormandale Primary School. In venue family daycare is also available at Rosedale Hub but this is very limited and means families struggle to access childcare in the district. Higher population growth, particularly amongst children aged 0 – 8 years, combined with the increased demand from the roll out of funded 3-year-old kindergarten indicates Rosedale and District will experience higher demand for early years services in the next decade. But many families access services in Sale or Traralgon, because this is where they work or because there is limited availability in Rosedale, e.g childcare.

Overall, there is sufficient infrastructure to respond to the increased demand for kindergarten in Rosedale and Gormandale, although there may need to be some changes to the way facilities are used e.g. the space currently used for in-venue family daycare at Rosedale Community Hub is made available for kindergarten. This of course has the flow on impact of removing any access to childcare in the district.

Table 5.4 below provides a high-level summary of the findings from the Demand Analysis for early years services and infrastructure in Rosedale and District. Key steps to be taken are:

- In Rosedale, monitor the demand for kindergarten services and explore options to improve the childcare offerings in the community. Changes to the existing kindergarten and in venue family daycare service models, will allow the Rosedale Community Hub to accommodate increased demand.
- In Gormandale, explore alternate service models to accommodate 3-year-old kindergarten and to provide childcare e.g. wrap around care.

Service	No. of Existing Services	There is unmet demand	Demand can be met with changes to service models	Existing infrastructure in poor condition or poorly located	Minor - Moderate Works on Existing Infrastructure	Additional or New Infrastructure Required	Co-location options to be pursued	No Change Required	Continue to Monitor
Kindergarten - Rosedale	1		X						X
Kindergarten - Gormandale	1	X	X						
Childcare - Rosedale	1	X							X
Childcare - Gormandale	0	X	X						
MCH	1							X	
Playgroups	1							X	

Table 5.4: High level summary of Demand Analysis for Rosedale and District, Wellington Shire Early Years Infrastructure Plan

5.3.5 Sale and District

As the main business and residential centre of Wellington Shire, Sale offers a wide range of early years services and supports including kindergarten, childcare (long daycare), maternal and child health services, immunisation, outside school hours care, toy library, community and supported playgroups, and parent and family support. Kindergarten services are also located at Longford and Wurruk.

High population growth, including children aged 0 – 8 years, combined with increased demand from the roll out of funded 3-year-old kindergarten, means Sale and district is likely to experience a notable increase in demand for early years services. While there is sufficient capacity to accommodate the increased demand for kindergarten, there may not be capacity to accommodate increased demand for childcare. It also remains unclear whether private childcare operates will step into the market further. Other issues be addressed or considered in Sale and District are:

- The prevalence of single room / single purpose early years facilities located close to each other, and in poor condition e.g. Hyland Community Kindergarten, Gwenfa Hampton Kindergarten, Sale North Kindergarten.
- The poor condition and location, and limited capacity of some services e.g. Kath Foley Children's Centre and Gumnuts Early Learning Centre.
- The low enrolments at the Wurruk Kindergarten.

Table 5.5 below provides a high-level summary of the findings from the Demand Analysis for early years services and infrastructure in Sale and District. Key steps to be taken are:

- Explore opportunities to establish early years hubs in Sale itself delivering kindergarten (dual room), possibly childcare, playgroup, toy library, MCH etc. Key features of hub facilities could / should include:
 - Access to nature to support nature based play
 - Co-location with other relevant services, including early years and possibly older adults to deliver an intergenerational service model.
- Change community perceptions about the Wurruk kindergarten and surrounding area to attract increased enrolments at the kindergarten.
- Monitor demand for early years services in Wurruk as the population increases including maternal and child health, childcare and playgroups.
- No changes are needed to the kindergarten infrastructure Longford.

Service	No. of Existing Services	There is unmet demand	Demand can be met with changes to service models	Existing infrastructure in poor condition or poorly located	Minor - Moderate Works on Existing Infrastructure	Additional or New Infrastructure Required	Co-location options to be pursued	No Change Required	Continue to Monitor
Kindergarten - Sale	8		X	X		X	X		
Kindergarten - Wurruk	1		X						X
Kindergarten - Longford	1		X					X	
Childcare - Sale	5	X		X		X	X		
Childcare - Wurruk	0								X
Childcare - Longford	0							X	
MCH - Sale	1						X		
MCH - Wurruk	0								X
MCH - Longford	0							X	
Playgroups – Sale	2						X		
Playgroups – Wurruk	0								X
Playgroups - Longford	0							X	

Table 5.5: High level summary of Demand Analysis for Sale and District, Wellington Shire Early Years Infrastructure Plan

