



Municipal Early Years Infrastructure Plan

Adopted in February 2019
Reviewed in June 2020



Acknowledgements

The Study Team recognises that the State of Victoria has an ancient and proud Aboriginal history and complex land ownership and stewardship dating back many thousands of years. Social Fabric Planning and Baw Baw Shire Council would like to acknowledge the Traditional custodians of this land and offer our respect to the past and present Elders, and through them to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The following table outlines the key terminology used throughout this report.

Service/program	Definition/explanations
Community playgroups and parent groups	Playgroups and parent groups provide parents with the opportunity to develop friendships and share experiences with other parents in their local area. Community members coordinate these groups.
Family Day Care	Family Day Care can be for children from birth through to aged 12 years. This type of care may also be available overnight or on weekends for families who are on-call or work shifts. Family Day Care is provided in the educator's own home Family Day Care services must meet the requirements of the National Quality Framework and are assessed and rated against the National Quality Standard.
Funded (four-year-old) kindergarten programs	Victoria provides all children with access to a quality early childhood education program for 15 hours a week in the year before they start school. The program is offered at long day care centres, early childhood hubs or in stand-alone facilities.
Funded (three-year-old) kindergarten program	The Victorian government is rolling out funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten. Kindergarten programs will be run in sessional kindergartens and long day care centres. They will be available in certain areas from 2020, and across the state from 2022.
Long day care	Primarily aimed at 0-6-year-olds, long day-care is usually based in a centre Long day care centres: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • typically operate for at least eight hours a day on regular working days for a minimum of 48 weeks per year • may also offer kindergarten programs • must operate and meet the requirements of the National Quality Framework.
Maternal and Child Health Service	The Maternal and Child Health Service supports families in the areas of parenting, health and development. The service includes ten Key Ages and Stages consultations, including an initial home visit, then consultations at two, four and eight weeks; four, eight, twelve and eighteen months; and two and three and a half years of age.
New parent groups	New parent groups are coordinated by the Maternal and Child Health service to assist in the early stages of parenting. Many of these parent groups evolve into community-based, parent-run playgroups over time.
Occasional care	Occasional care is provided on an hourly basis, for short periods of time, or at irregular intervals. Occasional care is used by parents who need time to attend appointments, take care of personal matters, undertake casual or part-time employment, study or require temporary respite from full-time parenting. These services provide developmental activities for children and are aimed primarily at 0-6-year-olds.
Preschool Field Officer Service	The Preschool Field Officer (PSFO) Program provides support to government-funded kindergarten program staff to support access and participation of children with additional needs.
Supported playgroups	Some families have access to supported playgroups run by a paid and qualified worker. Funded by the Victorian Government, these playgroups aim to support vulnerable families and children who may not typically have the opportunity to attend a playgroup.
Early Start Kindergarten	Early Start Kindergarten provides free or low-cost kindergarten to eligible children delivered by a qualified teacher. A child is eligible if they are aged three by 30 April in the year they will be attending a kindergarten program, and the child is Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, or the family has had contact with Child Protection (or been referred by Child FIRST).

Source: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/parents/Pages/>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose of document

Social Fabric Planning were engaged by Baw Baw Shire Council to prepare a Municipal Early Years Infrastructure Plan (MEYIP) for the Shire for the period 2017 - 2036, with a specific focus on kindergarten services over the next ten years when significant demand on these services is expected.

The assessment included

- A background review of existing policy, strategy and demographic information
- The development of a new population profile based on growth rates identified in the Shire's Settlement Strategy (2011) and adjusted to accommodate 2016 Census data.
- Development of a four-year-old age profile for each town
- Development of likely long-term kindergarten enrolment place assumption for each existing facility
- Needs assessment including the timing for additional infrastructure for
 - four-year-old kindergarten
 - Maternal and Child Health (MCH)
 - long day care
 - three-year-old kindergarten
 - Family Day Care
 - community and supported playgroups

The document was adopted by Council on 13 February 2019, with an action to be updated annually on the expected movements in the major determinants of demand for Early Years Services. The 2020 review has done this and updated information throughout the document.

A precinct-based approach

A precinct-based approach has been used to develop a future population profile to guide the MEYIP. The municipality has been divided into nine early years' service precincts based on geography and current service access patterns.

Three-Year-Old Kinder- 'Best Start, Best Life' Reform

Since this document was adopted, the Victorian Government announced the introduction of the 'Best Start, Best Life' reform, which will give children access to two years of funded kindergarten programs before starting school.

Victoria will be the first state or territory in Australia to introduce funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten for all children.

Funded three-year-old kindergarten will become available in stages. From 2022, three-year-olds in Baw Baw Shire will have access to five hours of a funded kindergarten program each week. The hours will then increase to 15 hours a week for 40 weeks of the year by 2029.

This Plan maps three-year-old kindergarten at current service levels (i.e. between 2.5 - 5.5 hours per week), not 15 hours, and on a user pay basis, not subsidised or free access.

This reform will compound Baw Baw's infrastructure challenges as three and four-year-old programs compete for the same space in facilities already operating at close to capacity and with projected population growth to continue.

A range of programming options are currently being explored with service providers. Council and service providers will need to carefully balance supply of places with quality of the service, provision of choice and responsiveness to the local community.

In light of the uncertainty regarding the 'Best Start, Best Life' implementation parameters, this Plan has not been updated to reflect the forecasted supply and demand resulting from funded three-year-old kinder. This work will continue over the next 12 months.

Likely population scenarios

The data assumptions prepared for the Settlement Management Plan 2013 were reviewed and compared against actual Census 2011 and 2016 data. Whilst Baw Baw's overall population growth occurred at similar rates and scale as the medium forecast scenario from the Settlement Management Plan, more population growth occurred in larger townships and less in the smaller towns.

The review considered Estimated Resident Population for 2017, 2018 and 2019 from .idcommunity, along with population forecasts from .idcommunity as at May 2020 along with Victoria in Future 2019 population projections. This information was utilised to update the likely population scenarios.

Based on the precinct approach, the following table shows the updated likely population scenarios of each precinct.

Likely future population (reference: Table 7, p.21)

Township	2016 Census	2019 ERP	By 2021	By 2026	By 2031	By 2036
Warragul Precinct	19,841	21,737	22,778	25,662	28,591	31,891
Drouin Precinct	13,937	15,893	17,058	20,410	23,382	26,814
Trafalgar Precinct	4,997	5,221	5,376	5,784	6,206	6,662
Yarragon Precinct	2,411	2,592	2,689	2,951	3,272	3,633
Longwarry Precinct	2,466	2,627	2,770	3,161	3,457	3,782
Neerim Precinct	2,150	2,214	2,230	2,270	2,278	2,286
Willow Grove Precinct	1,510	1,557	1,589	1,673	1,709	1,746
Thorpdale Precinct	578	580	583	587	597	606
Erica Precinct	569	586	599	630	644	658
Totals	48,459	53,010	55,672	63,128	70,137	78,079

The Estimated Resident Population updates and forecast modelling show that:

- Warragul and Drouin continue to show high growth.
- Yarragon and Longwarry's annual percentage growth rates are expected to outperform predictions, pushing them into the high category.
- Trafalgar's growth has slowed from the annual rates experienced between 2011-2016, however it is expected to return to moderate growth rates.
- The Neerim precinct's growth rate is expected to slow from moderate to limited with the remaining parts of Baw Baw Shire.

The recommendations

The recommendations include a planning and delivery phase to encourage proactive delivery of community infrastructure. In most instances, a five-year lead time has been recommended for the planning stage. This stage will include a detailed needs assessment, site selection and assessment, site acquisition, community and stakeholder engagement processes and construction.

Since the adoption of the Plan, the following key recommendations have been delivered:

- Drouin Primary Early Learning Centre expansion, providing an additional kindergarten room with a capacity for 22 children, which opened in Term 1 2020.
- New Trafalgar Primary Early Learning Centre with a capacity for 66 children in two rooms, expected to open for Term 3 2020.
- New Warragul Primary Early Learning Centre with a capacity for 66 children in two rooms and two consulting suites- one set up for MCH, also expected to open for Term 3 2020.

The review recommendations:

- Focus on the townships of Longwarry, Drouin and Warragul.
- Identify that expanded or new early years' facilities are likely to be required:
 - In Longwarry (2023/2024)
 - In Drouin (2024/2025)
 - In Warragul (2033/2034)
- Explore location options for an early years' service hub in Drouin. This should include any potential future community hub, new developments identified through the Precinct Structure Plan and discussions with the Victorian government regarding planning for new schools in the future.
- Monitor kindergarten enrolments in Yarragon.
- Acknowledges that some towns (minor towns) need their own kinder due to location and distance required to travel to other towns.
- Takes a pro-active approach to planning early year services providing the facilities before the population is fully realised.
- Adopts the best practice model of early childhood services hubs including:
 - two kindergarten rooms (66 places or space for a 33-place group with two group rotations)
 - two MCH rooms
 - space for meetings/parenting groups
 - ancillary space for a waiting room, storage, program planning, toilets, baby change and feeding spaces.

- Continue to work with the Department of Education and early years' service providers to investigate and model the impact of funded three-year-old kindergarten on early years' programming and infrastructure.
- Seek to achieve a balance between the adequate supply of kindergarten places with a continued focus on quality of service, provision of choice and responsiveness to local community needs.
- Advocate to all levels of government for the provision of services, funding and infrastructure to meet the growing needs of our community.

Summary of four-year-old kindergarten supply and demand by precinct (reference: Table 17, p. 48)

Year	Warragul Precinct				Drouin Precinct				Longwarry Precinct			
	Council managed places	Anticipated long-term available spaces	Predicted 4-y/o	deficit/ surplus places	Council managed places	Anticipated long-term available places	Predicted 4-y/o	deficit/surplus	Anticipated long-term available places	Predicted 4-y/o	deficit/ surplus	Adjusted balance if kinder expansion is delivered (based on 88 places)
2019	218	251	269	-18	212	244	244	0	44	41	3	
	New Warragul Hub delivered by Term 3 2020											
2020	332	365	275	90	256	288	253	35	44	42	2	
2021	332	365	281	84	256	288	262	26	44	43	1	
	MONITOR AND REVIEW CENSUS 2021 DATA AND REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS											
2022	332	365	288	77	256	288	272	16	44	44	0	
2023	332	365	295	70	256	288	282	6	44	45	-1	
									LTIP Proposed Longwarry Kinder Expansion			
2024	332	365	302	63	256	288	293	-5	44	47	-3	41
2025	332	365	309	56	256	288	304	-16	44	48	-4	40
2026	332	365	316	49	256	288	315	-27	44	49	-5	39
	MONITOR AND REVIEW CENSUS 2026 DATA AND REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS											
2027	332	365	323	42	256	288	324	-36	44	50	-6	38
2028	332	365	330	35	256	288	333	-45	44	51	-7	37
2029	332	365	337	28	256	288	342	-54	44	52	-8	36
2030	332	365	344	21	256	288	352	-64	44	53	-9	35
2031	332	365	352	13	256	288	362	-74	44	54	-10	34
	MONITOR AND REVIEW CENSUS 2031 DATA AND REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS											
2032	332	365	359	6	256	288	372	-84	44	55	-11	33
2033	332	365	367	-2	256	288	382	-94	44	56	-12	32
2034	332	365	375	-10	256	288	393	-105	44	57	-13	31
2035	332	365	383	-18	256	288	404	-116	44	58	-14	30
2036	312	365	391	-26	256	288	416	-128	44	59	-15	29

1. INTRODUCTION

It is well documented that the first years of life are crucial to lifelong learning, wellbeing and success. Both the Victorian Government and Baw Baw Shire Council are committed to strengthening early years services and facilities for children and families.

