



BAW BAW SHIRE COUNCIL

# Early Years Infrastructure Plan.

2025-2041







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## **Recognition of diversity and inclusion**

We recognise and celebrate the diversity of our community, we acknowledge and respect the skills, insights and life experiences of all community members irrespective of gender, ethnicity, ability, sexuality or age.

## **Child Safety standards and children's voices**

Baw Baw Shire Council is committed to the safety of all children and recognises its legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are concerned about a child's safety. Council unanimously adopted a Child Safety Policy solidifying the organisation's commitment to uphold, endorse and promote the Victorian Government's seven principle-based Child Safe Standards.

## **Ensuring Child Safety – Statement of Commitment**

- Council is committed to providing and actively promoting a safe environment for children.
- Council has zero tolerance towards child abuse, and is committed to protecting the physical, emotional, cultural and social wellbeing of all children. Council has policies and systems to protect children, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously.
- Baw Baw Shire Council acknowledges that children's safety is a whole of community responsibility and is everyone's business.

The Children and Families Plan has been developed within the boundaries and expectations of Council's Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment. The Policy is available to view at the following link <https://www.bawbawshire.vic.gov.au/OurCommunity/Children-and-Families/Child-Safety-Standards>.

Seven of the Victorian Government's Child Safety Standards state that organisations must have strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children. Encouraging children to speak up on matters that impact them, supports their developing sense of agency and impact, and also critically demonstrates that adults listen when children speak. This is essential messaging for children, who may need to reach out to adults to seek protection. In order to involve children in the development of this strategy, a specific consultation plan was developed. Information about the children's consultation process and what they told us is outlined in this Plan.





# Acknowledgement of **Traditional** Custodians.

**Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians and their ongoing connection to the land and waters that make up Baw Baw Shire.**

**We pay our respects to their Elders: past, present, and emerging. We thank the Traditional Custodians for caring for Country and continuing the customs that maintain the longest practised culture in the world.**



# Table of contents.

Contents	Page No.		
Executive Summary	1	<b>Section 5:</b> Supply and demand analysis	33
<b>Section 1:</b> Introduction	7	5.1 Scope of the analysis	34
1.1 What is early years infrastructure?	7	5.2 Summary of surplus and gaps in provision – kindergarten and MCH	37
1.2 Why an early years infrastructure plan?	8	5.3 Overall themes	39
1.3 Scope of the plan	9	5.4 Findings by SA2 and small planning areas	41
<b>Section 2:</b> Strategic and community context	10	5.4.1 Warragul SA2	41
2.1 Strategic context	11	5.4.2 Drouin SA2	45
2.3 Community profile	12	5.4.3 Trafalgar SA2	50
<b>Section 3:</b> Early years services and infrastructure	18	5.4.4 Mount Baw Baw SA2	59
3.1 Existing early years services and infrastructure	19	<b>Section 6:</b> Key findings	65
3.2 Summary of findings	20	<b>Section 7:</b> Priority areas and recommendations	69
3.2.1 SA2 Warragul	22	7.1 Priority areas	70
3.2.2 SA2 Drouin	23	7.2 Recommendations	72
3.2.3 SA2 Trafalgar	24	7.2.1 Recommendations for Baw Baw Shire	72
3.2.4 SA2 Mount Baw Baw	25	7.2.2 Recommendations by planning area	74
<b>Section 4:</b> Consultation and engagement outcomes	26		
4.1 Engagement program	27		
4.2 Key findings	28		
<b>Appendix A:</b> More detailed information about the policy and planning context			79
<b>Appendix B:</b> More detailed information about the demographic profile of Baw Baw Shire and planning areas			85



# Executive Summary.





## The EYIP Plan

The Early Years Infrastructure Plan (EYIP) has been developed to guide future decisions by Council about its investment in, and advocacy for infrastructure to support the delivery of responsive, high-quality early years services, programs, and activities in Baw Baw Shire. For families and children, having easy access to early years services and support is key to their health and wellbeing. By having contemporary, fit for purpose facilities and spaces, Council and other service providers can help to ensure services are high quality and responsive to the needs of families and children.

The Infrastructure Plan is focused upon facilities and spaces owned, operated, or supported by Baw Baw Shire Council, but also considers the impact of private kindergarten and childcare services.

The plan has a particular focus upon facilities and spaces supporting the delivery of kindergarten services, because of the significant reform occurring in this space, but it also considers at a high level:

- Maternal and child health services (MCH)
- Community and supported playgroups
- Childcare (occasional, long daycare, and wrap around care).

In addition, the Plan acknowledges the importance of places and spaces which are universally accessible to all community members such as parks, playgrounds, libraries, swimming pools, leisure centres, walking and cycling trails. Through the engagement program, the importance of these facilities and spaces to families and children, has been highlighted.



## Key findings

**Council's planning framework** acknowledges Council has an important role in planning for and supporting early years services and infrastructure. Council recognises the challenges associated with responding to the State Government's early years reform agenda and will need to consider the extent of its future footprint in providing infrastructure for kindergarten.

**Council has an extensive role in providing infrastructure which supports early years services** including 11 facilities and sites either owned by Council or leased by Council to support the delivery of kindergarten, and 8 sites where MCH services are or can be delivered from.

- Kindergarten is delivered from 4 school sites and Council is the lessee with maintenance and infrastructure renewal obligations.
- Two kindergartens operate from community halls (Willow Grove and Thorpdale). The committee of management at Willow Grove has declined to provide facility past 2025. There is potential for this to occur at Thorpdale.
- Several Council owned buildings are identified as being old, in poor condition or with functionality challenges including Mary Beck Pre-School in Neerim South and Grace Berglund Kindergarten in Warragul, and MCH facilities in Trafalgar, Yarragon, Neerim South and Erica, although there is very low demand in Erica.
- There are multiple single room kindergartens and the introduction of 30 hours of 4 year old kindergarten will increase the need for dual room kindergartens.
- Playgroups operate from a range of spaces and places, many of which are not Council owned e.g. schools, churches, and community halls. While Council does not need to be solely responsible for providing infrastructure for playgroups, new early years infrastructure should ideally provide spaces to support playgroups.

**The demand for early years services, supports and infrastructure will increase significantly** because of population growth and sector reforms for kindergarten and MCH. The communities where increased demand will be highest are **Warragul and Drouin**, but also Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma and Trafalgar – Trafalgar East. Communities where limited or no early years services are available also rely heavily upon the larger urban townships to access services.

- **Kindergarten:** Baw Baw families prefer accessing kindergarten in their local town and prefer sessional kindergarten over kindergarten integrated with childcare (90% of children attended sessional kindergarten in 2022). If these preferences remain constant, **up to 29 additional kindergarten program rooms** will be needed to support sessional kindergarten in Baw Baw Shire by 2032.
- **Universal MCH:** The existing supply of MCH consulting spaces will meet the current and medium to long term needs of the community. Additional space will be required in Drouin from 2036 and Warragul from 2038 and consideration needs to be given to the distribution the service in Warragul and Drouin.
- **Playgroup:** Demand for community playgroups is likely to increase as the population grows with the largest increase likely to occur in Warragul and Drouin. There is some indication community playgroups find it difficult to access facilities when needed.
- **Childcare:** Access to childcare is difficult for families in many communities across Baw Baw Shire. Childcare is not available in 3 planning areas – Trafalgar South – Yarragon South and District, Mount Baw Baw – Willow Grove and District, and Neerim South – Noojee and District. These communities rely upon being able to access childcare in neighbouring areas which already experience high and unmet demand.

**Making sure spaces and places are welcoming and accessible.** With increasing diversity in our community and more children presenting with complex needs and developmental vulnerabilities, it is particularly important to think about how we create spaces which are welcoming and accessible, of a community scale, and support the diverse needs and abilities of children and families.

**Using early years infrastructure effectively to respond to the needs of our communities.**

Many kindergarten services and facilities in Baw Baw Shire operate below licensed capacity because of difficulties securing and retaining staff, viability issues, concerns about the quality of education outcomes, family preferences for smaller group sizes, and the functionality of spaces.

The relationships and agreements between Council and kindergarten service providers are key to finding solutions which acknowledge the challenges and constraints service providers experience, and the need for spaces to be used to enable all children to access kindergarten. Council's Kindergarten Central Registration System is highly valued by early years providers and the community and helps to facilitate efficient use of kindergarten program rooms.

There is opportunity to have a more consistent and planned approach to the use and management of early years spaces, to embed family support, community, and allied health services more effectively into facilities.

**Leisure and community facilities.** Parks and playgrounds, swimming pools, leisure centres, libraries and community events are highly valued by families and are used or participated in often. The things families and children would like to see improved about these facilities are:

- **For parks and playgrounds** to offer more diverse, challenging, interesting, nature based, accessible, and inclusive play spaces. The age and poor condition of play spaces and parks, the lack of shade and play spaces not supporting children with additional needs and older children are key concerns.
- **For libraries** to be larger, more contemporary, and offer improved amenities.
- **For swimming pools and leisure centres** to be larger and offer more fun / play facilities. Children particularly love water play including water parks and water slides. The lack of access to swimming lessons, is a key concern for families which is likely to be linked to small size of facilities.



## Priority areas and recommendations

Future planning for and decision making about early years infrastructure will be guided by:

- Priority areas of focus
- Recommendations for Baw Baw Shire as a whole and by planning area.

Priority area	No.	Recommendation
Early years facilities for today and the future	1.1	<p>Explore and articulate Council's preferred response to the kindergarten reforms addressing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent of involvement Council proposes to have in the kindergarten space.</li> <li>• The extent of the capital contribution Council is willing and able to make to the delivery of new kindergarten infrastructure.</li> <li>• Council's future role in relation to kindergartens on school sites i.e. is Council prepared to continue taking on the role of lessee for the sites and the consequent maintenance and renewal responsibilities.</li> </ul>
	1.2	<p>Undertake a more detailed assessment of options to redevelop or expand existing kindergarten and early years sites to address future demand for kindergarten in Baw Baw Shire.</p> <p>The assessment should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify options, the strengths and limitations of each option, potential costs, the recommended direction and timelines.</li> <li>• Consider options for alternate sites and facilities to accommodate kindergarten infrastructure.</li> </ul> <p>The primary purpose of the assessment will be to identify a pipeline of projects to inform Council's long term financial plan and the partnership agreement with the Victorian School Building Authority.</p>
	1.3	<p>Where early years infrastructure is expanded or redeveloped, explore opportunities to incorporate multipurpose community activity space to accommodate community and supported playgroups, new parent groups, children's programs etc. Important components of these spaces will be having connected indoor and outdoor space, storage, amenities, and simple kitchen facilities.</p>
	1.4	<p>Review data annually about kindergarten participation and supply, and population projection data to identify any significant changes in demand and supply. Where a significant change has occurred, a more detailed review will be undertaken e.g. upon release of new ABS Census data.</p>

Priority area	No.	Recommendation
Strengthening how well facilities are used and activated	2.1	Work with kindergarten service providers to identify opportunities and explore the viability of offering before and after kindergarten care.
	2.2	Explore opportunities to activate community spaces with early years activities and services e.g. consulting rooms being used for allied health or family support services when they are not otherwise in use, community halls accommodating playgroups or new parent groups. As part of this, lease and license arrangements will need to be reviewed or considered.
	2.3	Review fees and charges arrangements for early years facilities, identifying where changes are needed to respond to operating and maintenance costs and / or facilitate increased use of spaces.
Spaces are welcoming and safe for all children and families	3.1	Prepare a toolkit to support Council and developers when designing and developing open space and play spaces, to better respond the needs and aspiration of families and children. Offering diverse, challenging, interesting, nature based, accessible, and inclusive play spaces is key.
	3.2	Develop a toolkit to support Council and its partners when designing community facilities and public spaces e.g. what to think about in relation to the needs of families and children, child safe considerations, templates, ideas about how to engage effectively, case studies etc.
Working together to maximise outcomes	4.1	<p>Advocate to the Victorian State Government about the need for a realistic and place-based assessment of future kindergarten demand. Key elements of the advocacy should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not being able to achieve quality education outcomes when licensed capacity is as high as 33 children.</li> <li>• The strong preferences families in Baw Baw Shire have for sessional kindergarten and unrealistic expectations about the uptake of kindergarten integrated with childcare.</li> <li>• The importance of families being able to access kindergarten in their local community or close to their local community to maximise accessibility.</li> <li>• Reducing the capacity multiplier used to assess the number of places available in long daycare to support the delivery of funded 3 and 4 year old kindergarten in Baw Baw Shire.</li> </ul>
	4.2	Advocate to the Victorian State Government for the development of kindergarten infrastructure as part of future schools planned in Baw Baw Shire.
	4.3	Advocate for the increased provision of childcare throughout Baw Baw Shire.

Recommendations by planning area are provided in section 7 of this report.

## SECTION 1:

# Introduction.

## 1.1 What is early years infrastructure?

Early Years Infrastructure is typically facilities and spaces where targeted services or programs are delivered from to support children aged 0 – 6 years and their families. This plan has a particular focus upon facilities and spaces supporting the delivery of kindergarten services because of the significant reform occurring in this space. It also considers at a high level:

- Maternal and child health services (MCH)
- Community and supported playgroups
- Childcare (occasional, long daycare, and wrap around care).



The facilities or spaces may support a specific service or program such as kindergarten, or could be shared or multi-use e.g. a room might support kindergarten, before and after kindergarten care, and playgroups. The facilities are often publicly owned, but may also be owned by schools, religious organisations or be privately owned and operated, particularly in the case of childcare and kindergarten.

Other early years services and programs which are often supported by public infrastructure include:

- Immunisation
- Toy libraries
- Parent or family support programs
- Allied health services.

There are also many facilities and spaces which are universally accessible to the whole community, and highly valued and used extensively by children and families. Key examples include:

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

Council's investment in these facilities and spaces is just as important as its investment in targeted early years infrastructure. While this Plan concentrates upon infrastructure which wholly or partially supports early years services and programs, the Plan also acknowledges the importance of these places and spaces for children and families.

## **1.2 Why an Early Years Infrastructure Plan?**

Council and the community have a strong focus upon enhancing health and wellbeing, improving access to services, and providing community infrastructure which supports sustainable communities and is responsive to changing community needs. The provision of infrastructure which facilitates the delivery of services, programs and activities for families and children, is key to Council delivering on these commitments.