5.3.6 Stratford and District

The Stratford and District community has access to kindergarten, maternal and child health and community playgroup in Stratford, and to kindergarten and occasional care (1 day a week) in Briagolong. Outreach maternal and child health services operate from Briagolong irregularly. There are no childcare services available in Stratford itself with families accessing childcare in Maffra or Sale. The district will experience high population growth in the next decade, particularly amongst 0 – 8-year-olds, along with increased demand for kindergarten because of funded 3-year-old kindergarten. Overall, the district will have capacity to respond to the increased demand for kindergarten, but only because of capacity in the Briagolong service, and unless families live close by, they are unlikely to access the service. The kindergarten in Stratford is a single room facility already operating close to capacity. The key areas of need in Stratford are:

- Infrastructure to support the increased demand for kindergarten services.
- Access to childcare services.

Table 5.6 below provides a high-level summary of the findings from the Demand Analysis for early years services and infrastructure in Stratford and District. Key steps to be taken are:

- Upgrade the former kindergarten facility in Stratford (which is now used for playgroups) to support the increased demand for kindergarten services.
- Upgrade the infrastructure in Briagolong to address its poor condition and support the delivery of contemporary kindergarten, MCH and occasional care services.
- Explore options to increase the availability of childcare services in Stratford e.g. provide wrap around care with kindergarten services, establish outside school hours care, work with a private operator to develop childcare services in Stratford or Maffra, or increase the availability of childcare in Maffra.

Service	No. of Existing Services	There is unmet demand	Demand can be met with changes to service models	Existing infrastructure in poor condition or poorly located	Minor - Moderate Works on Existing Infrastructure	Additional or New Infrastructure Required	Co-location options to be pursued	No Change Required	Continue to Monitor
Kindergarten - Stratford	1	X			X		X		
Kindergarten- Briagolong	1		X	X	X				
Childcare - Stratford	0	X				X	X		
Childcare – Briagolong	1			X	X				
MCH – Stratford	1							X	
MCH – Briagolong	1			X	X				
Playgroups - Stratford	1								X
Playgroup - Briagolong	1			X	X				

Table 5.5: High level summary of Demand Analysis for Sale and District, Wellington Shire Early Years Infrastructure Plan

5.3.7 Yarram and District

The Yarram and District community has access to kindergarten, childcare, maternal and child health, and outside school hours care in Yarram. Kindergarten and childcare operates as an integrated model and is located at Yarram Hub which also houses maternal and child health, the Library, community meeting spaces and Council customer service.

While population growth in Yarram will be moderate in the next decade, families living in the district have limited access to childcare and kindergarten services. The single childcare / kindergarten provider is already operating at capacity and cannot accommodate the increased demand which will occur from 3-year-old kindergarten. The existing site does not have the capacity to accommodate additional infrastructure.

Table 5.7 below provides a high-level summary of the findings from the Demand Analysis for early years services and infrastructure in Yarram and District. Key steps to be taken are:

- As a priority, facilitate the development of additional infrastructure to respond to the kindergarten and childcare needs of the community. Three possible options are:
 - Add onto the existing Yarram Hub by purchasing additional land to accommodate 2 program rooms for kindergarten.
 - Develop kindergarten facilities at the Yarram Primary School.
 - Work with another provider to establish kindergarten and / or childcare facilities in Yarram.

Service	No. of Existing Services	There is unmet demand	Demand can be met with changes to service models	Existing infrastructure in poor condition or poorly located	Minor - Moderate Works on Existing Infrastructure	Additional or New Infrastructure Required	Co-location options to be pursued	No Change Required	Continue to Monitor
Kindergarten	1	X				X	X		
Childcare	1	X				X	X		
MCH	1							X	
Playgroups	1							X	

Table 5.7: High level summary of Demand Analysis for Yarram and District, Wellington Shire Early Years Infrastructure Plan

SECTION 6: EYIP Framework



Image: Kath Foley Children's Centre and Kindergarten. Source:

6.1 Overview

The framework that will guide future decision making about the provision, management, and development of early years infrastructure includes:

- Guiding Principles
- Project Prioritisation Model
- Priority Areas.

6.2 Guiding Principles

The following principles will guide Council decision making around community facilities management, investment, support and operations. The principles were developed as part of preparing the Community Managed Facilities Strategy 2020 – 2025, the Sporting Infrastructure Plan 2020 – 2030 and the Community Infrastructure Plan 2021 - 2031.



6.3 Project Prioritisation Model

The project prioritization model has been developed by Council to ensure a consistent approach is taken to prioritising the selection and delivery of community projects. The model outlines the principles, criteria and parameters that projects will be assessed against.