This report outlines the recommended early years infrastructure requirements to meet the needs of the Baw Baw Shire community now and in the future until 2036.

Purpose of document

Social Fabric Planning was engaged by Baw Baw Shire Council to prepare a Municipal Early Years Infrastructure Plan (MEYIP) for the Shire.

The MEYIP provides a framework to facilitate the efficient and sustainable provision of early years infrastructure. It recognises the changing role Council may play in being a direct service provider, planner, advocate and partner.

This report provides a broad summary of issues and recommendations for early years' infrastructure for Baw Baw Shire Council, with a specific focus on kindergarten services over the next ten years.

The document was adopted by Council on 13 February 2019, with an action to be updated annually on the expected movements in the major determinants of demand for Early Years Services. The 2020 review has done this and updated information throughout the document.

Methodology

The following series of tasks and analysis informed the development of the MEYIP:

Policy Review and Demographic Analysis

A summary of relevant policies, analysis of the area's population and demographic profile, as well as an audit of existing early years facilities and services was undertaken. It was informed by the following policy and data.

Demographic information

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data 2011 and 2016

Policies and strategies

- Victorian State Government Early Childhood Reform Plan 2017
- Baw Baw Settlement Management Plan 2013

Supporting documents

- Baw Baw Shire Council MEYIP, prepared 2010
- Baw Baw Shire Council MEYP 2015-2018
- Baw Baw Shire Council Plan 2017-2021
- Baw Baw 2050 Community Vision
- Baw Baw Shire Council 10 Year Infrastructure Plan 2016-2026

- Gippsland Regional Growth Plan 2015-2020
- Department of Education and Training (DET) policy position papers and definitions

Review Methodology

Demographic information

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data 2011 and 2016
- .id Estimated Resident Population numbers for 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019
- .id population forecasts prepared July 2019
- Victoria in Future 2019 population forecasts

Policies and strategies

- Victorian Government's Building Blocks Infrastructure Strategy (March 2020)
- Baw Baw Settlement Management Plan 2013

Supporting documents

- Baw Baw Shire Council MEYP 2019-2023
- Baw Baw Shire Council Draft Long Term Infrastructure Plan- 18 March 2020

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Feedback from key stakeholders

This report also outlines the input and insights from relevant stakeholders, as well as families and children accessing early years services, including their experience of the early year's system and early years outcomes.

Interviews were undertaken with:

- The principal from a local primary school
- An early childhood educator from a local kindergarten
- Council's Preschool Field Officer
- Council's Maternal and Child Health Service Coordinator
- Council's Family and Children's Services Coordinator
- Two kindergarten service early years managers.

Feedback from families

An online survey was distributed through Council networks to gain an understanding of their experience of living as a family and accessing family and children's services within Baw Baw Shire. The survey was completed by 164 families and the findings are listed under the key facility areas.

2. KEY ISSUES

This section provides a summary of the key issues facing Baw Baw Shire Council in planning and provision of early years' services. The issues have been drawn from existing state, regional and local policy context.

Population trends

- Baw Baw Shire's population is distributed across small and large communities. The larger major towns are identified as Warragul and Drouin.
- There is likely to also be significant population growth in Trafalgar, Yarragon and Longwarry.
- A range of factors impact population growth, including:
 - the amount of available developable land
 - housing densities
 - regional service centres for nearby towns
 - proposed employment opportunities that may act as an attractor for the area
 - transport accessibility to nearby towns and areas
 - social trends including the "tree-change movement", whereby people choose to relocate to regional areas from nearby towns or Melbourne.
- Council's Settlement Management Plan anticipates that most of the projected population growth will predominantly occur in Warragul and Drouin, accommodating 77.96 per cent of new residents.
- The Settlement Plan outlines two main population scenarios to guide likely population growth. By 2031, the Settlement Plan forecasts that Baw Baw Shire is expected to have a total population of between 70,000 residents (medium growth scenario) and 100,000 (high growth scenario).

Trends in early years' services and infrastructure provision

- The broad policy context encourages, that where possible, facilities and services should be co-located or clustered to ensure maximum efficiencies for clients and to respond to emerging service delivery models.
- While this report considers all early years' services, there is a particular focus on kindergarten. Kindergarten enrolment numbers over the past five years illustrate:
 - overall kindergarten enrolment numbers have increased
 - due to a change in the leasing arrangement, Bowen Park Kindergarten in Warragul closed at the end of 2017
 - recent investment by the Australian Government, Victorian Government and Baw Baw Shire Council has resulted in the delivery of new Early Learning Centres in Warragul and Trafalgar and an expansion of the Drouin Early Learning Centre.
- Existing policies emphasise the importance of creative, stimulating, child-friendly environments. Many older facilities, such as some in church halls do not always provide a connection to the natural environment, another aspect recognised as significant to a child's learning.

Council's existing role in delivering early years services and infrastructure

- The role of Baw Baw Shire Council in early years provision varies from planning, advocacy and support, to direct service and infrastructure provision. Council engages key partners, including families and service providers, and negotiates with other levels of government to provide a long-term strategic plan across all departments including Maternal and Child Health Centres, supported playgroups and the Family Day Care Scheme.
- Council advocates and partners in the delivery of kindergarten programs, with some services delivered within Council-owned buildings. To date, Council has had a limited role in providing early years' services directly and acknowledges the need to provide more certainty around how and where services are provided to respond to population change and growth.

Council's preferred delivery model

- Baw Baw 2050 outlines that a key goal of Council is to provide informal and formal service hubs that enhance the experience of township living. The Plan aims for coordinated and multi-use facilities that bring together diverse groups of the community.
- It is a priority for Council that social inclusion is fostered and that there are services that are accessible and equitable amongst the entire community, including the Indigenous community.
- Formal and informal hubs need to provide access to flexible support services, so they serve to improve the well-being of the community. Maternal and Child Health Centres play a vital role in this area.

Council's advocacy and support focus

- A key role for Council is advocating and lobbying for infrastructure and essential services, as many are the responsibility of state and federal governments.
- Council has identified some key projects to focus its advocacy, including the co-location of kindergartens on primary school sites and additional kindergarten places.

3. EXISTING SUPPLY OF EARLY YEARS SERVICES

An audit of existing services has been undertaken to understand supply across the municipality. Most services and facilities are located in Warragul, Drouin, Trafalgar, Yarragon, Neerim South, Willow Grove and Erica. Many towns do not have any early years facilities, meaning that in some instances, families need to travel to the nearest town.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF EARLY YEARS SERVICES AND FACILITIES ACROSS THE SHIRE

	Population (2016)	MCH	Long Day Care	3-year-old Kinder	4-year-old Kinder	Playgroup	Parenting Group	Family Day Care
Warragul	15,757	1	3	4	8	7	3	14
Drouin	12,349	1	3	3	4	6	3	7
Trafalgar	3,912	1	1	1	2	2		1
Yarragon	1,650	1	1	1	1	1		2
Longwarry	1,805				1	1		
Neerim South	1,305	1		1	1	1		
Willow Grove	593	1		1	1	1		
Rokeby	183							1
Erica	192	1		*	*			
Narracan	252					1		
Drouin East	184			1	1			
Thorpdale	472			1	1	1		
Rest of Shire	9,825					4		1
Totals	48,479	7	8	13	21	25	6	26

*Facility exists at Erica; however, service is currently suspended due to low demand.

The assessment of existing facilities has identified that:

- Most facilities are within larger townships, and some facilities are in towns that are geographically isolated.
- Many of Council's facilities are older, single-use and stand-alone facilities

4. UNDERSTANDING POPULATION CHANGE

Four key documents have informed the analysis of the likely future population of Baw Baw Shire Council. These include regional papers and strategies and a local municipal strategy, including:

- Gippsland Regional Growth Plan 2015-2020 (2014)
- The Peri-Urban Group of Rural Councils (PUGRC) population growth position (2016)
- Baw Baw Shire Council Settlement Management Plan (2013)
- ABS Census Data (2011 and 2016)

An overview of considerations relevant to this assessment is outlined below.

Gippsland Regional Growth Plan 2015-2020 (2014)

The Gippsland Regional Growth Plan 2015-2020 considers the implications of the region reaching a population of 386,000 by 2041- an increase of 116,000 people. The projected growth rate of 1.19 per cent per annum aligns with growth rates across regional Victoria but is higher than historical rates of growth in the Gippsland region (one per cent growth since 1996). The Plan forecasts that population growth is unlikely to occur evenly across the region, with most of the region's growth focused in Traralgon, Bairnsdale, Wonthaggi, Warragul and Drouin.

The Plan predicts that municipalities closest to Melbourne are likely to grow the fastest with Bass Coast and Baw Baw Shires forecast to grow by 2.2 per cent and 1.7 per cent respectively. Their population growth will primarily be driven by the continuing growth of Melbourne's south-east and development of the Cardinia Employment Corridor. This increase in population is likely to result in an additional need for all community services but particularly early years infrastructure given that most of this population change is being driven by families moving to Baw Baw Shire Council, often moving out by Melbourne increasing housing prices.

The Peri-Urban Group of Rural Councils (PUGRC)

Baw Baw Shire Council is located within the Peri-Urban Area of Victoria described as the band of land between the urban fringe suburbs of Melbourne and regional Victoria. The PUGRC advocates for a growth response beyond metropolitan growth areas and regional cities. The PUGRC has identified that some peri-urban areas are growing rapidly, relative to their existing resident base and at higher rates than regional cities. By 2031, the assumptions suggest that the PUGRC areas will grow by an average of 45.3 per cent in comparison to the regional cities at 26.7 per cent. The PUGRC research predicts Baw Baw Shire is likely to grow from 43,400 (2011) to 67,700 (2031) indicating a population growth of 56 per cent. This is consistent with the population projections prepared by the Victorian Government, Victoria in Futures. Again, this is likely to mean an increase in the number of families and increase pressure on early years' services and infrastructure.

Baw Baw Shire Council, Settlement Management Plan (2013)

In 2013, Baw Baw Shire Council adopted the Baw Baw Settlement Management Plan. The Settlement Plan was prepared to direct population growth across the municipality through to 2036 and outlines two growth scenarios- one with a medium growth profile, the other with high growth.

The Settlement Plan provides a framework for accommodating population growth while preserving the existing character of the municipality. The Settlement Plan anticipates that most of the projected population growth will occur within Warragul and Drouin, accommodating 77.96 per cent of new residents.

Since the adoption of the Council's Settlement Plan, ABS Census 2016 data has been released. The actual Census 2016 data provides an opportunity to compare the anticipated population against the assumptions outlined in the Settlement Plan. A comparison is provided below.

Comparison of Settlement Plan population projections to 2016 ABS Census Data

Tables 2 and 3 provide a comparison of 2016 ABS Census Data with medium and high rate population growth scenarios outlined in the Settlement Plan.

Table 2: Census 2016 compared to anticipated medium growth rate scenarios outlined in the Settlement Plan (total population by township)

	2016 (actual) ²	MEDIUM GROWTH SCENARIO1	
		Predicted medium population scenario for 2016 (total)	Difference between anticipated and actual
Warragul	15,757	15,504	253
Drouin	12,349	10,578	1,771
Trafalgar	3,912	3,361	551
Yarragon	1,650	1,102	548
Longwarry	2,004	1,168	836
Neerim South	1,305	787	518
Rest of Shire	11,502	15,464	-3,962
Total	48,479	48,069	410

Source: Prepared by Social Fabric Planning, September 2017 based on information provided in the Baw Baw Shire Council Settlement Management Plan (2013)

The above table shows:

- The overall Shire population growth occurred as anticipated in the medium scenario, but in different towns than anticipated
- More population growth was expected in "Rest of the Shire" that has occurred, and more growth has occurred in Drouin, Trafalgar, Yarragon, Longwarry and Neerim South than anticipated.