Baw Baw Shire Council is a significant provider of facilities and spaces supporting the delivery of kindergarten, MCH, and playgroups. Council also has a role in directly delivering MCH and supported playgroup services.

While Council does not deliver kindergarten services, it is responsible for 10 facilities and sites with over 500 licensed places where kindergarten is delivered. This includes 4 facilities on school sites where Council holds the lease and is responsible for appointing an early year's manager and for maintenance of the facility.

This Infrastructure Plan is designed to guide Council in future planning for the maintenance, renewal, and development of infrastructure to support the delivery of early years services, that are contemporary and responsive to the needs of children and families. The Plan is focused upon infrastructure owned, operated, or supported by Baw Baw Shire Council, but also considers the impact of privately operated kindergarten and childcare services.

## 1.3 Scope of the Plan

The Early Years Infrastructure Plan is informed by:

- The strategic and policy context for the provision and operation of early years infrastructure in Baw Baw Shire.
- The demographic profile of the Baw Baw community, particularly children and families.
- The early years infrastructure available in Baw Baw Shire, its condition, functionality, accessibility, and location.
- The results from a program of consultation and engagement with children, parents and carers, service providers, Council officers and Council's Early Years Advisory Committee.
- An assessment of current and future demand for early years services and infrastructure in Baw Baw Shire concentrating upon kindergarten, MCH, playgroups and childcare.

As noted previously, the Plan focuses upon the future need for infrastructure to support kindergarten services, but also considers at a high level the need for infrastructure for maternal and child health, playgroups, childcare and universally accessible infrastructure such as parks and playgrounds.

The Plan considers the current and future early years' service and infrastructure needs across eight planning areas in Baw Baw Shire, aligning the planning areas with the four SA2 Census catchments typically used by the State Government to assess demand for kindergarten services and infrastructure. **Table 1.1** below identifies the 8 planning areas and their relationship to the SA2 catchments.

Planning catchment	SA2
<b>Warragul and District</b> Includes the smaller catchments of Warragul North and Warragul South	Warragul
<b>Drouin and District</b> Includes the smaller catchments of Drouin North, Drouin South, & Drouin West	Drouin
<b>Longwarry – Longwarry North</b>	
<b>Trafalgar – Trafalgar East</b>	Trafalgar
<b>Trafalgar South – Yarragon South and District (Inc. Thorpdale)</b>	
<b>Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma</b>	
<b>Mount Baw Baw – Willow Grove and District (Inc. Erica)</b>	Mount Baw Baw
<b>Neerim South – Noojee and District</b>	

**Table 1.1:** Baw Baw Shire planning areas and relationship to SA2 Census catchment, October 2023

The Plan identifies priority areas and recommended actions to guide Council in responding to current and emerging needs for early years services and infrastructure.



**SECTION 2:**

# **Strategic and community context.**



## 2.1 Strategic and policy context

Children and families are acknowledged by all levels government as being integral to building strong communities. Understanding their needs and aspirations, having access to quality services, and being able to be active participants in community life, underpins planning for early years services and infrastructure.

### Federal Government

#### National Quality Standard

For early childhood education and care and outside school hours care

#### Productivity Commission

Inquiry into early childhood education and care



### State Government

#### Best Start Best Life reform

Universal access to 15 hours of funded 3-year-old kindergarten and 30 hours of funded 4-year-old kindergarten

#### Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan (KISP)

#### Early Childhood Reform Plan

Expansion to maternal and child health services



### Baw Baw Shire Council

#### Community Vision:

the next 20 years and beyond (2021)



#### Council Plan 2021 – 2025



#### Municipal Early Years Plan 2024 – 2027



#### Municipal Health & Wellbeing Plan 2021 – 2025



#### Municipal Early Infrastructure Plan

## Commonwealth and State policy initiatives

**Federally**, the Productivity Commission (in 2023) is examining the early childhood education and care sector (centre-based day care, preschools, family day care, outside school hours care and in home care), seeking to understand the cost and availability barriers effecting the sector, and ways to improve outcomes for children and families. Early childhood care is identified by the Government as a 'powerful lever for increasing workforce participation' along with providing 'important developmental, social, and educational benefits for children'.

**The Victorian State Government** is introducing a range of reforms impacting significantly upon the provision of Kindergarten and Maternal and Child Health services and infrastructure over the next decade. Key policy initiatives are:

- **The reform occurring in 3 and 4 year old kindergarten** including:
  - The introduction of universal access to 15 hours of funded 3 year old kindergarten to be rolled out through a staged approach between 2022 and 2029. Where services have the capacity or the infrastructure is available, the move to a 15-hour program for 3 year old kindergarten is happening more quickly.
  - The introduction of 30 hours of 4 year old kindergarten (pre-prep) through a staged approach between 2025 and 2032.

Both changes will significantly increase the demand for kindergarten and in many locations will require additional infrastructure to be developed. This is particularly relevant to communities like Baw Baw Shire where significant population growth is projected over the next 10 – 20 years.

- **The reform occurring in Maternal and Child Health services** which includes an increase in key ages and stages hours per child from 6.45 hours to 8 hours, increased investment in parenting supports, expansion of Enhanced Maternal and Child Health programs, additional resourcing to address the risk of family violence, flexible funding to support people experiencing vulnerabilities, investment in workforce development and attraction and improvements to the Maternal and Child Health line, expansion of the supported playgroup program, specific initiatives to support Koori families and children, additional support for children with a disability.

While additional funding has been committed by the State Government to support the delivery of these initiatives, local government is being asked to undertake substantial service and infrastructure planning, commit additional funding, take responsibility for infrastructure built on State Government land, and facilitate securing a workforce to implement service delivery and reform changes. This is all within the context of competing demand for the resources Council has available and rate capping implemented by the State Government.



## Local policy and planning priorities

Council regularly undertakes extensive planning to set out the key social, economic and sustainability aspirations for Baw Baw Shire and its community. Priorities for the community include:

- A focus on health and wellbeing and being a connected and welcoming community.
- Services and facilities that are safe and accessible for all members of the community. Access to responsive early years, housing, health, and education services is recognised as contributing to the Shire's liveability and underpinning workforce attraction and retention.
- Responding to population growth and change in a sustainable way.
- The importance of local transport networks and being able to get around.
- A commitment to partnering and collaboration to maximise outcomes for the community.

In relation to the early years, Council has a well-developed planning framework for the early years services and infrastructure necessary to support children and families.

Plans and policies:

- Acknowledge local government has an important role in planning for and supporting early years services and infrastructure, in partnership with others, to respond to community needs.
- Recognise the challenges associated with responding to the State government's early years reform agenda for kindergarten, maternal and child health and other early years supports.
- Have a focus upon the services and programs needed to support and develop the capacity of families to care for children, particularly those experiencing vulnerability.

**Appendix A** provides more detailed information about the policy and planning context.

## 2.2 Community profile<sup>1</sup>

Located 100 kilometres east of Melbourne, Baw Baw Shire is one of Victoria's fastest growing municipalities. Stretching across 4,027 square kilometres the Shire offers a mix of farmland, national parks, and residential areas. The large geographic area the Shire covers presents some challenges for service and infrastructure provision, particularly in communities more remote from major townships. There is a high need for services and infrastructure in the major townships of Warragul and Drouin, but also in smaller townships and communities such as Trafalgar, Yarragon, Longwarry, Neerim South, Willow Grove, and Thorpdale. Key characteristics of the Baw Baw community are highlighted below.

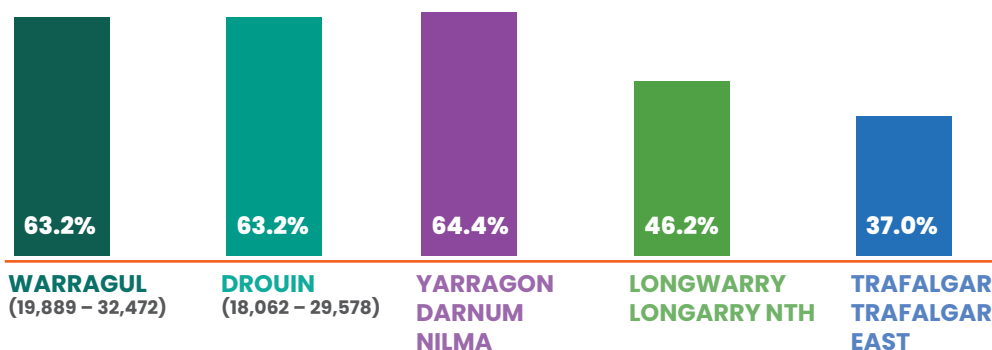
### POPULATION GROWTH 2021 – 2041

#### Baw Baw Shire

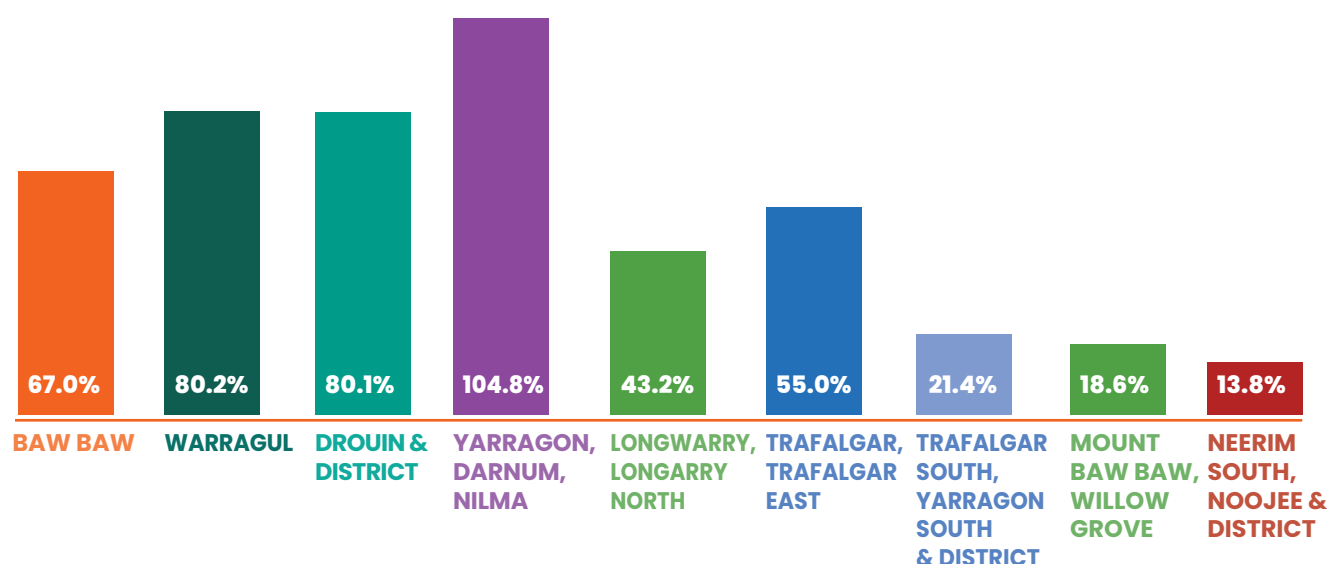
↑ **51.5%**

Highest growth  
expected between  
2021 and 2031

(57,626 – 87,281)



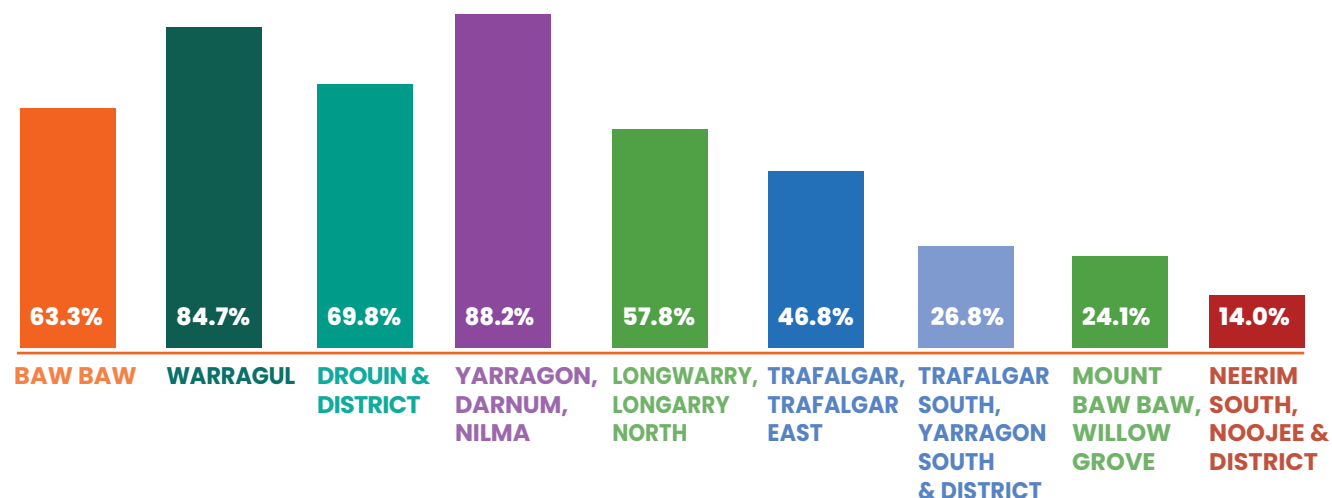
### GROWTH 2021 – 2041: [0–4] YEARS



<sup>1</sup> Baw Baw Shire, Council Plan 2021 – 2025: Council Plan and Community Vision ([bawbawshire.vic.gov.au](http://bawbawshire.vic.gov.au)) .id community, Baw Baw Shire Community profile and Population Forecast About the profile areas | Baw Baw Shire | [profile.id](http://profile.id)



## GROWTH 2021 – 2041: [5–9] YEARS



## DISADVANTAGE & VULNERABILITY

Area	SEIFA	
Baw Baw	1003.0	<p>Baw Baw Shire has lower levels of disadvantage than Regional Victoria and the Gippsland Region, but some communities experience higher disadvantage including Longwarry – Longwarry North, Drouin South and Mount Baw Baw – Willow Grove and District</p> <p>↑ <b>developmental vulnerability</b> amongst children in their first year of school especially in: Drouin, Longwarry, Trafalgar / Yarragon and surrounds and Warragul.</p>
Longwarry – Longwarry North	966.9	
Drouin South	985.4	
Mt Baw Baw – Willow Grove District	989.6	
Regional Victoria	985.0	
Gippsland Region	872.0	
Greater Melbourne	1018.0	