Projects are considered against 5 quantitative and qualitative criteria with associated weightings. The resultant scores are used to determine the investment in maintenance, refurbishment, safety and redevelopment of community facilities. These criteria align with the 2017-2021 Council Plan and are outlined in table 6.1 below.

Strategic inputs guiding how projects are identified include Council's maintenance and accessibility audits, facility condition summaries and the 2019 Committees of Management Survey. Future strategic inputs will come from the Community Infrastructure Plan, Sporting Infrastructure Plan, Early Years Infrastructure Plan, Community Management Facilities Strategy and Facility Management Plans. Other considerations will include service planning changes, legislative requirements and community/customer requests.

No.	Criteria	Assessment Measure (0 = low importance, 100 = high importance)	Weighting	Strategic Alignment
1	Hierarchy Level	Quantitative - measured against a score of 0-100	25%	Consistent with current Community Facilities Framework
2	Asset Component Importance – Community & Council	Quantitative - measured against a score of 0-100	10%	Consistent with Strategic Objective 1 in Council Plan 2017- 21 (Communities)
3	Level of Participation and if Maintained or Improved	Quantitative - measured against a score of 0-100	20%	Consistent with Strategic Objective 1 in Council Plan 2017- 21 (Communities)
4	Efficiency / Compliance / Operational Improvements	Quantitative - measured against a score of 0-100	15%	Consistent with Strategic Objective 6 in Council Plan 2017- 21 (Communities)
5	Asset Condition Rating	Quantitative - measured against a score of 0-100	25%	Consistent with Strategic Objective 2 in Council Plan 2017- 21 (Communities)

Table 6.1: Community Facilities Project Prioritisation Model, Wellington Shire, 2020

6.4 Facility Hierarchy

In relation to criteria 1 - hierarchy level, early years infrastructure is not subject to the same hierarchy model applied in the Sporting Infrastructure Plan and Community Infrastructure Plan. Early years services are critical to the healthy development of children and families and if they are not available in communities, the social, developmental and wellbeing outcomes for children are poor. In addition, Wellington Shire has a number of legislative and funding obligations and is a party to sector wide agreements between State and Local Governments. These along with community need for early years services and supports place a different

obligation upon Council to make infrastructure available to support early years services within communities. For services offered within Wellington Shire Council buildings a hierarchy model was developed so infrastructure projects can be assessed in the Prioritisation Model.

Consistent with the Council's facility hierarchy model, the model assesses:

- The catchment of each facility in relation to other facilities in Wellington Shire
- The features or attributes of each facility
- The extent of use the facility has the capacity to support / does support
- The governance model.

This underpins the maintenance and risk funding provided by Council to committees of management for the facilities they manage.

Table 6.2 below provides a detailed description of each facility type while table 6.2 provides a matrix summary.

Level	Name	Catchment	Services and Provision	Services in WSC Facilities
1a	Premier	Not Applicable for Early Years Facilities		
1b	Regional	Located in larger town Attracts use from multiple districts	8 – 12 hours per day 2-4 Programs	Gumnuts, Kath Foley, Yarram Early Learning Centre
2	District	Located in larger or smaller town Attracts use from multiple towns	4 – 7 hours per day 3 Programs	Queen St Kindergarten, Stratford Kindergarten, Stratford Kindergarten, Briagolong Kindergarten
3	Significant Local	Located in small town or locality Attract some use from multiple towns	4-7 hours per day 2 Programs	Hyland Kindergarten, Glassford Kindergarten, Heyfield Kindergarten
4	Local	Supports the immediate town or locality	4-7 hours per day 1 Program	Sale North Kindergarten
5	Minor Local	Not Applicable for Early Years Facilities		

Table 6.2: Facility Hierarchy for Early Years Services within Wellington Shire Council Facilities

6.5 Priorities Areas

The following Priority Areas are underpinned by detailed research completed to support the development of the Community Infrastructure Plan. The strategic priorities from Council's Community Managed Facilities Strategy and the Community Infrastructure Plan have been considered as part of identifying the priority areas.

Priority Area		What Does This Mean?
1	Child and Family Friendly Communities	Actively pursue initiatives which will improve the livability of local communities for children and families.
2	Contemporary and Integrated Services and Facilities	Prioritise infrastructure improvements which will deliver contemporary and integrated early years' service and facility outcomes.
3	Flexible Responses to Meet Community Need	Pursue alternate service models and programming initiatives to respond to changing community needs.
4	Advocacy and Partnerships	Advocate for and partner with others to deliver infrastructure which improves access to early years services and supports.
5	Equitable Access	Actively pursue initiatives which will remove barriers to accessing early years services and supports.