¹ <http://www.bawbawshire.vic.gov.au/Building-and-Planning/Planning-Strategies/Settlement-Management-Plan>

² Census 2016 http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/LGA20830

TABLE 3: Census 2016 compared to anticipated high growth rate scenarios outlined in the Settlement Plan (total population by township)

	2016 (actual) ⁴	HIGH GROWTH SCENARIO ³	
		Predicted high population scenario for 2016 (total)	Difference between anticipated and actual
Warragul	15,757	17,352	-1,595
Drouin	12,349	10,414	1,935
Trafalgar	3,912	3,048	864
Yarragon	1,650	1,333	317
Longwarry	2,004	1,474	530
Neerim South	1,305	729	576
Rest of Shire	11,502	16,903	-5,401
Total	48,479	51,637	-3,158

The above table shows:

- The high scenario prediction exceeded the actual population growth to 2016
- More growth was expected in "Rest of the Shire and "Warragul" that has occurred. Higher rates of population growth have occurred in Drouin, Trafalgar, Yarragon, Longwarry and Neerim South than anticipated.

Some likely reasons for the differences in population from those anticipated in the Settlement Plan are:

- Some existing residents are relocating from smaller towns and into larger towns.
- More housing development is happening in larger towns and attracting more people to these towns.
- There has been stronger population growth from the south-east of Melbourne than anticipated in forecast assumptions, the Gippsland Regional Growth Plan and by the PUGRC, driven by housing affordability and smaller township attractors.

³ <http://www.bawbawshire.vic.gov.au/Building-and-Planning/Planning-Strategies/Settlement-Management-Plan>

⁴ Census 2016 http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/LGA20830

5. DEVELOPING A FUTURE POPULATION PROFILE

To plan and respond effectively to future population change, a demographic profile needs to be developed to anticipate the scale and rate of change over time.

A precinct-based approach

A precinct-based approach was used to develop a future population profile for Baw Baw for the purposes of the MEYIP. The municipality was divided into nine early years' service precincts based on geography and current access patterns. Each town was grouped within one of the eight precincts, under three broad hierarchies in the Settlement Strategy:

1. Major Towns
2. Fringe Towns
3. Minor towns.

The precincts and towns are detailed below.

Major Towns

The category of major towns is consistent with the Settlement Strategy with the inclusion of Trafalgar given its recent and anticipated population growth.

TABLE 4: Major Towns

Warragul Precinct includes:		Drouin Precinct includes:	Trafalgar Precinct includes:
Warragul	Brandy Creek	Drouin	Trafalgar
Buln Buln/ Bravington	Seaview	Jindivick	Trafalgar East
Darnum (Warragul)	Lardner	Drouin South	Narracan
Nilma	Bona Vista	Drouin West (half)	Trafalgar South
Nilma North	Cloverlea (half)	Ripplebrook	Westbury (half)
Drouin West (half)	Mountain View	Athlone	Coalville
Warragul South	Drouin East (half)	Hallora	
Ellinbank	Strzelecki	Drouin East (half)	
Rokeby	Lillico	Torwood (half)	
Buln Buln East	Ferndale		
Shady Creek	Trida		
Crossover	Tetoor Road		
	Gainsborough		
	Torwood (half)		

Fringe Towns

Fringe towns include the Precincts of Yarragon and Longwarry.

TABLE 5: Fringe Towns

Yarragon Precinct	Longwarry Precinct
Yarragon	Longwarry
Darnum (half)	Labertouche
Yarragon South	Longwarry North
Cloverlea (half)	Modella (part)
Allambee Reserve	
Allambee	

Minor Towns

Minor towns are smaller towns in the more isolated areas of the Shire. These precincts include Neerim South, Willow Grove, Thorpdale and Erica.

TABLE 6: Minor Towns

Neerim South Precinct	Willow Grove Precinct	Thorpdale Precinct	Erica Precinct
Neerim South	Willow Grove	Thorpdale	Rawson
Neerim	Tanjil South	Childers	Erica
Neerim East	Hill End	Narracan	Moondarra
Noojee	Tanjil Bren		Walhalla
Neerim Junction	Westbury (half)		
Nayook/ Piedmont	Fumina South		
Neerim North	Vesper		

Likely population scenarios- Review

Population forecasts, 2016 to 2041, prepared by .id, the population experts as at July 2019 were used as the basis for applying average annual growth rates to each township. These were calculated and applied across two periods, 2016-2026 and 2026-2036.

These figures were compared to average annual growth experienced between the 2011 and 2016 Census and also the Estimated Resident Population for 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019.

The population forecast growth rates were applied with the exceptions of:

- Drouin- The average annual growth rate of Drouin between the 2011 and 2016 Census was 4.98%. The average annual percentage increase in Estimated Resident Population between 2016 and 2019 was 4.01%. Therefore, 4.01% was applied instead of the .id forecast of 3.53% between 2016-2026.
- Neerim South- The average annual growth rate of Neerim South between the 2011 and 2016 Census was 1.81%. The average annual percentage increase in Estimated Resident Population between 2016 and 2019 for this forecast area was 0.6%. Therefore, 0.6% was applied instead of the .id forecast of -0.03% between 2016-2026.

Whilst Census data can be gained for State suburb, Estimated Resident Population and projections only go down to Statistical Local Areas Level 2 (SA2), which in regional areas are much larger and represent catchments of rural towns (their purpose is to represent a community that interacts together socially and economically).

Estimated Resident Populations for 2019 were used as the starting point for the townships within the .id forecast areas of: Warragul, Drouin, Trafalgar- Trafalgar East, Yarragon- Darnum- Nilma, Longwarry- Longwarry North, Drouin West- Buln Buln and District and Neerim South- Noojee and District areas.

Due to inaccuracy in data, the remaining townships that made up the .id forecast areas of Trafalgar- Yarragon South and District and Mount Baw Baw- Willow Grove and District utilised 2016 Census data, with growth rates applied.

Based on the precinct approach, the following table shows the reviewed population scenarios.

TABLE 7: Likely future population

Township	2016 Census	By 2021	By 2026	By 2031	By 2036
Warragul Precinct	19,841	22,778	25,662	28,591	31,891
Drouin Precinct	13,937	17,058	20,410	23,382	26,814
Trafalgar Precinct	4,997	5,376	5,784	6,206	6,662
Yarragon Precinct	2,411	2,689	2,951	3,272	3,633
Longwarry Precinct	2,466	2,770	3,161	3,457	3,782
Neerim Precinct	2,150	2,230	2,270	2,278	2,286
Willow Grove Precinct	1,510	1,589	1,673	1,709	1,746
Thorpdale Precinct	578	583	587	597	606
Erica Precinct	569	599	630	644	658
Totals	48,459	55,672	63,128	70,137	78,079

Due to the projections at SA2 level and large profile areas in .id forecast, it is likely that variation will result in lower total population than forecast. For example, the Neerim South-Noojee and District areas apply one forecast, where as it is likely Neerim South will make up the majority of growth and other towns such as Noojee will result in negative figures, however this is not able to be forecast until the next census in 2021.

Despite the use of precincts, the analysis acknowledges that communities are not contained within bounded areas and that some families are likely to move between precincts.

Conversations with stakeholders and families identified that like most communities, each town does not operate in a silo, and that it is typical that families living in smaller towns to visit larger townships to access services and facilities. The townships of Warragul and Drouin are particularly popular and attract families from outside township boundaries.

Furthermore, the geography of the Shire suggests that not all services are equal and that capacity in some towns is not always accessible or desirable for families living in other areas of the Shire. For example, families who cannot access a local service in Drouin or Warragul are unlikely to travel 45 minutes to access a service in Erica or Willow Grove. The online survey results suggest that families see family and children's services as a local service and prefer access within their town or the nearest largest town (Warragul, Drouin or Trafalgar).

Council's kindergarten enrolment data, consultation and survey results indicate that there is movement across all areas of Baw Baw, with significant movement between Drouin and Warragul.

6. SERVICE ASSESSMENT – FOUR-YEAR-OLD KINDERGARTEN

This section analyses existing provision of four-year-old kindergarten and the extent to which likely future demand can be accommodated.

The context for planning kindergarten programs

The Victoria Government seeks to ensure that all children have access to a quality early childhood education program for 15 hours a week in the year before they start school.

Kindergarten programs are offered in a variety of settings, including children’s centres, long day care centres, community kindergartens, independent schools and co-located with government schools. There is also a range of management and governance structures, including local government, parent committees, community organisations, private operators, independent schools and some government schools.

The current delivery model assumes two kindergarten rooms (66 places per room- 33 places per group by two group rotations). This is a maximum rate of provision and many groups operate at 22-28 children per group.

Feedback from service providers

Interviews were undertaken with existing service providers, and the following issues were raised:

Demand

- Kindergarten services are under increasing pressure in the larger towns.
- Size of kinder groups is getting bigger and this makes it difficult to meet the child’s individual needs and can create large busy spaces with no respite- smaller groups are preferred.
- Families attend the service from a range of locations but mainly from within the precinct. Walkability and car parking are important.
- Families are expecting increasingly more support from the service and many families are moving to the Shire without support networks. This is resulting in more isolated families who are relying heavily on the kindergarten service.

Emerging/future needs

- The change in kindergarten teacher to child ratios has resulted in larger teaching groups and this is adding a new dynamic when managing challenging behaviours.
- Increasing need for spaces that support visits from health services such as occupational therapists, speech therapists.
- Increasing need for more space for family meetings to discuss private/ sensitive information.
- Future designs should include
 - larger outdoor areas with more trees and play spaces that have access to shade and nature
 - larger rooms, and breakout areas, to allow for an increased variety of programs/activity to meet the increasingly complex needs of children.

- Spaces for busy activity and spaces for a quiet retreat- newer centres are often built to the minimum standards and are often too small and lack suitable spaces to provide a diversity of function/activities.
- More storage and spaces for programs.
- Transition space where parents can drop-off children and socialise without disrupting the class.
- Similar to the above, many existing facilities are not fit-for-purpose. They lack suitable access to trees, outdoor nature spaces, sufficient storage and office/work planning areas.

Feedback from parents and families

The feedback from the online survey suggests that families

- Are generally very satisfied with kindergarten services
- Think that programs and educators are great
- Feel that some facilities are getting old and often feel crowded and too small
- Are finding that there are not enough kindergarten programs and are sometimes not getting their first preference
- Are less satisfied with older facilities such as Trafalgar and Thorpdale (shared with hall)
- Have varied preferences for longer days versus shorter day programs and would like the choice
- Requested longer day options in Neerim South.

Long-term kindergarten enrolment capacity assumptions

The following table outlines the existing enrolment numbers and the long-term enrolment capacity assumptions for each service.

The long-term enrolment capacity numbers have considered:

- That some services, such as those provided at private schools, attract families from outside the precinct. Some long-term enrolments are therefore divided across more than one precinct.
- The vulnerability of relying too heavily on the private sector to deliver kindergarten programs.

The capacity only considers the proposed programming for 2020 and 2021. The implications for funded three-year-old kindergarten, commencing in Baw Baw Shire in 2022 have at this stage not been included as some implementation parameters are still uncertain. Therefore, the capacity assumptions have assumed the maximum number of four-year-old places, which will change. Further work will continue in this area over the next year.