## DIVERSITY

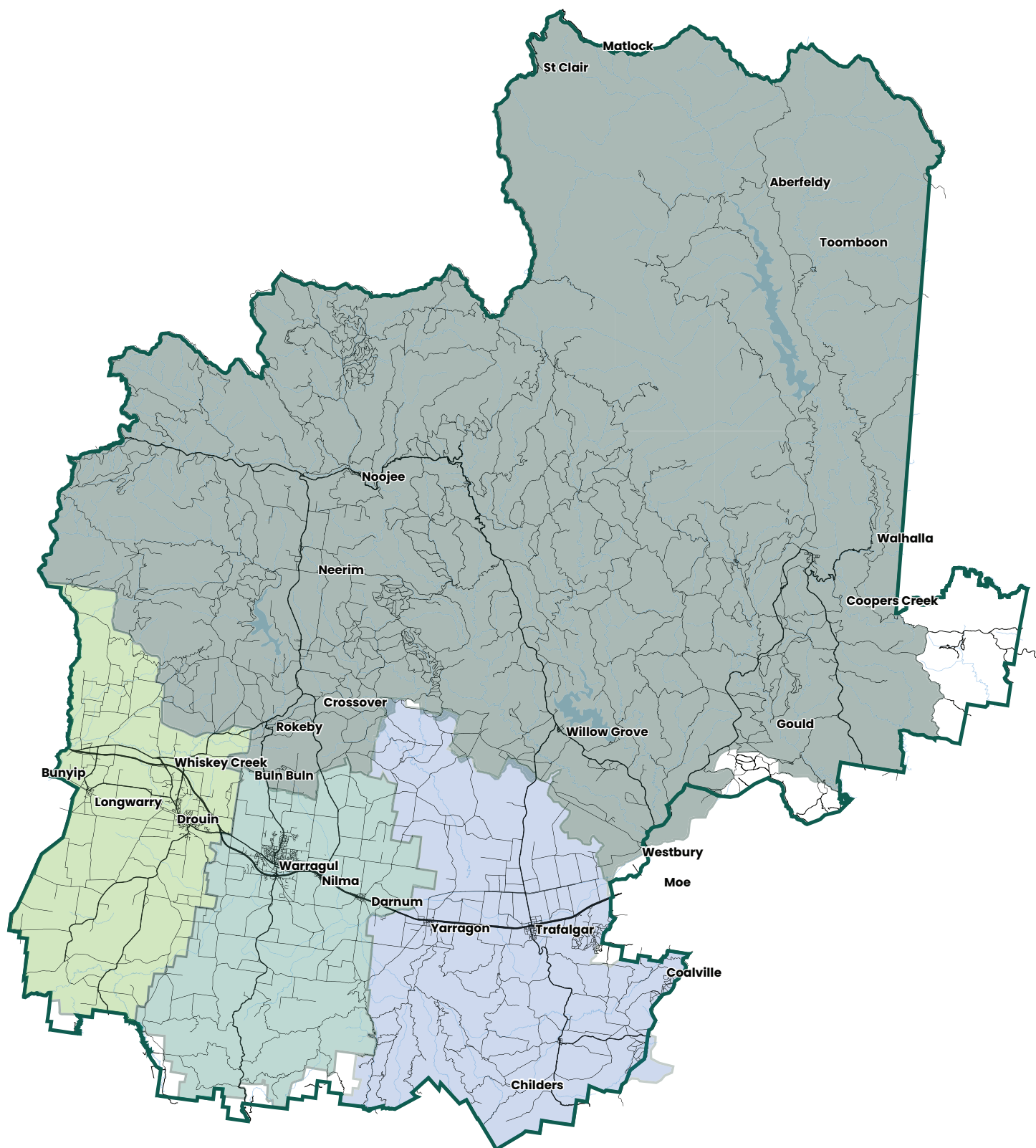
An increasing number of people who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander up from 1.0% in 2016 to 1.3% in 2021

Low but increasing levels of cultural diversity. 12.1% of the population born overseas in 2021, up from 10.8% in 2016

Need for assistance in daily life

- Overall increase from 6.0% in 2016 to 6.6% in 2021 across the population.
- While the numbers are low, there has been a significant increase in 0 – 4 year olds (45%) and 5 – 9 year olds (63.3%) with a need for assistance in their daily life.

**Appendix B** provides more detailed information about the demographic profile of the Baw Baw Shire and its planning areas.



## Baw Baw Shire

### Early Years Infrastructure and Service Providers

Planning areas

Figure 1: Baw Baw Shire and small planning areas<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> .id community, Baw Baw Shire Community profile: About the profile areas | Baw Baw Shire | profile.id



## Implications for the EYIP

While the demand and needs analysis later in this report will assess in more detail the implications of the characteristics of the Baw Baw Shire community, key implications are:

- Increased demand for early years infrastructure, services and supports will occur in Warragul and Drouin where population growth is expected to be highest. But population growth is not contained to these communities, so increased demand for infrastructure, services and supports is expected to occur in most planning areas.
- Population growth will also drive increased demand for broader community infrastructure to support children and families such as parks, playgrounds, aquatic leisure facilities, libraries etc.
- The importance of providing high quality, easy to access early years infrastructure, services and supports in communities where children and families are more likely to experience vulnerability or disadvantage. Communities where children or families may need additional support to access early years services include Longwarry – Longwarry North, Drouin South, and Mount Baw Baw – Willow Grove and District. Communities where children are more likely to experience developmental vulnerabilities are Drouin, Longwarry, Trafalgar / Yarragon and surrounds and Warragul.
- With increasing diversity amongst the Baw Baw Shire community, it will be important to consider how infrastructure and services may need change to better support children and families of all abilities and from all backgrounds and experiences.



**SECTION 3:**

# **Early years services and infrastructure.**



## 3.1 Existing early years services and infrastructure

The analysis of the infrastructure supporting early years services in Baw Baw Shire has concentrated upon:

- Kindergarten
- Maternal and child health services (MCH)
- Community and supported playgroups.

Information to support this analysis has been gathered through discussions with Council officers and early years' service providers, visits to the sites supporting early years services and activities, and desk top research. **Table 3.1** below provides a high-level summary of the number of sites these services and activities are offered from and whether they are integrated or co-located with other early years services, community activities or resources. Kindergarten services operating from privately owned buildings or sites including private schools are not captured in **Table 3.1**.

Service or activity	Site context	Number of Sites
Kindergarten	Standalone	5
	Co-located or Integrated	8
	Located in community halls	2
Maternal and Child Health	Standalone	1
	Co-located or Integrated	7
Community and Supported Playgroup	Co-located or Integrated	18

**Table 3.1:** Summary of early years services and sites, Baw Baw Shire, October 2023

Sections 3.2.1 to 3.2.4 provide a summary of the existing infrastructure where early years services are delivered from by SA2 and by small planning area. A high-level summary is provided of:

- The services each building or site supports
- The number of program or consulting rooms
- The owner of the land or building, the lessee (where relevant) and the service provider
- The condition, accessibility and functionality of the building or site
- Whether the site has capacity for additional infrastructure
- If the building or site is co-located or integrated with other community infrastructure or operates within a community precinct
- The current demand for services if known.

More detailed information about each of the facilities can be found in **Attachment F** which is provided as a separate Excel spreadsheet.

## 3.2 Summary of findings

Overall:

- **Many buildings and sites are owned or managed by Council**, but services and activities also take place in infrastructure on Department of Education land, Crown land, health facilities or land owned by religious organisations. Council is the lessee for 4 school sites where kindergarten and in some instances MCH services are delivered (Warragul, Drouin, Drouin West, and Trafalgar). As the lessee for these sites, a key challenge for Council is the long-term maintenance and infrastructure renewal obligations forming part of the lease. While ensuring all children in Baw Baw Shire have access to kindergarten is a priority for Council, the resourcing impost of entering into future similar leases will need to be considered.
- **The extent of Council's footprint and the provision of early years infrastructure varies across the four SA2 districts and smaller planning areas.** This typically reflects the population size and service demand. For example, there are more sites and subsequent service capacity in Warragul and Drouin SA2s, as this is where the population is largest and is expected to grow the most.
- **There is variability in the functionality of more recently developed infrastructure on primary school sites** with concerns at Warragul Primary School ELC and Trafalgar Primary School ELC about the outdoor play area, and Drouin Primary School ELC about the layout and size of the indoor spaces. The most recently developed facility at Drouin West Primary School reflects learnings from these three sites, delivering better quality, and highly functional indoor and outdoor spaces.
- **Two kindergartens operate from community halls (Willow Grove and Thorpdale)** managed by committees of management. Generally, this has been an excellent shared use of community infrastructure, with kindergarten operating 3 days per week and other community activity occurring on the remaining days. The roll out 30 hours of 4 year old kindergarten will, however, change the viability of this arrangement, with Willow Grove Hall committee indicating they will be unable to make the hall available for kindergarten 5 days a week. The need for kindergarten services in these communities and options for relocation of the services to alternate sites will need to be explored.
- **Several Council owned buildings are identified as being old, in poor condition, and / or having some challenges regarding layouts and functionality** including Mary Beck Pre-School in Neerim South, Erica Pre-School and MCH, Oak Street Kindergarten in Drouin, and Grace Berglund Kindergarten in Warragul. Service demand supports investment in Neerim South, Drouin, and Warragul, but not in Erica where there are very few children.
- **There are multiple single room kindergartens** including:
  - Grace Berglund Kindergarten and St Andrews Kindergarten (not Council owned) in Warragul
  - Drouin Kindergarten
  - Yarragon Primary School ELC (not Council owned or leased), noting the site has 2 program rooms but the second room is licenced for 15 and staffing and quality concerns mean it is not used.
  - Erica Pre-School
  - Mary Beck Pre-School in Neerim South
  - Willow Grove Kindergarten and Thorpdale and District Kindergarten (as noted previously, both operate from non-Council owned community halls).

While single room facilities may be sufficient in communities where the population is smaller and demand for kindergarten is lower, the introduction of 30 hours of 4 year old kindergarten will increase the need for dual room kindergartens.

- **MCH services currently operate from only 4 sites**, although there are 8 different locations where services could operate from. The sites which are currently not operational were closed during the Covid 19 pandemic and have not re-opened, and families are typically willing and able to travel to one of the 4 operational sites. The 8 sites include a mix of co-location with kindergarten, standalone buildings, or part of a community or health building or precinct. More recently developed early years infrastructure is likely to deliver a co-located approach for kindergarten and MCH e.g. Warragul and Drouin. With the exception of facilities in Drouin and Warragul, the spaces supporting MCH services are typically old, in poor condition, or not suitable. This includes Trafalgar, Yarragon, Neerim South and Erica. Future opportunities for the co-location of MCH with kindergarten and other early years services or community facilities should be pursued.
- **Playgroups** operate from a wide range of venues including schools, church or community halls, community centres, health centres and some Council owned buildings. This highlights, it is not solely Council's role to provide spaces to support playgroup activity. Officers advise at times; it can be difficult to identify venues which can support playgroup activity.



### 3.2.1 SA2 Warragul (Warragul and District planning area)

No.	Infrastructure / Service	Service Type	Town	Program / Consulting Rooms	Licenced capacity	Land / Building Owner	Service Provider	Facility Condition, Accessibility, Functionality	Capacity for Additional Infrastructure	Integrated / Co-located or Precinct	Current Service demand
1	Warragul Community Preschool	Kindergarten	Warragul	2	66	Baw Baw SC	YMCA	Building generally in good condition. Originally built in 1978, second program room added in recent years. Excellent outdoor space.	May be some capacity to provide a third program room, but lack of car parking is a limitation.	No	In high demand. Will offer 15 hrs of 3-year-old from 2024. No programming capacity, but could operate closer to licensed capacity
2	Grace Berglund Kindergarten	Kindergarten	Warragul	1	23	Baw Baw SC	YMCA	Single room, ageing facility in poor condition. Outdoor space excellent.	Relocation of Scope offers opportunity to expand kindergarten / develop a community hub.	Yes, same building with Scope and playgroup space. Precinct includes community garden.	In high demand because of small group sizes and extensive outdoor space.
3	Warragul Primary School ELC	Kindergarten MCH	Warragul	2 kinder 1 MCH	66	Dept. of Ed. Baw Baw SC lessee	Best Chance Baw Baw SC	Newly built in 2021 to minimum standards. Good internal functionality, but space outdoor is poor. Traffic and parking difficult at school pick up / drop off times.	No capacity for additional infrastructure.	Integrates Kinder and MCH. Also co-located on the Warragul Primary School site.	Service demand is low. May be related to offering short rather than long kinder sessions and poor outdoor space.
4	St Andrews Kindergarten	Kindergarten	Warragul	2	30	Uniting Church	Uniting VicTas	Single room facility in good condition. Extensive outdoor area and extensive car parking.	Possible capacity for additional infrastructure, dependent upon willingness of the Uniting Church.	Located alongside the Uniting Church and backing onto residential aged care.	In high demand, operating 5 days a week. Maximising capacity through operating a combined 3/4 program 4 days a week.
5	Normanby Street	MCH	Warragul	2	N/A	Baw Baw SC	Baw Baw SC	Older facility but in good condition.	No capacity for additional infrastructure.	Located in the same building as Baw Baw SC Family and Childrens' team.	Escalating demand for MCH
Playgroups in Warragul and District operate from a combination of church or community halls, primary schools and one Council venue - Grace Berglund Kindergarten site.											