SECTION 7: Recommendations and Measuring Outcomes



Image: Heyfield Kindergarten. Source: Uniting Victoria Tasmania

Priority Area 1 Child and Family Friendly Communities		Prioritise initiatives which will improve the livability of local communities for children and families.
	Recommendation	Measuring Outcomes
1.1	Increase opportunities for children and families to travel safely around their communities with a focus upon increasing opportunities for walking and cycling, through implementing Council plans such as the Healthy Wellington Plan and Urban Paths Plan.	Evidence of investment in initiatives which make it easier for children and families to travel safely around their communities.
1.2	Develop more contemporary, accessible, and safe play spaces for children and families, particularly nature-based play opportunities that reflect the priorities of plans such as Council's Open Space Plan and Access and Inclusion Plan and the changing needs and expectations of the community.	Community satisfaction with the quality, accessibility and safety of play spaces is demonstrably increased.
1.3	Consistent with Council's Community Engagement Strategy, actively involve children and families in the planning and development of community and early years places and spaces.	Evidence of increased involvement of families and children in decision making and priority setting for community places and spaces.

Priority Area 2 Contemporary and Integrated Services and Facilities		Prioritise infrastructure improvements which will deliver contemporary and integrated early years' service and facility outcomes.
	Recommendation	Measuring Outcomes
2.1	Develop service standards to confirm the size, quality, condition, and functionality requirements for infrastructure to support the delivery of early years services.	<p>Service standards developed.</p> <p>The extent of capital investment annually in the upgrade of early years facilities to address condition and functionality issues.</p>
2.2	<p>Review Council's Project Prioritisation Model to determine how early years infrastructure will be captured and assessed within the Model. Aspects to be addressed are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responding to increased demand for kindergarten services by developing multi-room early years facilities that can support kindergarten and other early years services and activities such as occasional care, playgroups, toy libraries and maternal and child health. The importance of actively pursuing opportunities to integrate, co-locate and rationalise early years services and infrastructure, and explore opportunities to locate early years services with complementary community facilities and activities. The need to improve access to early years services, support the financial viability of service providers, and deliver positive environmental benefits. 	<p>Review of the Project Prioritisation Model is completed.</p> <p>Planning for and the development of early years hubs or community hubs incorporating early years services is occurring.</p> <p>The extent of annual investment in projects that increase access to early years services and improve the financial viability, environmental outcomes of early years infrastructure.</p>

Priority Area 3 Collaborative and Flexible Responses		Work collaboratively with service providers to respond to changing community needs.
	Recommendation	Measuring Outcomes
3.1	Support service providers to identify and implement alternate service models and programming initiatives to respond to the increasing demand for kindergarten.	Evidence of increased capacity in the kindergarten service system that is not related to investment in infrastructure. Kindergarten participation rates for children eligible to attend kindergarten are improved.
3.2	Work with service providers to pursue options to increase the availability of childcare through service initiatives such increasing operating hours and days of existing services, identifying opportunities for in venue family daycare services, and offering wrap around care associated with kindergarten.	Evidence of increased availability of childcare in communities where the need is highest.
3.3	Support service providers to pursue options to increase the availability of outside school hours care.	Evidence of increased availability of outside school hours care in communities where the need is highest.
3.4	Review and update lease, license, and service system agreements to support and facilitate change in early years' service models and programming.	Evidence of increased capacity in the early years' service system (particularly for kindergarten and childcare) that is not related to investment in infrastructure.

Priority Area 4 Advocacy and Equitable Access		Advocate for and partner with others to provide equitable and accessible early years services and supports.
	Recommendation	Measuring Outcomes
4.1	In partnership with early years managers and service providers, advocate to the State Government to increase the investment in early years infrastructure, where community and service needs are not being met.	Constructive relationships with Local MPs and key decision makers. Increased investment by the State Government in early years infrastructure.
4.2	Work with current and potential service providers to respond to the childcare needs of smaller and more remote communities.	Evidence of increased availability of childcare through partnerships with community and private operators.
4.3	Work with service providers to ensure infrastructure and service models are responsive to the needs of all families and children.	Maternal and child health services are co-located with other early years services. Service models are implemented which increase the capacity of childcare and kindergarten. Planning for and the development of early years hubs or community hubs incorporating early years services is occurring.

SECTION 8: Attachments



Image: Glassford Kindergarten, Maffra. Source: Uniting Victoria Tasmania

8.1 List of Attachments

Attachment A: Background Research

Attachment B: Infrastructure Inventory by District - Excel Spreadsheets