Table 8: Existing kindergarten services

Name of service	Address	3-year-old program	4-year-old for 2020	Long-Term Enrolment Capacity Assumptions	
				Council services	Private Sector
Warragul Precinct			273	332	33
Warragul Primary ELC (New site opening Term 3 2020)	48-62 Bowen St, Warragul	X 2020 ✓ 2021	17	132	
Grace Berglund Kindergarten	12 George St, Warragul	✓	43	44	
Warragul Community Pre-School	1 Mouritz St, Warragul	✓	103	112	
St Andrews Kindergarten	Sutton St, Warragul	✓	39	44	
St Paul's Early Learning Centre (part)	150 Bowen St, Warragul	✓	24		24
Waterford Rise	1 Crole Drive, Warragul	X	13		0
Goodstart ELC-Sutton Street	201 Sutton St, Warragul	X	12		0
Goodstart ELC-Burke Street	75 Burke St, Warragul	X	13		0
Chairo Christian School Kindergarten (part)	Lardners Track, Drouin East	✓	9		9
Drouin Precinct			255	256	32
St Paul's Early Learning Centre (part)	150 Bowen St, Warragul	✓	10		10
Drouin Kindergarten	1 Adam Court, Drouin	✓	55	56	
Oak Street	1 Oak St, Drouin	✓	111	112	
Drouin Primary School ELC	153/161 Princes Way, Drouin	✓	44	88	
Good Start ELC-Drouin	2 Lindman St, Drouin	X	13		0
Chairo Christian School Kindergarten (part)	Lardners Track, Drouin East	✓	22		22
Trafalgar Precinct			57	112	0

Name of service	Address	3-year-old program	4-year-old for 2020	Long-Term Enrolment Capacity Assumptions	
Trafalgar Kindergarten	30 Contingent St, Trafalgar	✓	57	Council to determine future use	
Settlement Road Early Learning & Kinder	20 Settlement Rd, Trafalgar	X	0		0
Trafalgar Primary ELC (New opening Term 3 2020)	School Road, Trafalgar	✓	Refer Traf Kinder	112	
Yarragon Precinct			54	66	0
Yarragon Early Learning Centre	Loch St, Yarragon	✓	54	66	0
Neerim South Precinct			18	44	0
Mary Beck Pre-School	8 Neerim East Rd, Neerim Sth	✓	18	44	0
Longwarry Precinct			28	44	0
Longwarry Pre-School	4 Ford Place, Longwarry	X 2020 ? 2021	28	44	0
Thorpdale Precinct			9	44	0
Thorpdale and District Kindergarten	Johnstone St, Thorpdale	✓	9	44	0
Willow Grove Precinct			16	44	0
Willow Grove Kindergarten	Main St, Willow Grove	✓	16	44	0
Erica Precinct			0	44	0
Erica Pre-School	9-11 School Rd, Erica	X	X	44	0
				986	65
	Totals		710	1,051	

Projected four-year-old population

Council's Settlement Plan does not provide a likely future population profile that shows the likely proportions of different age groups within the population.

Four-year-old population numbers are required in order to estimate expected future demand. Therefore, these have been developed for this project.

The proportion of 4-year-olds was divided by the total population of the town from the 2016 Census, and this figure was then applied to the estimated population projections. These figures were compared to current kinder enrolments and also the .id forecast for this age group. The census proportion rates were used for all towns except for:

- Warragul- During the 2016 Census, 1.09% of Warragul's population was 4 years of age. This proportion did not reflect current kinder enrolment data and the high number of families living in the area. At the 2011 Census, the proportion of 4-year-olds was 1.34%. Utilising .id forecast, the average proportion of 4-year-olds in Warragul between the years 2019-2036 is 1.26%. The final figure used for Warragul's proportion 4-year-olds is 1.22%.
- Drouin- During the 2016 Census, 1.43% of Drouin's population was 4 years of age. This proportion did not reflect current kinder enrolment data and the high number of families living in the area. At the 2011 Census, the proportion of 4-year-olds was 1.8%. The final figure used for Drouin's proportion of 4-year-olds is 1.58%.

Key assumptions, context and limitations in developing the population projections were:

- The ABS apply adjustments to protect the confidentiality of data- this can become an issue when looking at age data for small towns. If a number could not be determined, Census 2011 and 2016 data has been averaged to provide an observation of the likely proportion of four-year-olds into the future.
- It is acknowledged that two data points (ABS Census 2016 and .id forecast for four-year-olds) may not accurately reflect a trend and it is recommended that the proportion and numbers of four-year-olds continues to be monitored over time.

The following table outlines the likely predicted populations' number of four-year-olds in each precinct between 2017 and 2036.

Table 9: Likely four-year-old population for each precinct between 2020-2036.

Precinct	Population by precinct (Census 2016)	Predicted population of 4-year-olds by 2021	Predicted population of 4-year-olds by 2026	Predicted population of 4-year-olds by 2031	Predicted population of 4-year-olds by 2036
Warragul Precinct	225	281	316	352	391
Drouin Precinct	194	262	315	362	416
Trafalgar Precinct	58	63	67	72	78
Yarragon Precinct	33	37	41	45	50
Longwarry Precinct	38	43	49	54	59
Neerim Precinct	20	21	21	21	21
Willow Grove Precinct	20	21	22	22	23
Thorpdale Precinct	10	10	10	10	10
Erica Precinct	4	5	5	5	5
Totals	603	742	846	943	1,053

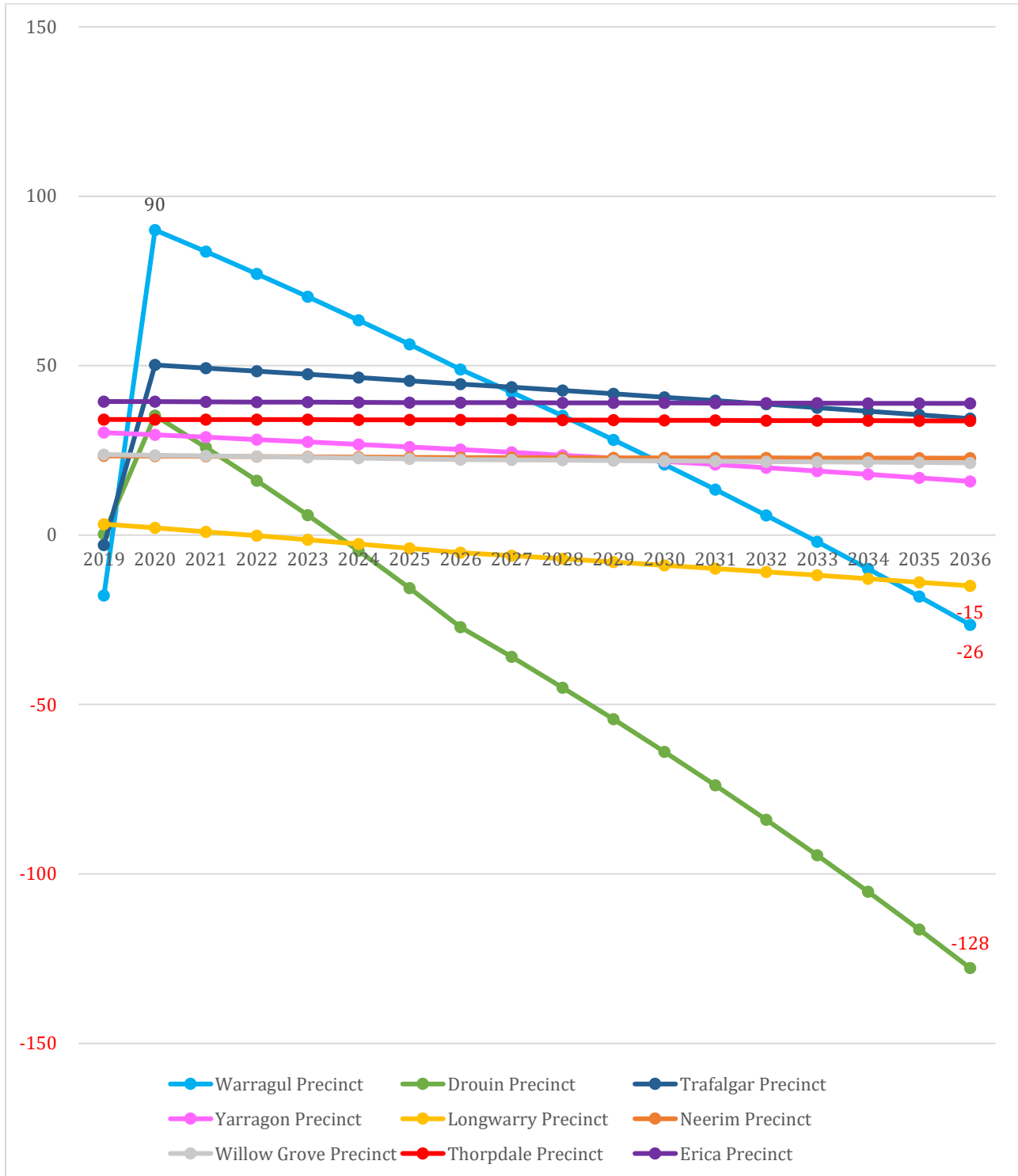
The difference between demand and supply of kindergarten places

The following table outlines the difference between the likely demand for four-year-old kindergarten in each precinct compared to the anticipated supply of places.

The likely future need for additional kindergarten places assumes:

- Some level of continued reliance on the private sector to meet kindergarten demand (refer to table 8).
- Equal net service access in and out of the municipality, i.e. equal number of children may leave the municipality as the number of families from nearby municipalities that move into the Shire.
- Twenty-nine children within the municipality are participating in the Early Start program in 2020. This number is increasing each year, and these children, although not yet four years old, typically require placement within the funded programs.
- Acknowledges that new kindergartens are planned to open in Warragul and Trafalgar in 2020.

Figure 1: Likely surplus or deficit of four-year-old kindergarten places by precinct over time 2019-2036.



A detailed discussion of demand and supply within each precinct is provided below.