## 3.2.2 SA2 Drouin (Drouin and District and Longwarry – Longwarry North planning areas)

No.	Infrastructure / Service	Service Type	Town	Program / Consulting Rooms	Licensed capacity	Land / Building Owner	Service Provider	Facility Condition, Accessibility, Functionality	Capacity for Additional Infrastructure	Integrated / Co-located or Precinct	Current Service demand
1	Oak Street Kindergarten	Kindergarten	Drouin	2	63	Baw Baw SC	YMCA	Originally built 1970. Program room added in 2014. Inefficient and confusing layout. Parking difficult when busy. Amenity and safety issues with outdoor space.	Significant reconfiguration to accommodate a third program room, but community radio next door may provide an option.	Standalone building but located alongside community radio.	In high demand. Will offer 15 hrs of 3-year-old from 2024. No programming capacity, but could operate closer to licensed capacity
2	Drouin Kindergarten	Kindergarten	Drouin	1	29	Baw Baw SC	YMCA	Single room, built in the 1980s, well designed and in good condition. Outdoor space located over multiple levels.	Council owned block of land next door provides opportunity for expansion, but car parking is limited.	Standalone building in residential area.	In high demand because of small group sizes and outdoor space.
3	Drouin Primary School ELC	Kindergarten MCH	Drouin	2 kinder 3 MCH	44	Dept. of Ed. Baw Baw SC lessee	YMCA Baw Baw SC	First room built in 2017 and second in 2020. In good condition but spaces are undersized. Recent improvements to MCH spaces. Traffic and parking difficult at school pick up / drop off times.	No capacity for additional infrastructure.	Integrates Kinder and MCH. Also co-located on the Drouin Primary School site.	Demand for kindergarten is high but some capacity to accommodate additional children through changing program structure.  MCH demand consistent. Only site MCH is offered in Drouin.
4	Drouin West Primary School ELC	Kindergarten	Drouin	2	66	Dept. of Ed. Baw Baw SC lessee	YMCA	Newly built and opened in 2023. Well designed, universally accessible, good car parking, attractive outdoor space.	Possible capacity for additional infrastructure, but unlikely this can be accommodated due to school needs.	Co-located with Drouin West Primary School.	Low demand, extensive capacity to accommodate additional children and programs. Demand expected to increase with population growth.
Playgroups in Drouin and District operate from church halls and one primary school.											
5	Longwarry Kindergarten	Kindergarten	Longwarry	2	55	Baw Baw SC	YMCA	Building in good condition. Refurbished and new program room added 2022. Outdoor space connected to new room is poor.	No capacity for additional infrastructure.	Standalone building.	Low demand with extensive capacity to accommodate additional children and programs. Demand expected to increase with kinder reform.
Playgroups in Longwarry – Longwarry North operate from the Longwarry Kindergarten.											



### 3.2.3 SA2 Trafalgar (Trafalgar – Trafalgar East, Trafalgar South – Yarragon South and District, Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma planning areas)

No.	Infrastructure / Service	Service Type	Town	Program / Consulting Rooms	Licensed capacity	Land / Building Owner	Service Provider	Facility Condition, Accessibility, Functionality	Capacity for Additional Infrastructure	Integrated / Co-located or Precinct	Current Service demand
1	Trafalgar Primary School ELC	Kindergarten	Trafalgar	2	66	Baw Baw SC	YMCA	Recently built, well laid out, good amenities, office and storage space. But, the outdoor play area is not functional, causing programming and safety problems.	May have capacity for additional infrastructure but access to additional outdoor space is needed as a high priority.	Co-located on the Trafalgar Primary School site.	Service is in high demand. It has some capacity to support increased enrolments, but the limitations of the outdoor space make this difficult.
2	Trafalgar MCH	MCH	Trafalgar	1	N/A	Baw Baw SC	Baw Baw SC	Building is aging, dated, and in significant need of an upgrade.	No capacity for additional infrastructure. Council is proposing to repurpose the building as a library with MCH would remain on site.	Building includes leased space used by the historical society and is located alongside Trafalgar Hall	Increasing demand.
Playgroups in Trafalgar – Trafalgar East operate from the scout hall or community centre.											
4	Thorpdale and District Kindergarten	Kindergarten	Thorpdale	1	25	DEECA COM is lessee	YMCA	Operates from Thorpdale Hall. The building is old and has substantial maintenance issues which have created safety issues for the kindergarten.	No capacity for a standalone kindergarten to be developed on the site. COM has indicated they may be unable to accommodate 5 days of kinder for 30 hrs of 4-year-old.	Service operates from Thorpdale Hall.	Moderate to low enrolments. 20 children in 2022 and 7 children in 2023.
Playgroups in Trafalgar – Trafalgar East operate from the scout hall or community centre.											
5	Yarragon Primary School ELC	Kindergarten	Yarragon	2	48	Dept. of Ed.	Yarragon Primary School	The facility is in good condition, universally accessible, excellent outdoor play area, and good access to parking. The second program room is not used because it is licensed for 15 children and this is inconsistent with child staff ratios.	Unlikely to be capacity for additional infrastructure due to school needs. Reconfiguring existing rooms could be considered.	Co-located on the Yarragon Primary School site.	Service demand is high but without operation of second program room, there is no capacity to support additional enrolments.
6	Yarragon Public Hall	MCH	Yarragon	1	N/A	Baw Baw SC	Baw Baw SC	Aging building and MCH facilities are in poor condition.	No capacity for additional infrastructure	Located in the Yarragon Public Hall.	MCH services have not operated from the site since the Covid 19 pandemic. Families typically travel to Trafalgar or Warragul to access MCH.
Playgroups in Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma operate from the community hall.											

### 3.2.4 SA2 Mount Baw Baw (Mount Baw Baw – Willow Grove and District, and Neerim South – Noojee and District planning areas)

No.	Infrastructure / Service	Service Type	Town	Program / Consulting Rooms	Licenced capacity	Land / Building Owner	Service Provider	Facility Condition, Accessibility, Functionality	Capacity for Additional Infrastructure	Integrated / Co-located or Precinct	Current Service demand
1	Willow Grove Kindergarten and MCH	Kindergarten MCH	Willow Grove	1	25	DEECA COM is lessee	YMCA	Operates from Willow Grove Hall. The building is well maintained and in good condition.	No capacity for a standalone kindergarten to be developed on the site. COM has indicated they will be unable to accommodate 5 days of kinder for 30 hrs of 4-year-old.	Service operates from Willow Grove Hall.	Consistent demand for kindergarten services.  MCH services have not operated from the site since the Covid 19 pandemic.
2	Erica Pre School and MCH	Kindergarten MCH	Erica	1 kinder 1 MCH	22	Baw Baw SC	YMCA	The building is old and needs to be upgraded. The outdoor play area and equipment is particularly poor.	The site has capacity to accommodate additional infrastructure, but demand does not support this.	Kindergarten and MCH co-located in the one building.	Low demand. YMCA has determined service will close at end of 2024.
Playgroups in Mount Baw Baw – Willow Grove and District operate from community halls.											
3	Mary Beck Pre-School	Kindergarten	Neerim South	1	26	Baw Baw SC	YMCA	The building is old, in poor condition and not functional. Car parking is poorly located.	No capacity for expansion on the current site.  A Council facility audit has determined that this building is unsuitable for kindergarten delivery, and will be unavailable past 2027.	Standalone building but located alongside the Secondary School and opposite recreation facilities.	Consistent demand for kindergarten services.
4	Neerim South MCH	MCH	Neerim South	1	N/A	Neerim Health Service	Baw Baw SC	Difficult site with no private / quiet waiting area for families.	N/A Council is assessing the feasibility of developing a community hub in Neerim South. Inclusion of space to support MCH services is being considered.	Located at the Neerim South Hospital.	MCH services have not operated from the site since the Covid 19 pandemic. Families travel to Warragul or Drouin to access MCH.
Playgroups in Neerim South – Noojee and District operate from church or community halls.											



**SECTION 4:**

# **Consultation and engagement outcomes.**



## 4.1 Engagement program

The consultation and engagement program sought to capture a wide range of voices and perspectives and was designed to help inform the development of both the Early Years Infrastructure Plan and the Municipal Early Years Plan. Engagement tools used included:

- **An online survey**, open to all community members and available through Council's online engagement platform Have Your Say.
- **A postcard survey** which was made available in key locations including community centres, Libraries, MCH sites, kindergartens, playgroups etc, and through pop up engagement activities.
- **A series of pop-up engagement** activities to encourage people to complete the online or postcard survey. In total pop-up engagement activities occurred in 4 locations.
- Discussions with Council's **Early Year's Advisory Committee**.
- Site visits and interviews with **key stakeholder organisations**.
- Interviews and workshops with **Council officers**.
- Engagement with **185 children**.

<b>120 people</b> completed the Online or postcard survey	<b>EYAC workshops</b>  Workshops were held with Council's Early Years Advisory Committee	<b>23 community locations visited</b>  to encourage people to complete the surveys
<b>Council Officers</b>  Discussions with officers from Children and Family Services, Planning, Major Projects, Infrastructure, Assets and Recreation, and Open Space	<b>185 children</b>  8 schools 5 kindergartens 1 long daycare service	<b>Site visits and stakeholder discussions</b>  Visits to early years sites and discussions with YMCA Ballarat, Uniting VicTas, Best Chance, Yarragon Primary School

## 4.2 Key findings

### FAMILIES

#### Leisure and community activities and spaces

Parks and playgrounds, swimming pools and leisure centres, libraries and community events are **highly valued by families and are the things they are most likely to use or participate in very often**. Families also access these activities and spaces outside Baw Baw because of the limited availability in Baw Baw, better quality options outside Baw Baw, and a desire to try new places and experiences.

**But families also experience challenges accessing these activities and spaces.** For example:

- **Parks and playgrounds:** a lack of shade; play spaces lacking diversity, challenge and interest, and not supporting children with additional needs and older children; concerns about the age and poor condition of play equipment and parks.
- **Libraries:** the dated facilities and the need to enlarge the facility and improve amenities.
- **Swimming pools and leisure centres:** the lack of access to swimming lessons, the cost of entry, the facilities being too small and crowded, the lack of fun / play facilities for children, and pools not being open enough during the summer.

#### Early years services

**Are highly valued and used very often**, including kindergarten, maternal and child health, free immunisation and childcare both centre-based care and family daycare.

**The factors which are most important to families** when choosing early years services are:

- Feeling confident about the quality of the service or program and being well supported.
- Feeling safe accessing the service, program or support.
- The people are approachable and make my child and family feel welcome and listened to.

**The factors which make it hard or difficult for families to access early years** are:

- **Limited or lack of availability and waiting lists** especially for childcare (all forms), kindergarten, playgroups, and swimming lessons.
- **Operating hours and days** especially for kindergarten, MCH, playgroup and programs through libraries. There is interest from working parents for MCH appointments, playgroups and library activities to be offered outside normal working hours.
- **Lack of information and awareness** for accessing family / parenting support, parent education, and community events.
- Cost and affordability.

#### Kindergarten and MCH preferences

Many families **prefer to access kindergarten and MCH services in their local town** the service closest to their home because of the convenience including reduced travel time and managing work commitments, along with being connected to their local community and other families.

**But others are happy to access these services outside their local community** if it means they can access quality services to meet the needs of their child / family and can access services when it suits them.

Families have a strong preference to access kindergarten through a standalone separate service or one located on a school site. Also, there is stronger demand for longer kindergarten sessions i.e. 7.5 hour sessions, particularly for 4 year old kindergarten.

## Improving support for families and children

Consistent with the challenges and difficulties families experience, **the things families would most like to see improved** are:

- **Playgrounds and open space** including shade, nature-based play experiences, and more diverse play experiences.
- **Availability of childcare** including family daycare and outside school hours care.
- **Kindergarten** including more availability, longer session times, and service quality.
- **Addressing cost and affordability.**

## CHILDREN

- **Challenging, outdoor play is important to children.** They would like to see more diverse and accessible play equipment or spaces, which support risky or adventurous play.  
*'I like high swings' and 'we need a flying fox' "Favourite park is Civic Park in Warragul because it has multiple activities', "Swings – big swings", "Slides – big, curly wurly one."*
- **Water play is highly valued by children** with many mentioning they would like access to *'water parks' or 'water slides.'*
- **Feeling good about and enjoying spending time in their community is important to children.** They want to feel safe when walking to school, shops and while in local sporting groups, and value places and events in their local community.  
*"The greenery is amazing and the community is excellent", "I like how there is a Nilma town hall and every year we go and meet our distant neighbours", "Events like SnowFest and show at Arts Centre."*
- **Sport and recreation facilities are important to children** with many sharing how they enjoyed accessing local sporting facilities, in particular football fields, basketball courts and swimming pools.
- **Children value and appreciate gardens and nature.** Many children spoke about the importance of greenery, gardens and nature.  
*"It's very peaceful, with all the greenery", "I like all the big old trees that line my street/backyard"*
- **Children are interested in and concerned about social issues** such as food security, support for people who are homeless, and the need for more sustainability measures.  
*"Less pollution. More soft plastic bins so that it wouldn't go into the red bins and into land fill" and "More homeless shelters."*
- **Road safety is area children are interested in and they have ideas about how to improve it.** *"Too busy after school near the train station", "Speed cameras near Warragul Regional", "Add crossing lights for near the train station."*



## EARLY YEARS PROVIDERS

- The relationship and partnership between service providers and Council is generally positive and the Kindergarten Central Registration System is highly valued.
- Key challenges for early years providers are attracting and retaining a workforce and implementing change management strategies with staff, responding to the significant increase in the number of children with additional and complex needs, and the limited choices available to service providers about how they respond to increased demand.
- Key challenges for early years infrastructure include single room services limiting opportunities to respond to increased demand, the ageing and poor condition of some infrastructure, the poor design of some of the newly developed infrastructure, particularly the outdoor space, and the ability of community halls to accommodate 30 hours of 4 year old kindergarten.
- Opportunities for change and improvement are largely connected to the challenges identified and include increasing the involvement of service providers in the design of new infrastructure, connecting more regularly with Council and other service providers to share information and work more collaboratively, increase information sharing through the CRS, implementing a more transparent process for appointing service providers to operate early years services.

## COUNCIL OFFICERS AND EYAC

### What supports families and children and is working well

- All elements of the MCH service are being delivered and the model is flexible and accommodating of individual needs.
- Council's early years team is highly valued and well regarded for its co-ordinated and connected approach.
- The kindergarten central registration system.
- The range of not for profit and private providers delivering services to families and children

### Barriers families experience accessing early years services

- The constant and substantial changes to State Govt policies which is making access to kindergarten very difficult and creates significant challenges for Council and service providers.
- Limited referral pathways and long waiting lists where families need additional support such as mental health services and early intervention services.
- The shortage of staff, particularly in the kindergarten space resulting in significant variability in quality of services and programs, and in some instances requiring temporary closure of services when leave cannot be backfilled.
- The high demand for services like swimming lessons and the limited space at Warragul Leisure Centre means it is difficult to access the Centre and the services it offers.

## Challenges and limitations of existing infrastructure

- The lack of clear governance arrangements around the use and management of early years spaces.
- The lack of agreed standards for the delivery of new early years infrastructure which is resulting in poor outcomes for new kindergarten buildings and outdoor space.
- The poor distribution of early years infrastructure in Warragul and Drouin which means services are not well located to respond to future population growth.
- Ageing playgrounds and equipment which is being replaced with like for like rather than contemporary play experiences. Community expectations about play spaces are high and these are not being met.

## Aspirations for supporting families and children

- Services and spaces are accessible, available locally, high-quality, and co-located with other relevant services and facilities.
- Council is innovative and continues to build on its strengths in supporting families and children.
- Council and its partners are proactive in predicting, planning for and responding to changing community needs, and differences in our communities.
- Neighbourhoods are safe and walkable for families.
- Families feel connected to and have strong relationships in their community, and this is retained as the population grows.
- A diversity of service offerings are available to support children with additional needs and their families.

## Key ideas for change or improvement

- Consolidating Warragul MCH to one location to help support the delivery of a co-ordinated and cohesive service perhaps through the Civic precinct development.
- Having consistent and planned arrangements for the use and management of early years spaces including lease and licence agreements, fees and charges, priority of access guidelines. and booking arrangements.
- Planning for new early years infrastructure by:
  - Developing a baseline of standards for the scope and design of new early years infrastructure.
  - Undertaking feasibility studies to ensure all aspects of developing, maintaining, and operating early years infrastructure have been considered prior to allocating funds and commencing works.
  - Taking a whole of Council approach, building knowledge and understanding across the organisation, and reaching a shared understanding of Council's role, resourcing capability, and commitment to delivering early years infrastructure and services.
  - Developing a high-level plan which outlines the gaps in provision by location, along with a more detailed plan by site and location.
- Involving the early years team in providing advice and guidance about proposals from developers for play spaces and for Council to have a more robust approach to responding to the play space proposals from developers.

- Developing play spaces:
  - That support risky, nature based and water-based play. Look at opportunities to work with local builders and artists to develop spaces that are interesting, appealing and help build the resilience of children.
  - For the whole of a family by providing outdoor play and gathering spaces that support a range of ages and cohorts.



**SECTION 5:**

# **Current and future need and possible responses.**





## 5.1 Scope of the analysis

This section draws together the findings from the background research to examine the current and future need for kindergarten, MCH, playgroup and childcare services and infrastructure in Baw Baw Shire, and begin the process of identifying possible responses or solutions.

A range of evidence and research informs the analysis including:

- The current and projected demographic profile of the Baw Baw community, particularly the 0 – 4 population.
- Data from Council's kindergarten central registration system and the Early Childhood Education (ECE) report issued annually by the Department of Education.
- Family preferences for accessing services, particularly preferences for sessional kindergarten and the impact of travel distances on the ability of families to access services.
- Provision benchmarks based upon population size for MCH services. 1 consulting room for every 130 children aged 0 years. This benchmark or similar is typically informs community infrastructure planning.<sup>1</sup>
- Provision benchmarks based upon population size for childcare services. 1 licensed placed for every 2 children aged 0 – 4 years. This benchmark or similar is typically informs community infrastructure planning.<sup>2</sup>
- The availability of suitable spaces to support playgroups.
- The existing infrastructure available, its suitability to meet future needs and opportunities for expansion or redevelopment.

In addition, detailed modeling has been undertaken to assess the likely demand for kindergarten between 2025 and 2041 and the capacity of the service system to respond to the increased demand. The detailed modeling including all assumptions is provided as a separate attachment to this report with a summary of key data included in each planning area to assist in understanding future demand for kindergarten, MCH and playgroups services and activities. Three demand models and 3 supply models have been examined and their scope is outlined below.

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<sup>1</sup> Victorian State Government and Wyndham City Council, 2009, Guide to Social Infrastructure Planning.

<sup>2</sup> Metropolitan Planning Authority, 2015, Kindergarten Infrastructure Needs Assessment in Greenfield Growth Areas: A Revised Benchmark.

### 3 demand models

1. The total number of 3 and 4 year old children who will be eligible to access kindergarten and the number of licensed places required to support this to occur.
2. The number children who will require access to kindergarten and the number of licensed places required if 90% of 3 and 4 year old children attend sessional kindergarten. This percentage reflects data from the 2022 Early Childhood Education Profile for Baw Baw Shire.
3. The number children who will require access to kindergarten and the number of licensed places required if 65% of 3 year old and 70% of 4 year old children attend sessional kindergarten.

It is important to note:

- The demand modelling undertaken for the EYIP expresses demand as the number of licensed places required for kindergarten.
- A second version of the model has been developed which expresses demand as the number of 15-hour places required for 3 and 4 year old children to attend kindergarten. This approach is consistent with the demand assessment modelling undertaken by the Victorian State Government in developing the KISP document.

### 3 supply models

1. 0.5 capacity multiplier for LDC and St Pauls, and sessional kindergartens operating at capacity.
2. Sessional kindergarten operating at capacity, and realistic capacity assessment for St Pauls and LDC.
3. Sessional kindergartens operating below capacity, and realistic capacity assessment for St Pauls and LDC.

It is important to note:

- The supply modelling undertaken for the EYIP expresses supply as the number of licensed places required for kindergarten.
- A second version of the model has been developed which expresses supply as the number of 15-hour places available for 3 and 4 year old children to attend kindergarten. This approach is consistent with the supply assessment modelling undertaken by the Victorian State Government in developing the KISP document.
- The supply modelling assumes Erica Kindergarten will cease to operate from 2025. This reflects the intention of the current service provider.
- The term realistic capacity reflects a service-by-service assessment of the licensed places / number of 15-hour places genuinely available for funded kindergarten.



## Key factors to understand

- The analysis has been undertaken by planning area (8 in total) with planning areas grouped according to Census SA2 catchments.

Planning catchment	SA2
<b>Warragul and District</b> Includes the smaller catchments of Warragul North and Warragul South	Warragul
<b>Drouin and District</b> Includes the smaller catchments of Drouin North, Drouin South, & Drouin West	Drouin
<b>Longwarry – Longwarry North</b>	
<b>Trafalgar – Trafalgar East</b>	Trafalgar
<b>Trafalgar South – Yarragon South and District (Inc. Thorpdale)</b>	
<b>Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma</b>	
<b>Mount Baw Baw – Willow Grove and District (Inc. Erica)</b>	Mount Baw Baw
<b>Neerim South – Noojee and District</b>	

- Demand and supply data has been identified for kindergarten using information from the demand and supply modelling described above.
- While the demand and supply assessment is based upon the assumption all additional program rooms will be licensed for 33 children and operate at capacity, in reality, many rooms operate below licensed capacity due to concerns about quality educational outcomes, especially for 3 year old kindergarten. This means consideration may need to be given to the provision of additional program rooms in some circumstances.
- Demand and supply data has been identified for maternal and child health services by examining demographic data and applying the community infrastructure provision benchmark of 1 consulting room for every 130 children.
- For playgroups, information is more general in nature, and written commentary is provided outlining the demand and supply factors relevant to playgroups.
- Information is also drawn from section 4 in this report about issues or opportunities associated with the existing infrastructure supporting Kindergarten, MCH and playgroups.
- Demand and supply data for childcare has been identified by examining demographic data and applying the community infrastructure provision benchmark of 1 licensed place for every 2 children aged 0 – 4 years. While this will be influenced by the changes occurring in kindergarten, the application of this benchmark provides some insight about the current extent of under or over provision.

## 5.2 Summary of surplus and gaps in provision for kindergarten and MCH

90% of children attend sessional kindergarten					
Location	Surplus or Gap in kindergarten program rooms needed				
	Black text = a surplus, Red text = a gap				
	2025	2027	2029	2032	2041
Warragul and District	3 to 4	5	7 to 8	10 to 11	13 to 14
Drouin and District	1 to 2	2 to 3	5 to 6	8 to 9	11 to 12
Longwarry – Longwarry North	0	0	0 to 1	1	1 to 2
Trafalgar – Trafalgar East	0	0	1	2	2
Trafalgar South – Yarragon South (Inc. Thorpdale)	1	1	1	1	1
Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma	0 to 1	1	1	2	2
Mount Baw Baw – Willow Grove (Inc. Erica)	0	1	1	1	1
Neerim South – Noojee	1	1	1	2	2
<b>TOTAL program rooms to be built</b>	<b>6 to 9</b>	<b>10 to 12</b>	<b>17 to 20</b>	<b>27 to 29</b>	<b>33 to 35</b>

**Table 5.1:** Summary of surplus and gaps in the supply of program rooms for sessional kindergarten in Baw Baw Shire 2025 – 2041 assumes 90% of children attending sessional kindergarten

65% of 3 year olds and 70% of 4 year olds attend sessional kindergarten					
Location	Surplus or Gap in kindergarten program rooms needed				
	Black text = a surplus, Red text = a gap				
	2025	2027	2029	2032	2041
Warragul and District	1	3 to 4	4 to 5	7	9
Drouin and District	0 to 1	2 to 3	3	5 to 6	7 to 8
Longwarry – Longwarry North	0 to 1	0	0 to 1	1	1
Trafalgar – Trafalgar East	1	0	0 to 1	1	1
Trafalgar South – Yarragon South (Inc. Thorpdale)	0	1	1	1	1
Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma	0	1	1	1	1 to 2
Mount Baw Baw – Willow Grove (Inc. Erica)	0	1	1	1	1
Neerim South – Noojee	0	0	1	1	1
<b>TOTAL program rooms to be built</b>	<b>1 to 2</b>	<b>8 to 10</b>	<b>11 to 14</b>	<b>18 to 19</b>	<b>22 to 24</b>

**Table 5.2:** Summary of surplus and gaps in the supply of program rooms for sessional kindergarten in Baw Baw Shire 2025 – 2041 assumes 65% of 3 year old and 70% of 4 year old children attend sessional kindergarten

Maternal and Child Health					
Location	Surplus or Gap in MCH consulting rooms needed				
	Black text = a surplus, Red text = a gap				
	2025	2027	2029	2032	2041
Warragul and District	0	0	0	0	1
Drouin and District	0	0	0	0	1
Longwarry – Longwarry North	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5
Trafalgar – Trafalgar East	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.3
Trafalgar South – Yarragon South (Inc. Thorpdale)	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.5
Mount Baw Baw – Willow Grove (Inc. Erica)	1.86	1.85	1.85	1.85	1.85
Neerim South – Noojee	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8
<b>TOTAL SURPLUS consulting rooms</b>	<b>3.26</b>	<b>3.15</b>	<b>3.15</b>	<b>3.05</b>	<b>0.7</b>

**Table 5.3:** Summary of the surplus and gap in provision for MCH consulting rooms in Baw Baw Shire 2025 – 2041



## 5.3 Overall themes

### KINDERGARTEN

- **Unmet demand for kindergarten will occur in Baw Baw Shire** across all planning areas
- The extent of unmet demand is impacted by the licensed places available in childcare services for funded kindergarten, and the extent to which sessional kindergartens operate at licensed capacity.
- Families have indicated a strong preference for sessional kindergarten, and the more children attending sessional kindergarten, the more rapidly unmet demand will increase. Assuming 65% of 3-year-olds and 70% of 4-year-olds access sessional kindergarten, there will be **unmet demand for sessional kindergarten before 2032 requiring a minimum 18 - 19 additional program rooms** (this assumes Erica Preschool closes in 2025, Willow Grove in 2026, and Mary Beck in 2028)
- An alternative for kindergarten infrastructure in Willow Grove will need to be explored as the service operates from the local community hall and the hall committee has indicated they will be unable to accommodate kindergarten 5 days a week when 30 hours of 4 year old is implemented.
- The Mary Beck Pre-School in Neerim South and Grace Berglund Kindergarten in Warragul are key locations where kindergarten infrastructure needs to be replaced due to the age and poor condition of the facilities.
- Possible opportunities to expand or reconfigure existing kindergarten infrastructure have been identified in Warragul, Drouin, Yarragon, and Trafalgar, but these require further investigation to assess their feasibility.
- Possible opportunities to provide additional kindergarten infrastructure as part of yet to be developed community infrastructure have been identified, but there is significant uncertainty about the timing of these developments, and it will be difficult to rely upon them in the short or medium term.

### UNIVERSAL MCH

- The existing supply of MCH consulting spaces will meet the current and medium to long term needs of the community.
  - An additional consulting room will be required in Warragul from 2038.
  - An additional consulting room will be required in Drouin from 2036.
- Consideration needs to be given to the distribution of MCH services in Warragul and Drouin, particularly as the population grows.
  - In Warragul, all services are located north of Princes Highway.
  - In Drouin, all services are concentrated at Drouin Primary School.
- Opportunities for the co-location and integration of MCH services with other early years services should be actively pursued.
- The availability of spaces to support the delivery of MCH services in smaller communities is very important to the accessibility of the service. This includes Yarragon, Trafalgar, Willow Grove, Erica, Neerim South. While spaces supporting the delivery of MCH services exist in these communities, they are generally ageing, in poor condition and need to be upgraded. Dedicated spaces are not essential, but spaces must have the capacity to support the effective delivery of MCH services.

## PLAYGROUP

- Overall, demand for playgroups is likely to increase as the population grows with the largest increase in demand likely to occur in Warragul and Drouin.
- Community playgroups operate in all planning areas across Baw Baw Shire with the largest concentration in Warragul and District (5) and Drouin and District (4).
- Supported playgroups are demand based and at the current time only operate from Warragul. Consideration needs to be given to diversifying the location of supported playgroups to improve accessibility.
- Playgroups operate from a range of spaces and places, many of which are not Council owned e.g. schools, churches, and community halls. This demonstrates Council does not need to be solely responsible for providing infrastructure for playgroups, however, where new early years infrastructure is being developed, providing spaces which can support playgroups should be a key consideration. Important considerations are having both indoor and outdoor spaces which are connected, storage, and tea and coffee making facilities.