Assessment by precinct

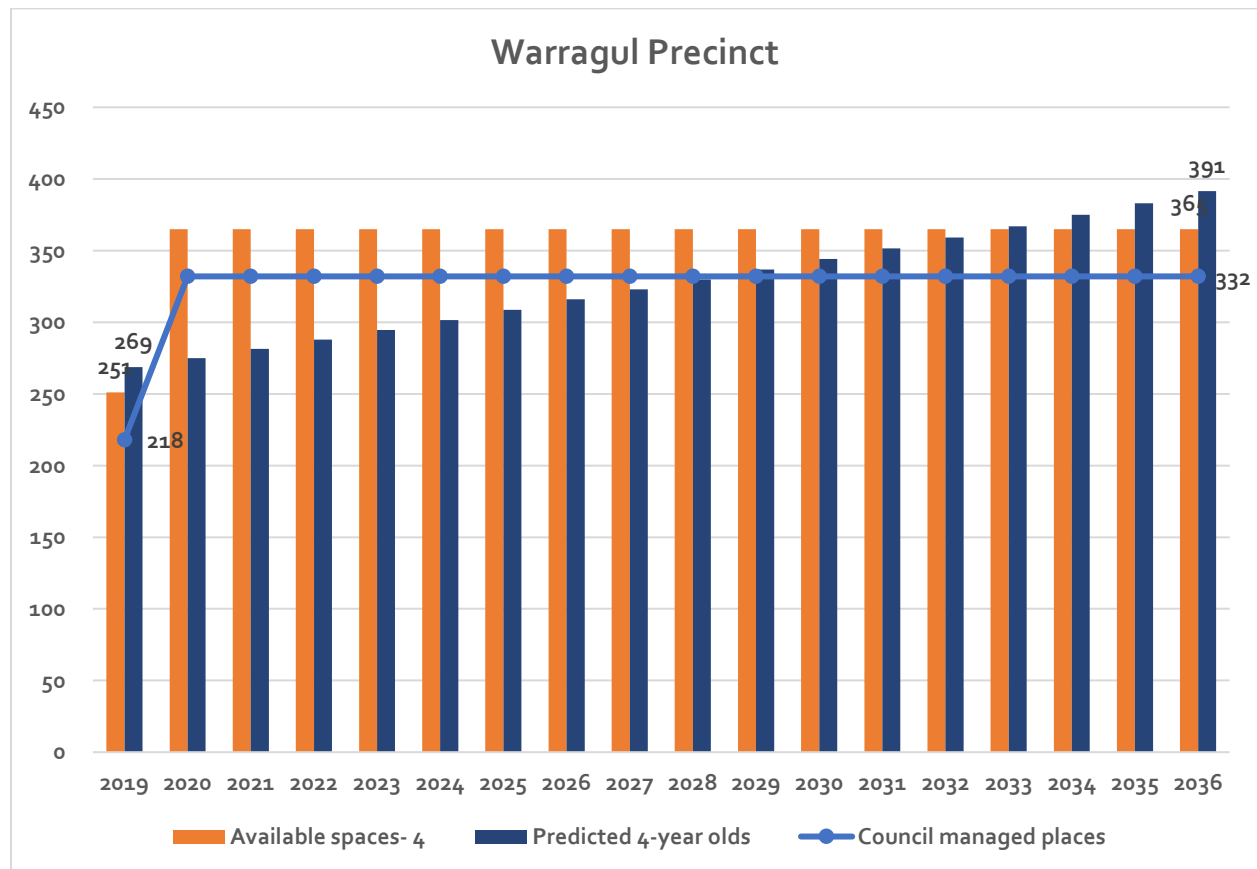
This section assesses the likely kindergarten demand generated within each precinct and whether there is expected to be sufficient provision to meet demand.

Warragul Precinct

The following table outlines the likely number of kindergarten places required against the available kindergarten places within the Warragul Precinct, identifying that:

- 218 places of the available 251 kindergarten places are currently managed by Council.
- 33 places are provided by the private sector
- In term 3 2020, the new Warragul Primary Early Learning Centre will commence operation and will provide 114 additional places to the Warragul supply (note, this service is currently operating from a temporary facility with a capacity of 18 places)
- In 2020, there was demand for 275 places, with 365 becoming available by term 3
- By 2033, demand for kindergarten places is likely to be higher than supply
- By 2036, demand is expected to exceed supply by 26 places.

Figure 2: Likely projected four-year-old kindergarten places in the Warragul Precinct 2019-2036

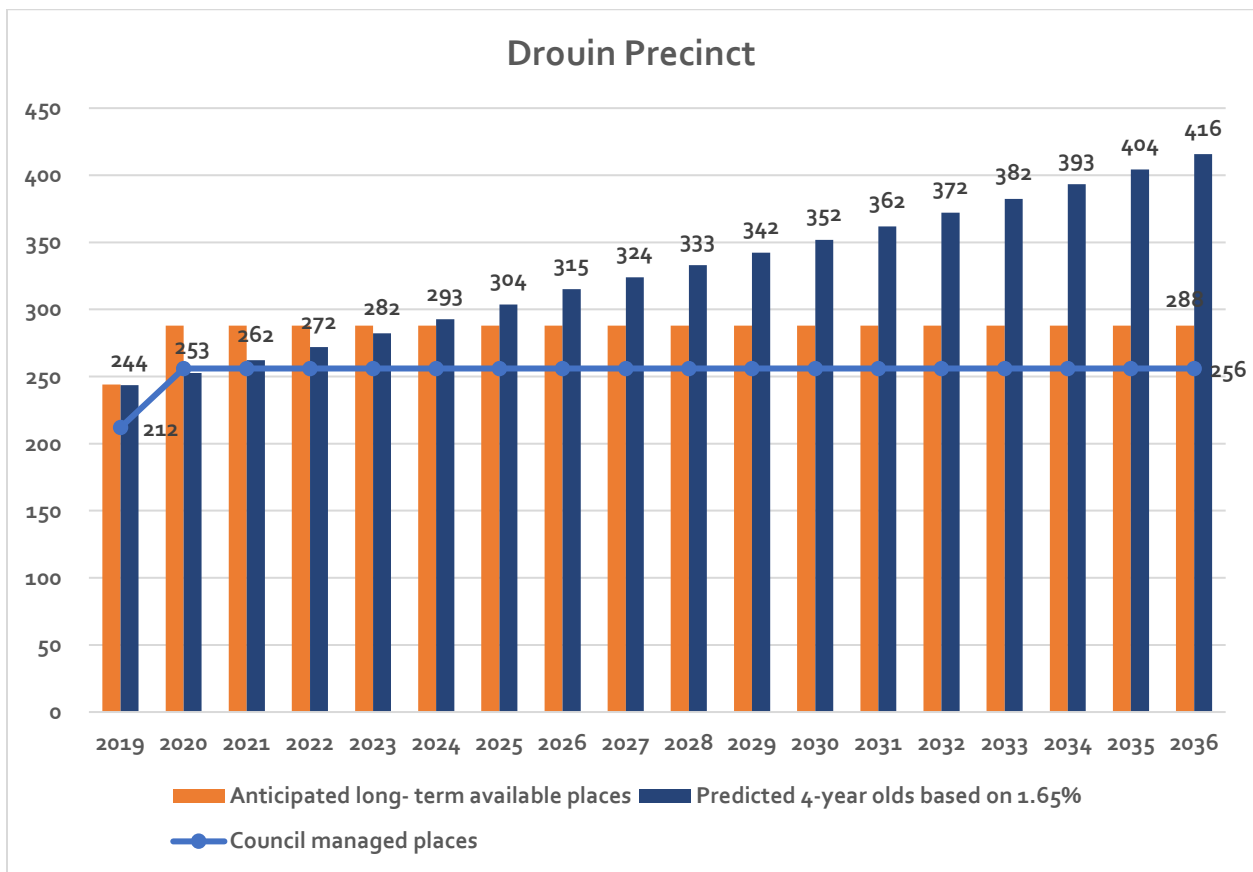


Drouin precinct

The following table outlines the likely number of kindergarten places required against the available places within the Drouin Precinct, identifying that:

- The Drouin Primary Early Learning Centre expansion opened in Term 1 2020, providing an additional kindergarten room with a capacity for 22 children (44 places with two groups rotating per week)
- In 2020, 256 of the available 288 places are provided by Council
- in 2020, there was demand for 253 of the 288 available kindergarten places
- by 2024, demand for kindergarten places is likely to be higher than supply
- by 2036, demand is expected to exceed supply by 128 places.

Figure 3: Likely demand for four-year-old kindergarten places in the Drouin Precinct, 2019-2036.

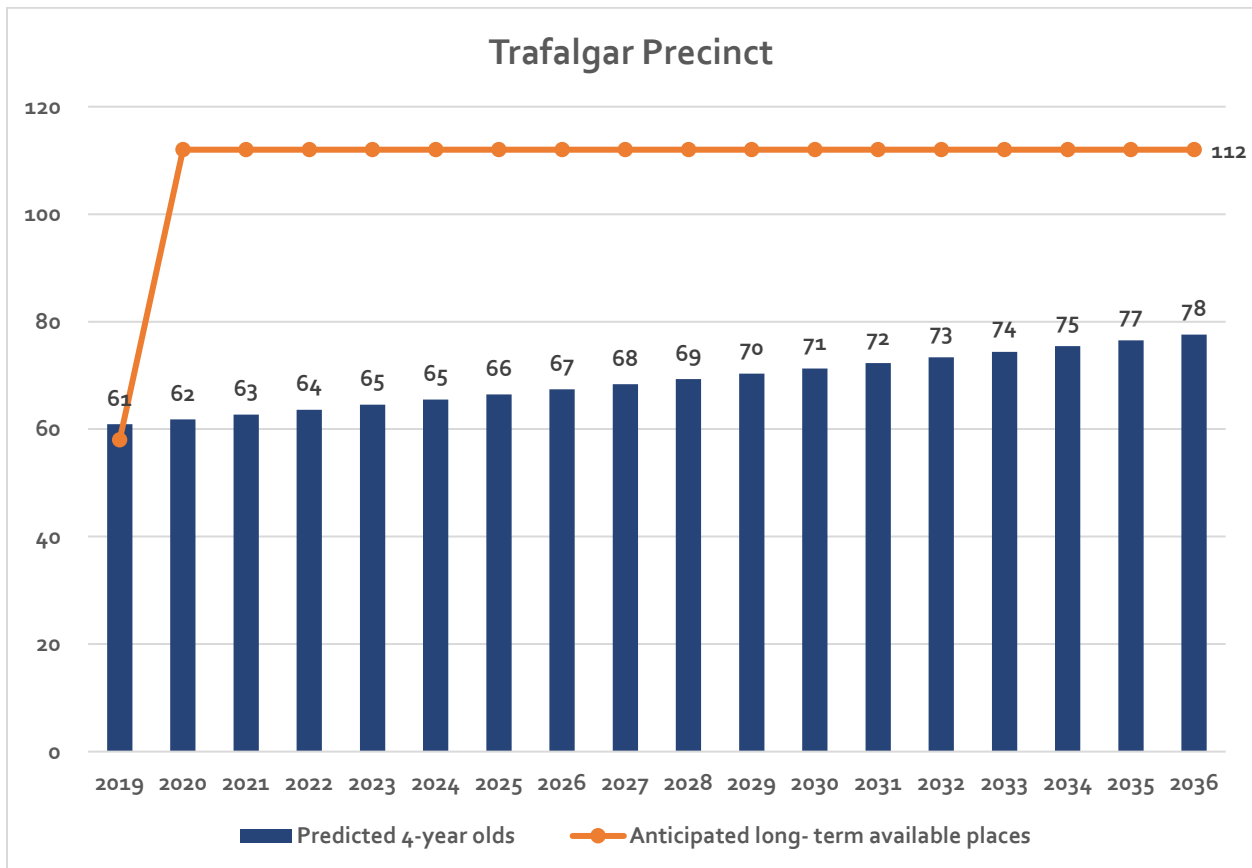


Trafalgar Precinct

The following table outlines the likely number of kindergarten places required against the available places within the Trafalgar Precinct, identifying that:

- Currently, the 58 available kindergarten places are all provided by Council
- The new Trafalgar Primary Early Learning Centre with a capacity for 66 children in two rooms is expected to open for Term 3 2020. This will provide 112 places (based on a provider set group capacity of 28 children per group, with 4 groups able to rotate per week).
- Council has not made a decision on the continued use of the existing site; therefore, it has not been considered as part of the long-term capacity. It is recommended Council await information on funded three-year-old kindergarten prior to making a decision about the use of this space.
- In 2020, there was 62 predicted 4-year-olds requiring kindergarten places, with 112 becoming available by term 3
- With the new facility, there is sufficient places available to meet long term demand for four-year-old kinder

Figure 4: Likely demand for four-year-old kindergarten places in the Trafalgar Precinct 2019-2036