## CHILDCARE

- Access to long daycare is difficult for families in many communities across Baw Baw Shire. This is evident through looking at supply and demand data, as well as from the feedback received from families through the engagement process. While Council is not involved in providing infrastructure specifically for childcare, there may be opportunity to work with kindergarten service providers to explore the viability of offering before and after kindergarten care to address some of the care needs of families.
- The planning areas where long daycare is not available include Trafalgar South – Yarragon South and District, Mount Baw Baw – Willow Grove and District, and Neerim South – Noojee and District. These communities are highly reliant upon being able to access childcare in neighbouring areas and may be more likely to seek access to before and after kindergarten care.
- The planning areas where unmet demand is likely to be highest are Warragul and Drouin, but also Longwarry – Longwarry North, Trafalgar – Trafalgar East. With population growth the unmet demand will continue to increase, unless additional services and licensed places become available.
- Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma is the only planning area where there is likely to be no existing unmet demand, however, the limited availability of childcare in the surrounding area means families are likely to be accessing childcare in Yarragon from communities such as Trafalgar, Thorpdale, Willow Grove etc.

## 5.4 Findings by SA2 and small planning areas

### 5.4.1 Warragul SA2 (Warragul and district planning area)

Warragul SA2 is also Warragul and district planning area and accounts for 35% of Baw Baw's population. Demand for early years services is high, and while there is a large concentration of early years services in the Warragul SA2, the rapid population growth, and changes in government policy mean the demand for kindergarten, MCH, playgroup and childcare will increase significantly between 2025 and 2041. **Table 5.1** below provides a summary of key demand and supply data for kindergarten and Universal MCH.

#### KINDERGARTEN

- **A shortfall in licensed places to support kindergarten is projected to commence in 2025.**
- **A minimum additional 7 – 11 programs rooms will be needed to support sessional kindergarten by 2032** if the community continues to demonstrate a preference for sessional kindergarten. The range of 7 – 11 program rooms reflect different demand assumptions i.e. 11 program rooms assumes 90% of 3 and 4 year old children attend sessional kindergarten. Seven program rooms assumes 65% of 3 year old children and 70% of 4 year old children access sessional kindergarten.
- **Opportunities to refurbish, redevelop or add onto existing kindergarten infrastructure** to address the shortfall are as follows:
  - Development of a children and families hub incorporating 2 or 3 program rooms, on the site of the Grace Berglund Kindergarten, acknowledging that alternate accommodation will need to be found for Scope who reside in part of the building.
  - Development of a second program room at St Andrews Kindergarten but noting this is dependent upon the willingness of the Uniting Church to support expansion.
  - Possible reconfiguration and expansion of Warragul Community Preschool to create a third program room, but car parking and traffic congestion is an issue for this site, and there is significant concern about loss of highly valued outdoor space by adding a third program room.
- **Potential opportunities from proposed future community infrastructure** are outlined below. These reflect information in the Precinct Structure Plan for Warragul, but Council has not yet purchased the land and there is currently no indication of when or whether these facilities will be developed. Each of the facilities is proposed to be situated alongside new school infrastructure but there is uncertainty about whether the schools will be developed in these locations due to concerns about the suitability of the nominated sites.
  - Dollabum community centre (North West Warragul) – level 1 community centre proposed which assumes a double room kindergarten.
  - Carrington community centre (North East Warragul) – level 2 community centre proposed which assumes a double room kindergarten.
  - Spring Creek community centre (South West Warragul) – level 1 community centre proposed which assumes a double room kindergarten.



Given the Victorian State Government priority around establishing kindergartens on school sites, it may be preferable to pursue the development of kindergarten infrastructure on new school sites once they are confirmed. This will have the dual benefit of delivering on State Government priorities and allowing the proposed community infrastructure to be made available for other age groups and services needed in the community.

## UNIVERSAL MCH

- **The existing supply of MCH consulting rooms meets will meet current and future needs until 2038.** However, all spaces and services are concentrated north of Princes Highway. While the population is considerably smaller in Warragul South, if new community or early years infrastructure is developed south of Princes Highway, consideration should be given to incorporating a space which can support MCH services. This does not need to be a dedicated space, but rather one which can support a range of family, community or allied health services including MCH.
- **A potential opportunity from planned future community infrastructure** is the Carrington community centre (North East Warragul) – level 2 community centre which is proposed to include MCH consulting suites.
- **Consideration could also be given to including MCH services as part of the suggested children and family hub at the Grace Berglund site.** If this was pursued, consideration could be given to relocating MCH services from the Normanby Street site to the Grace Berglund Site.

## PLAYGROUPS

- **The demand for community playgroups is likely to increase as the population increases. In addition, the need for supported playgroups is increasing** as more children in Warragul and district are presenting to services with complex behavioral and developmental needs. The data supports this, with more children in Warragul identified as being developmentally vulnerable in their first year of school between 2018 and 2021.
- **Supported playgroup** in Warragul operates from the same building / site as the Grace Berglund Kindergarten. The space is located at the opposite end of the building from the kindergarten and is specifically designed to support playgroups, new parent groups etc. Space for the program can typically be easily identified and secured as needed in Warragul.
- **There are 5 community playgroups operating in Warragul and District**, and 4 are registered with Playgroup Victoria. One operates from a Council building, two from church owned buildings, one from a commercial space, and one in outdoor spaces (Bush Bunyips Playgroup).
- **Potential opportunities from planned future community infrastructure** are:
  - Dollabum community centre (North West Warragul) – level 1 community centre proposed which assumes a community room will be included.
  - Carrington community centre (North East Warragul) – level 2 community centre proposed which assumes a community hall will be included.
  - Spring Creek community centre (South West Warragul) – level 1 community centre proposed which assumes a community room will be included.

If a children and family hub was established at the Grace Berglund site, this would also present an opportunity to incorporate spaces for playgroup activity, noting that a room for playgroups already exists at the site.

## CHILDCARE

- **Access to childcare is likely to be difficult for families in Warragul, despite the large concentration of providers in the planning area.** There are four long daycare providers offering a total of 381 licensed places. With an estimated 1,495 children aged 0 – 4 years in Warragul in 2023, this means there is 1 place for every 3.9 children. A typical benchmark applied for the provision of childcare is 1 licensed place for every 2 children aged 0 – 4 years. While this will be influenced by the changes occurring in kindergarten, the application of this benchmark provides some insight about the extent of under or over provision.
  - Applying this benchmark suggests there is a shortfall of over 360 licensed places in 2025.
  - Without additional supply, by 2032 the shortfall will increase to 561.

Warragul SA2 (Warragul and district planning area)							
Service	Data description	2025	2027	2029	2032	2041	Commentary and assessment
Kindergarten	All 3 and 4 year old children	678	712	744	787	932	Modelling indicates a shortfall in licensed places will occur between 2026 – 2028.
	Total licensed places needed	290	408	442	566	671	
	Surplus / gap	2 to 124	6 to – 116	28 to 150	152 to 274	257 to 379	
	Equiv. prog. rooms surplus / gap	1 to 4	0 to 4	1 to 5	5 to 9	8 to 12	
	90% OF CHILDREN ATTEND SESSIONAL KINDERGARTEN						
	Licensed places needed for sessional kinder	261	290	401	509	604	A shortfall in licensed places is occurring now and expected to increase. The timing and scale of the shortfall in licensed places depends upon the capacity model applied.
	Surplus / gap	77 to 97	106 to 126	217 to 237	325 to 345	420 to 440	
	Equiv. prog. rooms surplus / gap	3 to 4	5	7 to 8	10 to 11	13 to 14	Assumes 33 place program rooms operating at capacity.
	65% OF 3 YEAR OLD CHILDREN AND 70% OF 4 YEAR OLD CHILDREN ATTEND SESSIONAL KINDERGARTEN						
	Licensed places needed for sessional kinder	197	278	303	387	458	A shortfall in licensed places is expected to commence from 2025 onwards. The scale of the shortfall depends upon the capacity model applied.
	Surplus / gap	13 to 33	94 to 114	119 to 139	203 to 223	274 to 294	
	Equiv. prog. rooms surplus / gap	1	3 to 4	4 to 5	7	9 to 10	Assumes 33 place program rooms operating at capacity.
Universal MCH	0 year old population	304	318	331	348	410	Using the industry benchmark of 1 room for every 130 children aged 0 years, overall, there are sufficient MCH consulting rooms to support needs of the community in Warragul SA2 until 2038.
	Consult. rooms existing	3	3	3	3	3	
	Consult. rooms needed	3	3	3	3	4	

Table 5.4: Key demand data for Kindergarten and Universal MCH in Warragul SA2, 2025 – 2041



## 5.4.2 Drouin SA2

Drouin SA2 consists of two planning areas:

1. Drouin and district
2. Longwarry – Longwarry North.

The two planning areas are examined separately, to ensure there is a strong understanding of the specific needs, issues and opportunities in the two planning areas.

### DROUIN AND DISTRICT PLANNING AREA

Drouin and District Planning Area accounts for 31% of Baw Baw's population and this is expected to increase to 34% by 2041. Demand for early years services is high, and while there is a large concentration of early years services in the Drouin, the rapid population growth, and changes in government policy mean the demand for kindergarten, MCH, playgroup and childcare will increase significantly between 2025 and 2041. **Table 5.2** below provides a summary of key demand and supply data for kindergarten and Universal MCH.

### KINDERGARTEN

- A shortfall in licensed places to support kindergarten is projected to commence between 2025 and 2027, depending upon the capacity model applied.
- A minimum additional 5 – 9 programs rooms will be needed to support sessional kindergarten by 2032 if the community continues to demonstrate a preference for sessional kindergarten. The range of 5 – 9 program rooms reflect different demand assumptions i.e. 9 program rooms assumes 90% of 3 and 4 year old children attend sessional kindergarten. Five program rooms assumes 65% of 3 year old children and 70% of 4 year old children access sessional kindergarten.
- Opportunities to refurbish, redevelop or add onto existing kindergarten infrastructure to address the shortfall are as follows:
  - Possible reconfiguration and expansion of Oak Street Kindergarten to create a third program room, but significant reconfiguration of the infrastructure would be required, and there may be a need for additional land. Works are also needed at this site to address safety and functionality issues associated with the outdoor spaces and storage and office facilities.
  - Development of a second program room on the vacant Council owned land next door to Drouin Kindergarten. However, car parking and the impact upon the surrounding residential area is a key consideration and may reduce the viability of this site.
- Potential opportunities from proposed future community infrastructure are outlined below. These reflect information in the Precinct Structure Plan for Drouin, but Council has not yet purchased the land and there is currently no indication about when or whether these facilities will be developed. Each of the facilities is proposed to be situated alongside new school infrastructure and there is uncertainty about whether the schools will be developed in these locations due to concerns about the suitability of the nominated sites.
  - Wellwood community centre (North Drouin) – level 1 community centre which assumes a double room kindergarten will be provided.
  - Weebar community centre (South Drouin) – level 1 community centre which assumes a double room kindergarten will be provided.

Given the Victorian State Government priority around establishing kindergartens on school sites, it may be preferable to pursue the development of kindergarten infrastructure on new school sites once they are confirmed. This will have the dual benefit of delivering on State Government priorities and allowing the proposed community infrastructure to be made available for other age groups and services needed in the community.

### UNIVERSAL MCH

- The existing supply of MCH consulting rooms meets will meet current and future needs until 2035 – 2036. However, all spaces and services are concentrated at Drouin Primary School. If new community or early years infrastructure is developed to the north of Drouin Primary School or the south of the railway line, consideration should be given to incorporating a space which can support MCH services. This does not need to be a dedicated space, but rather one which can support a range of family, community or allied health services including MCH.
- Potential opportunities from proposed future community infrastructure are the Wellwood community centre (North Drouin) and the Weebar community centre (South Drouin), but as level 1 community centres, neither currently propose to include space to support MCH.

### PLAYGROUPS

- The demand for community playgroups is likely to increase as the population increases. In addition, the need for supported playgroups is increasing as more children in Drouin and district are presenting to services with complex behavioral and developmental needs. The data supports this with a significant increase in the number of children in Drouin being identified as developmentally vulnerable in their first year of school between 2018 and 2021.
- Supported playgroup is not currently offered in Drouin and District due to a lack of demand. Supported playgroup has previously been held in a church owned building.
- There are 4 community playgroups registered with Playgroup Victoria operating in Drouin and District including one in Buln Buln. The three in Drouin itself operate from church owned buildings. The one in Buln Buln operates from the Buln Buln Primary School. One other community playgroup operating from a Council owned building, folded during the Covid-19 pandemic, and has not been re-established.
- Potential opportunities from proposed future community infrastructure are:
  - Wellwood community centre (North Drouin) – level 1 community centre proposed which assumes a community room will be included.
  - Weebar community centre (South Drouin) – level 1 community centre proposed which assumes a community room will be included.

### CHILDCARE

- Access to childcare is likely to be difficult for families in Drouin and District, despite the large concentration of providers in the planning area. There are four long daycare providers offering a total of 357 licensed places. With an estimated 1,381 children aged 0 – 4 years in 2023, this means there is 1 place for every 3.8 children.
  - When the benchmark of 1 licensed place for every 2 children aged 0 – 4 years is applied, there is a shortfall of over 330 licensed places.
  - Without additional supply, by 2032 the shortfall will increase to 539.

Drouin and district planning area							
Service	Data description	2025	2027	2029	2032	2041	Commentary and assessment
Kindergarten	All 3 and 4 year old children	598	642	673	718	857	Modelling indicates a shortfall in licensed places will occur between 2027 – 2029.
	Total licensed places needed	255	368	402	515	615	
	Surplus / gap	147 to 28	35 to 85	1 to 119	113 to 232	213 to 332	
	Equiv. prog. rooms surplus / gap	1 to 5	2 to 3	0 to 4	4 to 7	7 to 10	
	90% OF CHILDREN ATTEND SESSIONAL KINDERGARTEN						
	Licensed places needed for sessional kinder	230	261	362	464	554	A shortfall in licensed places is expected to commence in 2025. The timing and scale of the shortfall in licensed places depends upon the capacity model applied.
	Surplus / gap	28 to 46	59 to 77	160 to 178	262 to 280	352 to 370	
	Equiv. prog. rooms surplus / gap	1 to 2	2 to 3	5 to 6	8 to 9	11 to 12	Assumes 33 place program rooms operating at capacity.
	65% OF 3 YEAR OLD CHILDREN AND 70% OF 4 YEAR OLD CHILDREN ATTEND SESSIONAL KINDERGARTEN						
	Licensed places needed for sessional kinder	173	250	273	352	420	A shortfall in licensed places is expected to commence in 2025 – 2026. The timing and scale of the shortfall depends upon the capacity model applied.
	Surplus / gap	11 to 29	48 to 66	71 to 89	150 to 168	218 to 233	
	Equiv. prog. rooms surplus / gap	0 to 1	2 to 3	2 to 3	5 to 6	7 to 8	Assumes 33 place program rooms operating at capacity.
Universal MCH	0 year old population	306	321	334	357	422	Using the industry benchmark of 1 room for every 130 children aged 0 years, overall, there are sufficient MCH consulting rooms to support needs of the community in Drouin SA2 until 2035 – 2036.
	Consult. rooms existing	3	3	3	3	3	
	Consult. rooms needed	3	3	3	3	4	

**Table 5.5:** Key demand data for Kindergarten and Universal MCH in Drouin and district planning area, 2025 – 2041



## LONGWARRY – LONGWARRY NORTH PLANNING AREA.

Longwarry – Longwarry North planning area accounts for 5.2% of Baw Baw's population. The availability of early years services in Longwarry – Longwarry North is more limited due to the size of the population and proximity to Drouin (10 – 12 minute drive). The small but consistent population growth, particularly in younger children, and changes in government policy mean the demand for kindergarten, MCH, playgroup and childcare will increase between 2025 and 2041. **Table 5.3** below provides a summary of key demand and supply data for kindergarten and Universal MCH.

### KINDERGARTEN

- A small shortfall in licensed places to support kindergarten is projected to commence possibly from 2027 but more likely from 2029. This will depend upon the capacity model applied.
- There are no identifiable opportunities to refurbish, redevelop or add onto existing kindergarten infrastructure and no potential opportunities from proposed future community infrastructure but as noted above, it is unlikely additional space will be needed in the short or medium term.

Given the Victorian State Government priority around establishing kindergartens on school sites, if future demand requires additional program space, it would be preferable to pursue the development of kindergarten infrastructure at the Longwarry Primary School.

### UNIVERSAL MCH

- MCH services are not delivered in Longwarry – Longwarry North. Ideally it would be preferable to have MCH services available in Longwarry – Longwarry North, but families typically prefer to access the service in Drouin which is 10 – 15 minutes' drive.

### PLAYGROUPS

- The demand for community playgroups will remain will grow slightly but largely remain stable, reflecting the stable population. The need for supported playgroups is increasing as more children are presenting to services with complex behavioral and developmental needs. The data supports this with a significant increase in the number of children in Longwarry – Longwarry North identified as being developmentally vulnerable in their first year of school between 2018 and 2021.
- Supported playgroup is not currently offered in Longwarry – Longwarry North due to a lack of demand. Supported playgroup has previously been held at the Longwarry Kindergarten rooms, a Council owned building.
- There is one community playgroups operating in Longwarry – Longwarry North. The playgroup operates from the Longwarry Kindergarten rooms, a Council owned building.

### CHILDCARE

- Access to childcare is likely to be difficult for families in Longwarry – Longwarry North. There is one long daycare provider offering a total of 67 licensed places and with an estimated 271 children aged 0 – 4 years in 2023, this means there is 1 place for every 4 children.
  - When the benchmark of 1 licensed place for every 2 children aged 0 – 4 years is applied, there is a shortfall of 68 licensed places.
  - Without additional supply, by 2032 the shortfall will increase to 78.

Longwarry – Longwarry North planning area								
Service	Data description	2025	2027	2029	2032	2041	Commentary and assessment	
Kindergarten	All 3 and 4 year old children	109	111	113	119	135	Modelling indicates a shortfall in licensed places will occur between 2027 – 2029.	
	Total licensed places needed	47	64	67	86	97		
	Surplus / gap	41 to 19	23 to 2	20 to 2	2 to 20	9 to 31		
	Equiv. prog. rooms surplus / gap	3 to 1	1	1 to 1	0 to 1	1		
	90% OF CHILDREN ATTEND SESSIONAL KINDERGARTEN							
	Licensed places needed for sessional kinder	42	45	61	77	87	A shortfall in licensed places is expected to commence in 2027. The timing and scale of the shortfall in licensed places depends upon the capacity model applied.	
	Surplus / gap	13 to 2	10 to 1	6 to 17	22 to 33	32 to 43		
	Equiv. prog. rooms surplus / gap	0	0	0 to 1	1	1 to 2	Assumes 33 place program rooms operating at capacity.	
	65% OF 3 YEAR OLD CHILDREN AND 70% OF 4 YEAR OLD CHILDREN ATTEND SESSIONAL KINDERGARTEN							
	Licensed places needed for sessional kinder	32	43	46	59	66	A shortfall in licensed places is expected to commence in 2029. The timing and scale of the shortfall depends upon the capacity model applied.	
	Surplus / gap	23 to 12	12 to 1	9 to 2	4 to 15	11 to 22		
	Equiv. prog. rooms surplus / gap	0 to 1	0	0 to 1	1	1	Assumes 33 place program rooms operating at capacity.	
	Universal MCH	0 year old population	50	52	53	56	63	Using the industry benchmark of 1 room for every 130 children aged 0 years, Longwarry – Longwarry North is undersupplied for MCH rooms as the service is not offered in this community due to its proximity to Drouin.
		Consult. rooms existing	0	0	0	0	0	
		Consult. rooms needed	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	

**Table 5.6:** Key demand data for Kindergarten and Universal MCH in Longwarry – Longwarry North planning area, 2025 – 2041

### 5.4.3 Trafalgar SA2

Trafalgar SA2 consists of 3 planning areas:

1. Trafalgar – Trafalgar East
2. Trafalgar South – Yarragon South and District
3. Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma.

The three planning areas are examined separately, to ensure there is a strong understanding of the specific needs, issues and opportunities in the three planning areas.

#### TRAFALGAR – TRAFALGAR EAST PLANNING AREA

Trafalgar – Trafalgar East planning area accounts for 8.0% of Baw Baw's population. The population while smaller than the major centres of Drouin and Warragul, is projected to experience consistent population growth, with notable growth in the younger age cohorts of 0 – 4 years and 5 – 9 years.

Early years services in Trafalgar – Trafalgar East including kindergarten, MCH, playgroup and childcare which are concentrated in the township of Trafalgar. The notable growth projected in the number of young children, and changes in government policy mean the demand for kindergarten, MCH, playgroup and childcare will increase between 2025 and 2041.

**Table 5.4** below provides a summary of key demand and supply data for kindergarten and Universal MCH.

#### KINDERGARTEN

- A small shortfall in licensed places to support kindergarten is projected to commence from 2028 – 2029.
- 0 – 1 additional program rooms will be needed to support sessional kindergarten from 2028 if the community continues to demonstrate a preference for sessional kindergarten. The range of 0 – 1 program rooms reflect different demand assumptions i.e. 1 program room assumes 90% of 3 and 4 year old children attend sessional kindergarten. Zero program rooms assumes 65% of 3 year old children and 70% of 4 year old children access sessional kindergarten. There may, however, be a need for additional capacity sooner if the Thorpdale Kindergarten ceases to operate in the future.
- There may be opportunity to expand the existing kindergarten facilities at Trafalgar Primary School to deliver a third program room, but a higher priority for this site is to secure access to additional outdoor space because of the poor functionality and size of the existing play space.
- A second opportunity is to upgrade the old kindergarten facility and return it to being operational for kindergarten services. Council is currently proposing to repurpose the building as a library, but with limited options for addressing the unmet demand for kindergarten in Trafalgar, consideration must be given to using the site for kindergarten.
- No other opportunities to deliver additional kindergarten infrastructure have been identified as part of preparing the EYIP. It is anticipated more investigation will be required to identify alternatives in Trafalgar.

Options for addressing unmet demand for kindergarten in Trafalgar will need to be further examined.



## UNIVERSAL MCH

- The existing supply of MCH consulting rooms will meet current and future needs into the foreseeable future, however the facilities are aging, in poor condition and in significant need of an upgrade. The building the MCH service operates from is currently proposed to be re-purposed as a library with MCH facilities remaining at the site.

## PLAYGROUPS

The demand for community playgroups is likely to increase as the population increases. In addition, the need for supported playgroups is increasing as more children in Trafalgar – Trafalgar East planning area are presenting to service with complex behavioral and developmental needs. The data supports this with a significant increase in the number of children in Trafalgar being identified as developmentally vulnerable in their first year of school between 2018 and 2021.

- Supported playgroup is not currently offered in Trafalgar – Trafalgar East due to a lack of demand. Supported playgroup has previously been held at the community centre in Trafalgar, a Council owned building.
- There is 1 community playgroup registered with Playgroup Victoria operating in Trafalgar from the Trafalgar Scout Hall.

## CHILDCARE

- Access to childcare is likely to be difficult for families in Trafalgar – Trafalgar East. There is one long daycare provider offering a total of 92 licensed places, and with an estimated 305 children aged 0 – 4 years in 2023, this means there is 1 place for every 3.3 children.
  - When the benchmark of 1 licensed place for every 2 children aged 0 – 4 years is applied, there is a shortfall of 60 licensed places.
  - Without additional supply, by 2032 the shortfall will increase to 105.
- The limited availability of childcare services in the broader catchment exacerbates demand further in Trafalgar – Trafalgar East. Families are likely to be accessing childcare in Trafalgar from communities such as Thorpdale, Willow Grove and surrounding areas.

Trafalgar – Trafalgar East planning area							
Service	Data description	2025	2027	2029	2032	2041	Commentary and assessment
Kindergarten	All 3 and 4 year old children	135	145	152	161	179	Modelling indicates a shortfall in licensed places will occur from 2031 onwards.
	Total licensed places needed	57	83	91	116	129	
	Surplus / gap	55 to 36	29 to 10	21 to 2	4 to 23	17 to 36	
	Equiv. prog. rooms surplus / gap	2 to 1	1	0	0 to 1	1 to 2	
	90% OF CHILDREN ATTEND SESSIONAL KINDERGARTEN						
	Licensed places needed for sessional kinder	52	59	82	104	116	A shortfall in licensed places is expected to commence 2028 – 2029. The timing and scale of the shortfall depends upon the capacity model applied.
	Surplus / gap	14 to 8	7 to 1	16 to 22	38 to 44	50 to 56	
	Equiv. prog. rooms surplus / gap	0	0	1	2	2	Assumes 33 place program rooms operating at capacity.
	65% OF 3 YEAR OLD CHILDREN AND 70% OF 4 YEAR OLD CHILDREN ATTEND SESSIONAL KINDERGARTEN						
	Licensed places needed for sessional kinder	39	57	62	79	88	A small shortfall in licensed places is expected to commence from 2029 but is more likely to be evident from 2032. The timing and scale of the shortfall depends upon the capacity model applied.
	Surplus / gap	27 to 21	9 to 3	4 to 2	13 to 19	22 to 28	
	Equiv. prog. rooms surplus / gap	1	0	0 to 1	1	1	Assumes 33 place program rooms operating at capacity.
	Universal MCH	0 year old population	68	71	74	78	85
Consult. rooms existing		1	1	1	1	1	
Consult. rooms needed		0.5	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.7	

**Table 5.7:** Key demand data for Kindergarten and Universal MCH in Trafalgar – Trafalgar East planning area, 2025 – 2041

## TRAFALGAR SOUTH – YARRAGON SOUTH AND DISTRICT

Trafalgar South – Yarragon South and District accounts for 7.0% of Baw Baw's population. The population is projected to remain stable with minimal overall population growth between 2025 and 2041, and a decline in the number of 0 – 4 year olds and 5 – 9 year olds.

The only early years' service in the planning area is the Thorpdale and District Kindergarten which operates from the Thorpdale Hall 3 days a week. Families requiring access to other early years services will typically travel to Trafalgar, Mirboo North or Morewell. While the change to government policy will increase demand for kindergarten, it is more likely there will be reduced demand for MCH and playgroups.

**Table 5.8** below provides a summary of key demand and supply data for kindergarten and Universal MCH.

### KINDERGARTEN

- A shortfall in licensed places to support kindergarten is projected to commence from 2025. A minimum of 1 additional program room is required to address current and future demand for kindergarten in the planning area.
- There may be opportunity to relocate the kindergarten from Thorpdale Hall to the Thorpdale Primary School. This has previously been explored by the service provider and the Department of Education but did not proceed. Given the Victorian State Government priority around having kindergartens on school sites, it is preferable to pursue relocation of the service to Thorpdale Primary School, but this may be dependent upon whether the service provider is willing / able to continue operating the service.

### UNIVERSAL MCH

- MCH services are not delivered in Trafalgar South – Yarragon South and District. MCH services have previously been delivered from a small Council owned building in Thorpdale but not for the last 6 – 7 years because of the age and poor condition of the building. Ideally it would be preferable to have MCH services in the local community, but there are no facilities available to support this, and services can be accessed in either Trafalgar or Mirboo North which are both less than 15 minutes' drive. If kindergarten facilities were developed at Thorpdale Primary School, consideration could be given to incorporating flexible space which could support MCH services along with other services and activities.



## PLAYGROUPS

- The demand for community playgroups will remain stable, reflecting the stable population. The need for supported playgroups is increasing as more children are presenting to services with complex behavioral and developmental needs. The data supports this with a significant increase in the number of children in Trafalgar South – Yarragon South and District identified as being developmentally vulnerable in their first year of school between 2018 and 2021.
- Supported playgroup is not currently offered in Trafalgar South – Yarragon South and District due to a lack of demand.
- There are three community playgroups operating in Trafalgar South – Yarragon South and District. One in Lardner Park at the local primary school, one in Ellinbank, also at the local primary school and one in Thorpdale at a Council owned venue.

## CHILDCARE

- Access to childcare is likely to be difficult for families in Trafalgar South – Yarragon South and District. There are no childcare providers in the planning area and an estimated 148 children aged 0 – 4 years in 2023.
  - When the benchmark of 1 licensed place for every 2 children aged 0 – 4 years is applied, there is a shortfall of 74 licensed places.
  - The shortfall will remain at 74 by 2032.
- Families are reliant on being able to access childcare in Trafalgar, Yarragon, Warragul, Drouin and potentially Longwarry, and these areas also experience high and unmet demand for childcare.