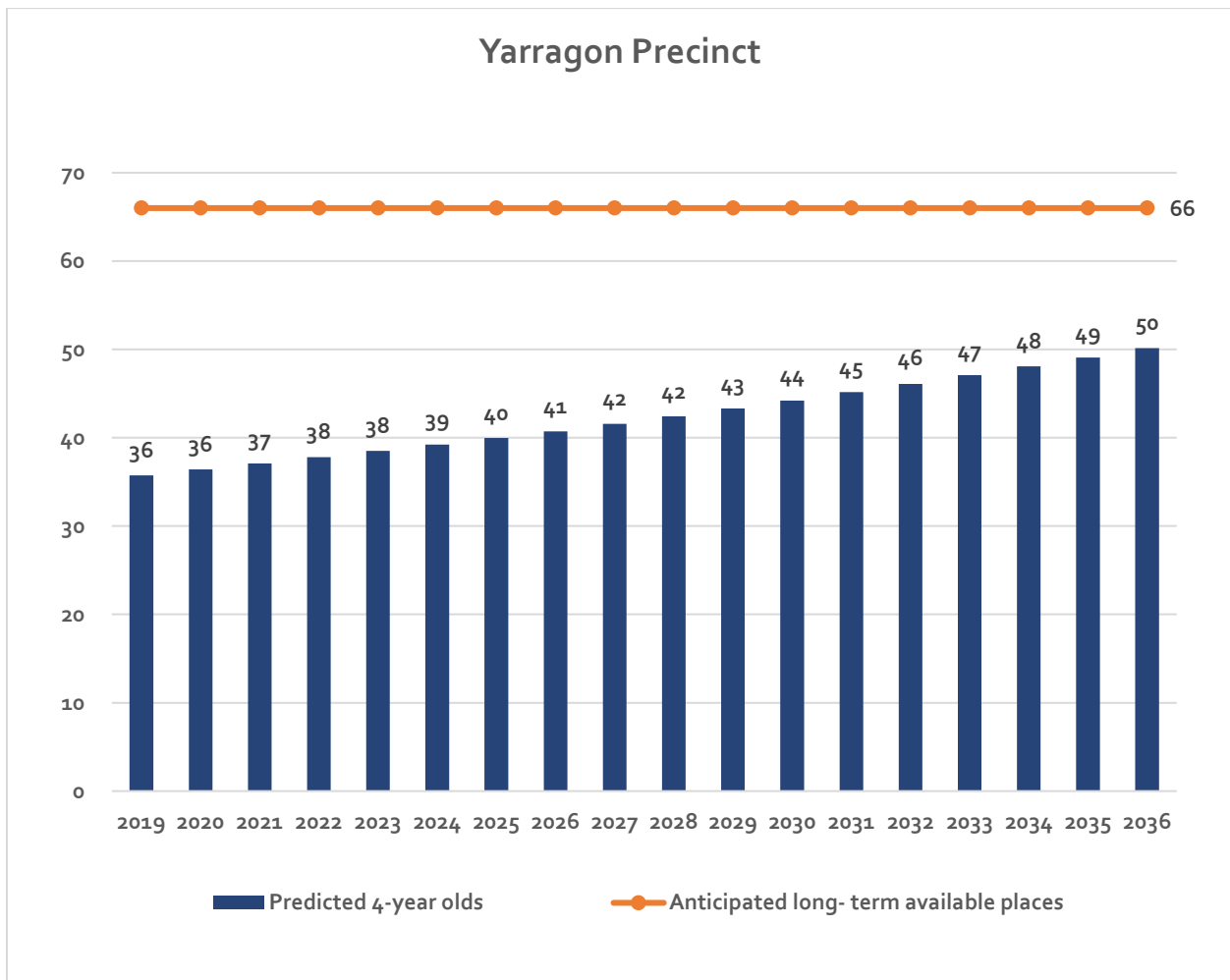
Fringe Towns

Yarragon Precinct

The following table outlines the likely number of kindergarten places required against the available places within the Yarragon Precinct, identifying that:

- There are 66 kindergarten places available in the precinct, with all enrolments managed by Council
- In 2020, modelling shows there was 36 estimated 4-year-olds requiring places, with 66 available places. However, actual enrolments for 2020 are 54 children.
- Whilst the modelling shows that the existing supply is sufficient, given the current enrolment level, this should be closely watched over time.

Figure 5: Likely demand for four-year-old kindergarten places in the Yarragon Precinct 2019-2036

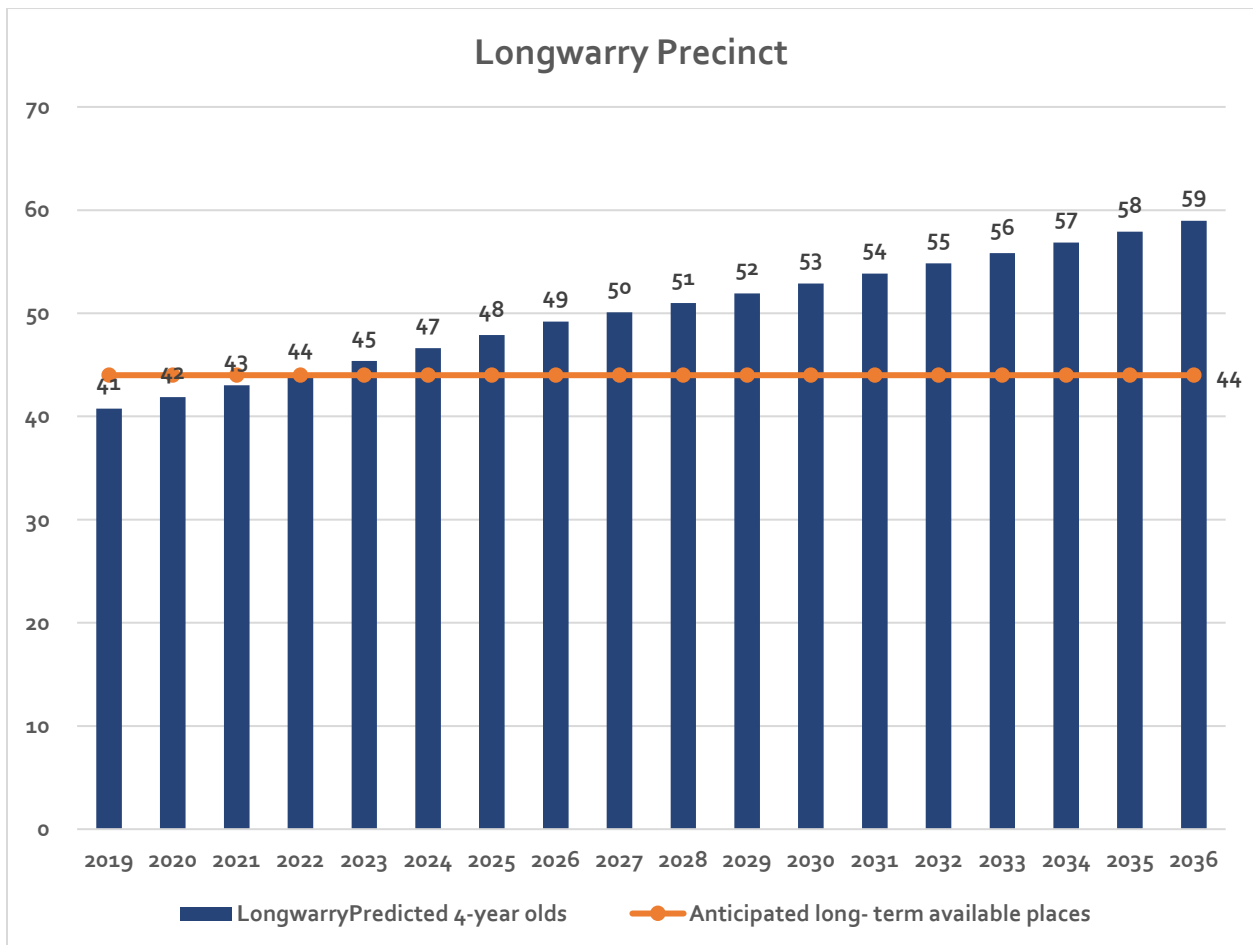


Longwarry Precinct

The following table outlines the likely number of kindergarten places required against the available places within the Longwarry Precinct, identifying that:

- Council provides all 44 existing kindergarten places.
- By 2023, the likely demand for kindergarten is expected to exceed supply.
- By 2036, Longwarry may require 15 additional places, noting that some families travel to nearby Warragul or Drouin.

Figure 6: Likely demand for four-year-old kindergarten places in Longwarry Precinct, 2019-2036.



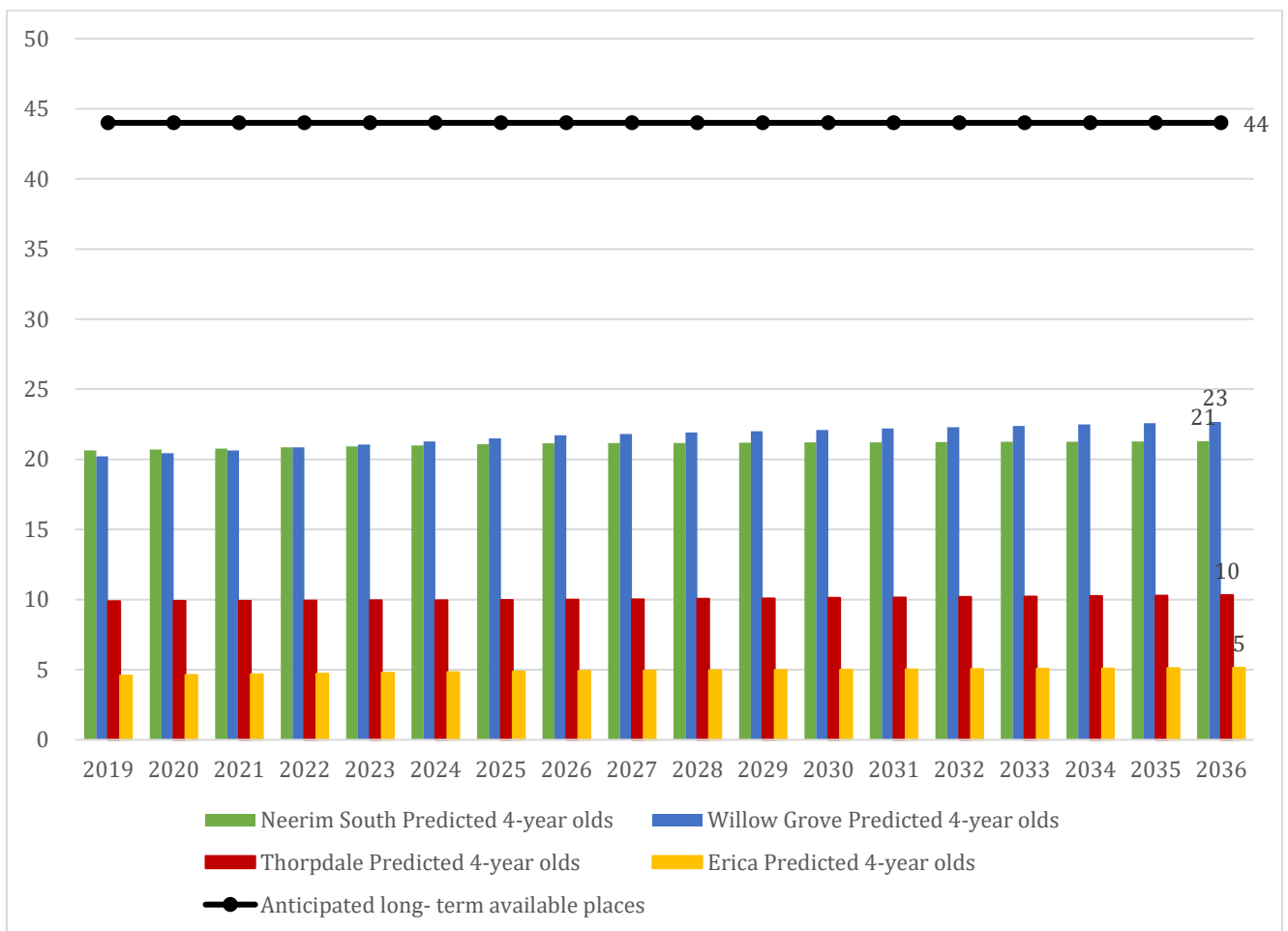
Minor townships

As outlined earlier, the populations in some minor towns are likely to decline over time. However, many of these towns are in relatively isolated areas- including some that are 45 minutes to one-hour drive from major towns.

The following table outlines the likely kindergarten demand generated by population growth in the minor towns of Thorpdale, Neerim South, Erica and Willow Grove. These towns are likely to have sufficient places to meet future demand.

At this stage, all services should be retained given their location across the municipality, and no additional facilities are required in these locations.

Figure 7: Likely demand for four-year-old kindergarten places in Neerim South, Willow Grove, Thorpdale and Erica Precincts, 2019-2036.



7. SERVICE ASSESSMENT – OTHER EARLY YEARS SERVICES

7.1 Maternal and Child Health

The Maternal and Child Health Service (MCH) supports families in the areas of parenting, health and development. The service includes ten Key Ages and Stages consultations, including an initial home visit, then consultations at two, four and eight weeks; four, eight, twelve and eighteen months; and two and three and a half years of age.

Current Provision

MCH is currently provided in seven towns.

TABLE 10: Existing MCH Services

Township	Address	Ownership	Operation
Warragul	Family and Children's Centre	Co-located with Family and Children's services in Council owned building	Two nurses. Open five days
Drouin	Drouin Primary Early Learning Centre	Co-located with kindergarten in Council owned building	Two nurses. Open five days
Trafalgar	33 Contingent Street	Co-located with kindergarten in Council owned building	Operates two days a week
Neerim South	Neerim District Hospital, Main Road	Room in hospital	Operates fortnightly
Yarragon	Public Hall Campbell Street,	Crown land and building managed by a committee	Operates fortnightly
Willow Grove	Public Hall, Main Road,	Crown land and building managed by a committee	Operates fortnightly
Erica	School Road	Co-located with kindergarten in Council owned building	Operates fortnightly

Source: Baw Baw Shire Council (2017)

Figure 8: Map of existing MCH services



BAW BAW SHIRE COUNCIL FAMILY SERVICES AUDIT

Maternal and Child Health Services



Stakeholder feedback

Interviews with Council MCH nurses and input from the family survey provided the following insights:

Existing issues:

- Services are under increasing pressure, particularly in servicing families with complex needs.
- Families travel to attend the service from a range of locations but mainly within precincts.
- Current facilities lack sufficient storage and office/work planning areas.
- Existing MCH facilities are generally small and lack suitable break out spaces to provide parenting support programs.

Emerging/future needs

- Larger meeting rooms for parenting groups and information sessions.
- More storage and areas for breast feeding, resting and caring for babies.
- Warragul and Drouin's services are reaching capacity and likely to need an additional nurse/room in the next few years. In Warragul, the new Warragul Primary Early Learning Centre includes a consulting space for MCH nurses.

Feedback from parents and families (survey results)

- High level of satisfaction with service.
- Services are getting busier, and some families are experiencing delays in appointments in larger towns.
- Quality of facilities varies, from the new facility in Drouin to older facilities such as Trafalgar.
- Feedback on the new facility in Drouin included:
 - Foyer areas are too small with limited facilities for breast feeding and nappy changing.
 - The waiting room is too small if parents have toddlers.
 - Parking is problematic if appointment times are near school drop-off or pick-up times.

Recommendations

Council does not apply population benchmarks to anticipate demand for MCH facilities, but monitors birth notices and responds to need over time. Any increase in demand is currently achieved with an increase in nurse hours at existing centres.

MCH nurses have identified that this service is operating well but could benefit from updated facilities where the service is co-located with other early years services, consistent with contemporary policy and best practice. MCH service should continue to be provided in all existing locations- in both urban and remote areas, to ensure a local service and early intervention and support service is maintained.

It is recommended that the any new early years' facilities include updated MCH facilities, comprising of two-nurse office space and access to ancillary waiting and multi-purpose meeting room/s.

7.2 Long day care

Primarily aimed at 0-6-year-olds, long day care is usually based in a centre, and the education and care programs are created around the developmental needs, interests, and experience of each child. Long day care centres typically operate for twelve hours a day on typical working days for a minimum of 48 weeks per year. Some long day care services also offer kindergarten programs.

Long day care services must meet the requirements of the National Quality Framework.

Existing Supply

Baw Baw Shire Council does not provide Long Day Childcare services. These services are provided by the private and community sectors. The current facility model for long day childcare is 90-120 places, provided as a stand-alone facility, or within an early years' hub.

The impending integration of early year facilities with schools may influence the future facility model for private and community sector facilities. Providers may want to locate their new facilities near or at schools - as component elements of early years' facilities or as stand-alone facilities.

A new childcare service opened in Drouin in January 2020.

Eight facilities offer childcare services, detailed in the table below.

TABLE 11: Summary Existing Childcare Facilities

Township	Name of service	Address
Warragul Precinct	Waterford Rise	1 Crole Drive, Warragul
	Goodstart ELC-Sutton Street	201 Sutton St, Warragul
	Goodstart ELC-Burke Street	75 Burke St, Warragul
Drouin Precinct	Good Start ELC-Drouin	2 Lindman St, Warragul
	Little Saints ELC Drouin	41 Main South Rd, Drouin
	Sparrow Early Learning Drouin	214 Princes Way, Drouin
Trafalgar Precinct	Settlement Road Early Learning	20 Settlement Rd, Trafalgar
Yarragon Precinct	Yarragon Children's Centre	139 Princes Highway, Yarragon
Total		8

Council does not have an agreed population benchmark to anticipated demand for long day care centres, but a well-regarded benchmark used by the Victorian Planning Authority is one long day centre per 9,000 residents or 3,000 households.

The following table applies this benchmark to provide some observations about how well long day care facilities are currently offered.

TABLE 12: Summary of Likely Future Need for Childcare

Township	Number of existing centres	Population by town (Census 2016)	Predicted 2021	Predicted 2026	Predicted 2031	Predicted 2036	Likely need by 2036
Warragul Precinct	3	19,841	22,778	25,662	28,591	31,891	3.5
Drouin Precinct	3	13,937	17,058	20,410	23,382	26,814	3
Trafalgar Precinct	1	4,997	5,376	5,784	6,206	6,662	0.74
Yarragon Precinct	1	2,411	2,689	2,951	3,272	3,633	0.4
Longwarry Precinct		2,466	2,770	3,161	3,457	3,782	0.4
Neerim Precinct		2,150	2,230	2,270	2,278	2,286	0.3
Willow Grove Precinct		1,510	1,589	1,673	1,709	1,746	0.2
Thorpdale Precinct		578	583	587	597	606	0.1
Erica Precinct		569	599	630	644	658	0.1
Totals	8	48,459	55,672	63,128	70,137	78,079	8.7

Discussion with key stakeholders and feedback in the family survey:

- Childcare is providing an increasing role to support families with limited local support.
- There is increasing demand for care and supply is driven by market demand.

Recommendations:

- By 2036, it is likely that additional childcare facilities will be required between Warragul and Drouin to meet increasing demand.
- It is unlikely that more facilities will be required in other towns.

7.3 Three-year-old kindergarten

Many kindergartens run programs for three-year-old children, but currently this program is charged at the full fee.

There are currently 18 three-year-old kindergarten programs operating from 13 facilities across the Shire. Most of these programs offer between two-and-a-half and five-and-a-half hour weekly programs in the four-year-old kindergarten room.

TABLE 13: Three-year-old kindergarten programs

	Population (2016)	3-year-old kindergarten
Warragul	15,770	4
Drouin	12,338	3
Trafalgar	3,915	1
Yarragon	1,634	1
Neerim South	1,327	1
Willow Grove	583	1
Drouin East	138	1
Thorpdale	494	1
Total	48,479	13

Three-Year-Old Kinder- 'Best Start, Best Life' Reform

Since this document was adopted, the Victorian Government announced the introduction of the 'Best Start, Best Life' reform, which will give children access to two years of funded kindergarten programs before starting school.

Victoria will be the first state or territory in Australia to introduce funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten for all children.

Funded three-year-old kindergarten will become available in stages. From 2022, three-year-olds in Baw Baw Shire will have access to five hours of a funded kindergarten program each week. The hours will then increase to 15 hours a week for 40 weeks of the year by 2029.

This Plan maps three-year-old kindergarten at current service levels (i.e. between 2.5 -5.5 hours per week), not 15 hours, and on a user pay basis, not subsidised or free access.

This reform will compound Baw Baw's infrastructure challenges as three and four-year-old programs compete for the same space in facilities already operating at close to capacity and with projected population growth to continue.

A range of programming options are currently being explored with service providers. Council and service providers will need to carefully balance supply of places with quality of the service, provision of choice and responsiveness to the local community.

In light of the uncertainty regarding the 'Best Start, Best Life' implementation parameters, this Plan has not been updated to reflect the forecasted supply and demand resulting from funded three-year-old kinder. This work will continue over the next 12 months.

Discussion with key stakeholders and feedback in the family survey:

- The National Quality Framework introduction of 15 hours a week program for four-year-olds has put increasing pressure on kindergarten facilities to find an appropriate time for the three-year-old kindergarten program, this will also be compounded by funded three-year-old kinder.
- Educators see significant benefits for children participating in three-year-old programs, particularly families experiencing disadvantage.
- A recent survey was conducted by Baw Baw's largest kindergarten provider in May 2020 regarding preferred kindergarten session modelling. Responses were received from 210 families. Responses indicated that families valued choice and flexibility regarding program times to suit different family needs including the child's individual needs, parent work hours, sibling school hours etc.

Recommendations:

- Seek confirmation of implementation parameters of funded three-year-old kinder from the Victorian Government.
- Continue to work with the Department of Education and early years' service providers to investigate and model the impact of funded three-year-old kindergarten on early years' programming and infrastructure.
- Seek to achieve a balance between the adequate supply of kindergarten places with a continued focus on quality of service, provision of choice and responsiveness to local community needs.
- Advocate to all levels of government for the provision of services, funding and infrastructure to meet the growing needs of our community.

7.4 Family Day Care

Family Day Care can be for children from birth through to twelve years of age. This type of care may also be available overnight or on weekends for families who are on-call or work shifts. Family Day Care provided in the educator's own home. Family Day Care services must meet the requirements of the National Quality Framework and are assessed and rated against the National Quality Standard.

Council currently manages the Family Day Care program and the service is offered in private homes. The service provides care for approximately 180 children from 132 families.

TABLE 14: Family Day Care programs

Township	Number of Family Day Care providers
Warragul	14
Drouin	7
Yarragon	2
Trafalgar	1
Buln Buln	1
Rokeby	1
Total	26

Discussion with key stakeholders and feedback in the family survey:

- The majority of Family Day Care providers are located in Warragul.
- Family Day Care is a popular childcare choice for families living in the Shire.
- There are wait lists in some areas and the service is primarily driven by availability of registered carers rather than infrastructure needs.
- Provision of this service is an important alternative to Long Day Care and takes pressure off other childcare service.
- This service is highly valued by the local families.

Recommendations:

- Council should continue to provide, promote and support Family Day Care.

7.5 Community and supported playgroups

Playgroups and parent groups provide an opportunity for parents to develop friendships and share experiences with other parents in their local area.

TABLE 15: Community playgroup programs

Name	Address	Township
Bizzy Butterflies Playgroup	Drouin Baptist Church, Bennett Street, Drouin	Drouin
Drouin Music and Movement Playgroup	Drouin Anglican Church, Princes Hwy, Drouin	Drouin
Drouin Playgroup	Community Room, Oak St, Drouin	Drouin
Drouin Presbyterian Church Playgroup	2 Winters Avenue, Drouin	Drouin
Drouin Uniting Playgroup	Drouin Uniting Church Hall, 7-9 Sinclair St, Drouin	Drouin
“Yarning About Families”	Drouin Primary School ELC, School Road, Drouin	Drouin
Ellinbank Playgroup	Ellinbank Primary School, 13 Community Place, Ellinbank	Ellinbank
Little Seeds Bush Playgroup	Ellinbank Primary School, 13 Community Place, Ellinbank	Ellinbank
Lardner School Connecting Parents and Friends Group	Lardner and District Primary School, Burnt Store Rd, Lardner	Lardner
Longwarry Baptist Church Playgroup	Longwarry Kindergarten, Ford Place, Longwarry	Longwarry
Gumnuts Playgroup	Narracan Primary School, 32 School Rd, Narracan	Narracan
Neerim District Playgroup	Neerim District Rural Primary School, 145 Nayook Powelltown Rd, Nayook	Nayook
Neerim South Music & Movement Playgroup	Main Neerim Rd, Neerim South	Neerim South
Thorpdale Playgroup	Johnstone Street, Thorpdale	Thorpdale
Mainly Music- Trafalgar	St Mary’s Anglican Church, Corner 40 Contingent and Church Streets, Trafalgar	Trafalgar
Trafalgar Playgroup Association	Scout Hall, Kitchener St, Trafalgar	Trafalgar
Bush Bunyips Playgroup	Multiple locations	Warragul
Community Church Warragul Playgroup Inc.	Community Church, Cnr King/Wills Sts, Warragul	Warragul
Mainly Music- Warragul	Warragul Anglican Church, 96 Victoria St, Warragul	Warragul
Playgroup @ Warragul Uniting Church	Warragul Uniting Church, 210 Sutton St, Warragul	Warragul
Tumble Train Gymnastic Playgroup	Factory 4, 3 Pearse Street, Warragul	Warragul

Warragul Playgroup Inc.	Exhibition Hall, South Rd, Warragul	Warragul
Warragul Salvation Army Playgroup	Warragul Salvation Army, 120 Burke St, Warragul	Warragul
Willow Grove & District Playgroup	Willow Grove Community Hall, Main Road, Moe-Willow Grove Rd, Willow Grove	Willow Grove
Yarragon Playgroup	Yarragon Public Hall, Campbell St, Yarragon	Yarragon

Source: Playgroup Victoria and Baw Baw Shire Council 2020

Some families have access to supported playgroups delivered by a paid worker. Funded by the Victorian Government, these playgroups aim to support vulnerable families and children who may not normally have the opportunity to attend a playgroup.

Supported Playgroups are run through Baw Baw Shire Council. The table below is indicative of programs; however, they are subject to frequent change. An outreach program may also operate from different locations throughout the Shire when required.

TABLE 16: Supported playgroup programs

Name	Address	Township
3 x Play Matters Supported Playgroup	Drouin Primary School ELC, 153/161 Princes Way, Drouin	Drouin
3 x Play Matters Supported Playgroup	Education room, Anglican Church, 96 Victoria St, Warragul	Warragul
Total		6

Discussion with key stakeholders and feedback in the family survey:

- Community playgroups provide a critical support role for families living in the Shire.
- Some families find it difficult to access a playgroup in their local area.
- There is a strong preference for groups to meet in a family-friendly environment and with services that offer additional support and information.
- Storage of equipment needs to be available on-site to make set-up and pack down as easy as possible.

Recommendations:

- Council should continue to promote and support playgroups and provide Supported Playgroups.
- Council should partner with Playgroups Victoria and other organisations to provide more management tips and tools to enable more families to run additional groups.
- Generic meeting spaces with adequate storage are required in the larger towns to provide playgroups. These should be delivered in new hub facilities.

8. KEY DRIVERS FOR FUTURE PROVISION AND DELIVERY

The findings from this report have identified a series of key drivers to inform the recommendations chapter of this report.

Equity across the Shire

Population distribution across small and large communities in Baw Baw presents both challenges and opportunities. Each community has a unique character and need for service support. Opportunities to come together are vital for creating thriving smaller villages and larger towns.

The higher density urban areas of Drouin, and Warragul are likely to experience the highest population growth in the future, and the policy shift towards co-location of services within an early years' community hub will serve these towns well.

Some smaller towns are experiencing a decline in population, which is a challenge. The practicality of access to services and financial viability must be balanced by providing services to those in the most rural and remote areas of the Shire. The Early Start Kindergarten program aims to make early childhood education more accessible, and this must include all children, particularly those in more isolated areas.

As childhood developmental outcomes are closely linked to supported parenting, it is crucial that parents in all areas of the Shire are adequately supported by early childhood services. It is particularly important that all parents in the Shire are engaged at an early stage in their children's lives, so their children are not developmentally vulnerable when they start school. The role of meeting spaces within hubs to access information and parenting group support will remain important.

Supporting local provision and a village feel

MCH centres and playgroups play an important role in providing extra support for parents and decreasing the isolation that many parents feel, which is particularly relevant to some of the smaller communities in the Shire. The lack of public transport outside of Drouin and Warragul needs to be considered in making early years' service hubs accessible to everyone. Family and children's services support the creation of vibrant communities, a key objective of the Council Plan.

A significant emphasis is placed on village life by the Baw Baw community. The importance of creating the village feel for all townships, not only major towns, suggests a need for localised early years' service hubs. The scale of all future early years' facilities needs to be considered given the rural setting that initially attracted many families to the area. Access to trees, large spaces and views of the rural landscape are consistent with the Victorian Government's Early Years Framework, Council policy and the aspirations of many families consulted during this project.

Supporting early years services is vital to enhancing the health and wellbeing of the whole community. The co-location of kindergartens on primary school sites to provide extra kindergarten places has been identified as a key project for Council to advocate.

Responding to population growth.

The location and timing of new infrastructure needs to respond to current patterns of use and longer-term patterns of population growth. The population forecasts suggest most population growth will be happening in and around Warragul and Drouin with Trafalgar, Yarragon and Longwarry also experiencing moderate growth over the long term.

It is also important to ensure the current state government policy context and available funding opportunities are maximised by building on opportunities for co-location and the establishment of early years hubs that include kindergarten rooms, MCH rooms, playgroup space, multi-purpose space and facilities to meet contemporary family needs and regulations.

Early provision of facilities before the benchmark population is reached ensures that communities are supported as they grow and avoids leaving a community without access to adequate local facilities. It is also important to continue to review and monitor population change over time. It is recommended that census data in 2021 is compared against the assumption outlined in this report, and subsequent Census years to confirm actual rates of population growth.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations include a planning and delivery phase to encourage proactive delivery of community infrastructure. In most instances, a five-year lead time has been recommended. This planning stage allows time to undertake needs assessment, site selection and assessment, site acquisition and community engagement processes and construction. In some instances, a new room is triggered when only part of the room is required to avoid this lead time.

Since the adoption of the Plan, the following key recommendations have been delivered:

- Drouin Primary Early Learning Centre expansion, providing an additional kindergarten room with a capacity for 22 children, which opened in Term 1 2020.
- New Trafalgar Primary Early Learning Centre with a capacity for 66 children in two rooms, expected to open for Term 3 2020.
- New Warragul Primary Early Learning Centre with a capacity for 66 children in two rooms and two consulting suites- one set up for MCH, also expected to open for Term 3 2020.

The review recommendations:

- Focus on the townships of Longwarry, Drouin and Warragul.
- Identify that expanded or new early years' facilities are likely to be required:
 - In Longwarry (2023/2024)
 - In Drouin (2024/2025)
 - In Warragul (2033/2034)
- Explore location options for an early years' service hub in Drouin. This should include any potential future community hub, new developments identified through the Precinct Structure Plan and discussions with the Victorian government regarding planning for new schools in the future.
- Monitor kindergarten enrolments in Yarragon.
- Acknowledges that some towns (minor towns) need their own kinder due to location and distance required to travel to other towns.
- Takes a pro-active approach to planning early year services providing the facilities before the population is fully realised.
- Adopts the best practice model of early childhood services hubs including:
 - two kindergarten rooms (66 places or space for a 33-place group with two group rotations)
 - two MCH rooms
 - space for meetings/parenting groups
 - ancillary space for a waiting room, storage, program planning, toilets, baby change and feeding spaces.
- Continue to work with the Department of Education and early years' service providers to investigate and model the impact of funded three-year-old kindergarten on early years' programming and infrastructure.
- Seek to achieve a balance between the adequate supply of kindergarten places with a continued focus on quality of service, provision of choice and responsiveness to local community needs.
- Advocate to all levels of government for the provision of services, funding and infrastructure to meet the growing needs of our community.

TABLE 17: Summary of four-year-old kindergarten supply and demand by precinct

Year	Warragul Precinct				Drouin Precinct				Longwarry Precinct			
	Council managed places	Anticipated long-term available spaces	Predicted 4-y/o	deficit/ surplus places	Council managed places	Anticipated long-term available spaces	Predicted 4-y/o	deficit/surplus	Anticipated long-term available places	Predicted 4-y/o	deficit/ surplus	Adjusted balance if kinder expansion is delivered (based on 88 places)
2019	218	251	269	-18	212	244	244	0	44	41	3	
	New Warragul Hub delivered by Term 3 2020											
2020	332	365	275	90	256	288	253	35	44	42	2	
2021	332	365	281	84	256	288	262	26	44	43	1	
	MONITOR AND REVIEW CENSUS 2021 DATA AND REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS											
2022	332	365	288	77	256	288	272	16	44	44	0	
2023	332	365	295	70	256	288	282	6	44	45	-1	
									LTIP Proposed Longwarry Kinder Expansion			
2024	332	365	302	63	256	288	293	-5	44	47	-3	41
2025	332	365	309	56	256	288	304	-16	44	48	-4	40
2026	332	365	316	49	256	288	315	-27	44	49	-5	39
	MONITOR AND REVIEW CENSUS 2026 DATA AND REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS											
2027	332	365	323	42	256	288	324	-36	44	50	-6	38
2028	332	365	330	35	256	288	333	-45	44	51	-7	37
2029	332	365	337	28	256	288	342	-54	44	52	-8	36
2030	332	365	344	21	256	288	352	-64	44	53	-9	35
2031	332	365	352	13	256	288	362	-74	44	54	-10	34
	MONITOR AND REVIEW CENSUS 2031 DATA AND REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS											
2032	332	365	359	6	256	288	372	-84	44	55	-11	33
2033	332	365	367	-2	256	288	382	-94	44	56	-12	32
2034	332	365	375	-10	256	288	393	-105	44	57	-13	31
2035	332	365	383	-18	256	288	404	-116	44	58	-14	30
2036	312	365	391	-26	256	288	416	-128	44	59	-15	29