Trafalgar South – Yarragon South and District							
Service	Data description	2025	2027	2029	2032	2041	Commentary and assessment
Kindergarten	All 3 and 4 year old children	69	62	61	61	63	
	Total licensed places needed	30	36	37	44	45	
	Surplus / gap	8	14	15	22	23	
	Equiv. prog. rooms surplus / gap	1	1	1	1	1	Assumes 33 place program rooms operating at capacity.
	<b>90% OF CHILDREN ATTEND SESSIONAL KINDERGARTEN</b>						
	Licensed places needed for sessional kinder	27	25	33	40	41	A shortfall in licensed places is expected to commence in 2025.
	Surplus / gap	5	3	11	18	19	
	Equiv. prog. rooms surplus / gap	1	1	1	1	1	Assumes 33 place program rooms operating at capacity.
	<b>65% OF 3 YEAR OLD CHILDREN AND 70% OF 4 YEAR OLD CHILDREN ATTEND SESSIONAL KINDERGARTEN</b>						
	Licensed places needed for sessional kinder	20	24	25	30	31	A shortfall in licensed places is expected to commence from 2025.
	Surplus / gap	2	2	3	8	9	
	Equiv. prog. rooms surplus / gap	0	1	1	1	1	Assumes 33 place program rooms operating at capacity.
Universal MCH	0 year old population	28	28	28	28	28	Using the industry benchmark of 1 room for every 130 children aged 0 years, Trafalgar South – Yarragon South and District is undersupplied for MCH rooms as the service is not offered in this community.
	Consult. rooms existing	0	0	0	0	0	
	Consult. rooms needed	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	

**Table 5.8:** Key demand data for Kindergarten and Universal MCH in Trafalgar South – Yarragon South and District planning area, 2025 – 2041

## YARRAGON – DARNUM – NILMA

Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma planning area accounts for just over 5.0% of Baw Baw's population and this is expected to grow to nearly 6.0% by 2041. The population while smaller than the major centres of Drouin and Warragul, is projected to experience notable population growth, particularly in the younger age cohorts of 0 – 4 years and 5 – 9 years.

Early years services in Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma including kindergarten, MCH, playgroups and childcare are concentrated in the township of Yarragon. The notable growth projected in the number of young children, and changes in government policy mean the demand for kindergarten, MCH, playgroup and childcare will increase between 2025 and 2041.

**Table 5.9** below provides a summary of key demand and supply data for kindergarten and Universal MCH.

### KINDERGARTEN

- A shortfall in licensed places to support kindergarten is projected to commence between 2025 and 2027.
- One additional program room will be needed to support sessional kindergarten possibly from 2025 if the community continues to demonstrate a preference for sessional kindergarten. A second additional room may be needed from 2032, but this will depend upon the extent of demand for sessional kindergarten.
- The main opportunity to address part of the shortfall in licensed places in Yarragon is to reconfigure the existing two room kindergarten facility at Yarragon Primary School ELC. As noted earlier in this report, one program room is licensed for 33 children and the other for 15 children. The second program room is not used because it is not financially viable to operate the room with 2 staff and from a safety perspective, it is not possible to operate the room with only one staff member and 11 children. Consideration should be given to reconfiguring the rooms to deliver 2 rooms licensed for 22 children i.e. a total of 44 licensed places. This would deliver 11 additional licensed places which are not currently available to the community.
- A second opportunity is to encourage and support Yarragon Children's Centre to offer a funded kindergarten program, although this will then reduce the availability of childcare in the community.
- No other opportunities to deliver additional kindergarten infrastructure have been identified as part of preparing the EYIP as the school does not have capacity for additional infrastructure and no other Council owned sites have been identified. Further investigation of options and alternatives will be needed to address the future demand for kindergarten in Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma.

### UNIVERSAL MCH

- The existing supply of MCH consulting rooms will meet current and future needs into the foreseeable future, however the facilities are aging, in poor condition and in significant need of an upgrade. MCH services have not operated from the site since the Covid-19 pandemic, with families accessing services in Trafalgar or Warragul.



## PLAYGROUPS

- The demand for community playgroups is likely to increase as the population increases. In addition, the need for supported playgroups is increasing as more children in Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma planning area are presenting to service with complex behavioral and developmental needs. The data supports this with a significant increase in the number of children in Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma being identified as developmentally vulnerable in their first year of school between 2018 and 2021.
  - Supported playgroup is not offered in Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma due to a lack of demand. Families have in the past accessed supported playgroup in Trafalgar.
  - There is 1 community playgroup registered with Playgroup Victoria operating in Yarragon from the Yarragon Public Hall.

## CHILDCARE

- Childcare is likely to be reasonably accessible for families in Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma. There is one long daycare provider offering a total of 120 licensed places, and with an estimated 212 children aged 0 – 4 years in 2023, this means there is 1 place for every 1.8 children.
  - When the benchmark of 1 licensed place for every 2 children aged 0 – 4 years is applied, there is a small oversupply of 14 licensed places.
  - Without additional supply, by 2032 there will be a shortfall of 25 licensed places.
- However, limited availability of childcare services in the broader catchment will increase demand in Yarragon. Families are likely to be accessing childcare in Yarragon from communities such as Trafalgar, Thorpdale, Willow Grove and surrounding areas.

Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma							
Service	Data description	2025	2027	2029	2032	2041	Commentary and assessment
Kindergarten	All 3 and 4 year old children	102	109	115	122	144	Modelling indicates a shortfall in licensed places will possibly occur from 2025 onwards.
	Total licensed places needed	44	63	69	88	104	
	Surplus / gap	0 to 11	19 to 30	25 to 36	44 to 55	60 to 71	
	Equiv. prog. rooms surplus / gap	1	1	1 to 2	2	2 to 3	Assumes 33 place program rooms operating at capacity.
	<b>90% OF CHILDREN ATTEND SESSIONAL KINDERGARTEN</b>						
	Licensed places needed for sessional kinder	39	44	62	79	93	A shortfall in licensed places is expected to commence in 2025. The scale of the shortfall depends upon the capacity model applied.
	Surplus / gap	5 to 6	0 to 11	18 to 29	35 to 46	49 to 60	
	Equiv. prog. rooms surplus / gap	0 to 1	1	1	2	2	Assumes 33 place program rooms operating at capacity.
	<b>65% OF 3 YEAR OLD CHILDREN AND 70% OF 4 YEAR OLD CHILDREN ATTEND SESSIONAL KINDERGARTEN</b>						
	Licensed places needed for sessional kinder	30	43	47	60	71	A shortfall in licensed places is expected to commence between 2027 and 2028. The scale of the shortfall depends upon the capacity model applied.
	Surplus / gap	14 to 3	1 to 10	3 to 14	16 to 27	27 to 38	
	Equiv. prog. rooms surplus / gap	1	0 to 1	1	1	1 to 2	Assumes 33 place program rooms operating at capacity.
Universal MCH	0 year old population	44	47	50	54	63	Using the industry benchmark of 1 room for every 130 children aged 0 years, the existing provision of 1 room supports the needs of the Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma communities for the foreseeable future.
	Consult. rooms existing	1	1	1	1	1	
	Consult. rooms needed	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	

**Table 5.9:** Key demand data for Kindergarten and Universal MCH in Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma planning area, 2025 – 2041

## 5.4.4 Mount Baw Baw SA2

Mount Baw Baw SA2 consists of 2 planning areas:

1. Mount Baw Baw – Willow Grove and District
2. Neerim South – Noojee and District

The two planning areas are examined separately, to ensure there is strong understanding of the specific needs, issues and opportunities in the two planning areas.

### MOUNT BAW BAW – WILLOW GROVE AND DISTRICT

Mount Baw Baw – Willow Grove and District accounts for 3.7% of Baw Baw's population. The population is smaller and more dispersed than other parts of Baw Baw and is projected to experience minimal population growth, including the younger age cohorts of 0 – 4 years and 5 – 9 years.

Kindergarten and MCH services are offered in two locations in the planning area including Erica and Willow Grove. This reflects the broad geographic catchment and lengthy travel distances for families who live outside larger townships. Changes in government policy mean the demand for kindergarten will increase between 2025 and 2041, but it is expected this will be centralised in Willow Grove rather than Erica.

The primary challenge in Willow Grove is the kindergarten operating from the Willow Grove community hall. The hall committee has advised they cannot accommodate 5 days a week of kindergarten with the roll out of 30 hours of 4 year old kindergarten, requiring an alternate facility or location to be found.

**Table 5.10** below provides a summary of key demand and supply data for kindergarten and Universal MCH.

### KINDERGARTEN

- Despite the closure of the Erica service, a shortfall in licensed places to support kindergarten is not projected to occur until 2026 when the Willow Grove Kindergarten closes.
- 1 program room will be needed to replace the Willow Grove Hall.
- The only obvious opportunity to address the need for kindergarten facilities in Willow Grove is to access existing or develop new infrastructure at the Willow Grove Primary School. Given the Victorian State Government priority around having kindergartens on school sites, it is preferable to pursue this option, but it needs further investigation.

## UNIVERSAL MCH

- There is an oversupply of MCH consulting rooms to support needs of the community in Mount Baw Baw – Willow Grove and District planning area, but it is important to acknowledge MCH services operate on an as needs basis in this planning area rather than regular sessions, and the travel distances are extensive.
- The MCH facilities at Erica are aging and need to be upgraded. However, service demand is very low and it is difficult to justify investment in upgrading the facilities unless it can also be used for other purposes.
- The MCH facilities in Willow Grove are very basic, dated and in need of upgrade. If kindergarten facilities were developed at Willow Grove Primary School consideration could be given to incorporating flexible space which could support MCH services along with other services and activities.

## PLAYGROUPS

- The demand for community playgroups is likely to remain stable and there isn't strong evidence for supported playgroups.
  - Supported playgroup is not offered in Mount Baw Baw – Willow Grove and District due to a lack of demand. Supported playgroup has previously been held at the community health centre in Rawson.
  - There is 1 community playgroup registered with Playgroup Victoria operating in Willow Grove from the Willow Grove Community Hall.

## CHILDCARE

- Access to childcare is likely to be difficult for families in Mount Baw Baw – Willow Grove and District. There are no childcare providers in the planning area and an estimated 95 children aged 0 – 4 years in 2023.
  - When the benchmark of 1 licensed place for every 2 children aged 0 – 4 years is applied, there is a shortfall of 47 licensed places.
  - Without additional supply, by 2032 the shortfall will increase slightly to 53.
- Families are reliant on being able to access childcare in Trafalgar, Yarragon, Warragul, and Moe and several of these areas are also experiencing high and unmet demand for childcare.



Mount Baw Baw – Willow Grove and District								
Service	Data description	2025	2027	2029	2032	2041	Commentary and assessment	
Kindergarten	All 3 and 4 year old children	40	42	42	44	48	Modelling indicates a shortfall in licensed places will occur from 2026 onwards.	
	Total licensed places needed	17	24	25	32	34		
	Surplus / gap	5	24	25	32	34		
	Equiv. prog. rooms surplus / gap	0	1	1	1	1		Assumes 33 place program rooms operating at capacity.
	90% OF CHILDREN ATTEND SESSIONAL KINDERGARTEN							
	Licensed places needed for sessional kinder	15	17	23	28	31	A shortfall in licensed places is expected to commence from 2027.	
	Surplus / gap	7	17	23	28	31		
	Equiv. prog. rooms surplus / gap	0	1	1	1	1	Assumes 33 place program rooms operating at capacity.	
	65% OF 3-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN AND 70% OF 4-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN ATTEND SESSIONAL KINDERGARTEN							
	Licensed places needed for sessional kinder	12	16	17	22	24	A shortfall in licensed places is expected to commence from 2027.	
	Surplus / gap	10	16	17	22	24		
	Equiv. prog. rooms surplus / gap	0	0	0	0	1	Assumes 33 place program rooms operating at capacity.	
	Universal MCH	0 year old population	18	20	20	20	21	Using the industry benchmark of 1 room for every 130 children aged 0 years, overall, there is an oversupply of MCH consulting rooms to support needs of the community in Mount Baw Baw – Willow Grove and District planning area.
		Consult. rooms existing	2	2	2	2	2	
Consult. rooms needed		0.14	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15		

**Table 5.10:** Key demand data for Kindergarten and Universal MCH in Mount Baw Baw – Willow Grove and District planning area, 2025 – 2041

## NEERIM SOUTH – NOOJEE AND DISTRICT

Neerim South – Noojee and District accounts for 4.6% of Baw Baw's population. The population is smaller and more dispersed than other parts of Baw Baw and is projected to experience minimal population growth, including the younger age cohorts of 0 – 4 years and 5 – 9 years.

Kindergarten and MCH services are offered in Neerim South, with kindergarten services operating from a Council owned building and MCH services from a premises leased from Neerim Health Service. A primary challenge in Neerim South is the age, poor condition, and functionality of the building where kindergarten operates from. This combined with increased demand for kindergarten driven by changes in government policy, means replacement of the existing infrastructure is of high importance.

**Table 5.11** below provides a summary of key demand and supply data for kindergarten and Universal MCH.

### KINDERGARTEN

- A shortfall in licensed places to support kindergarten may occur from 2025, but more likely from likely from 2027.
- An additional program room will be needed to support sessional kindergarten from 2028 when Mary Beck Kindergarten closes. It may be possible for the unmet kindergarten needs of the Neerim South community to be accommodated in the short term at the Drouin West Primary School ELC, as this service is operating well below capacity and may take some time to build up.
- The existing kindergarten site in Neerim South (Mary Beck Preschool) cannot accommodate additional facilities. Traffic and parking are also difficult because of its location beside the Secondary College, and car parking is located across the road from the kindergarten. Council is assessing the feasibility of developing a community hub in Neerim South and the inclusion of facilities to replace the Mary Beck Kindergarten is being considered.

### MCH

- The existing provision of 1 room supports the needs of the Neerim South – Noojee and District communities for the foreseeable future, however, MCH services have not operated from the site since the Covid 19 pandemic. Council is assessing the feasibility of developing a community hub in Neerim South and the inclusion of space to support MCH services is being considered.

### PLAYGROUPS

- The demand for community playgroups is likely to remain stable and there isn't strong evidence for supported playgroups.
- Supported playgroup is not offered in Neerim South – Noojee and District due to a lack of demand.
- There are 4 community playgroups operating in Neerim South – Noojee and District and 2 are registered with Playgroup Victoria. One operates in Neerim East from the Neerim Memorial Hall, one in a church building in Neerim South, one in Shady Creek from the Shady Creek Hall and one from the former Neerim District Primary School at Nayook.

## CHILDCARE

- Access to childcare is likely to be difficult for families in Neerim South – Noojee and District. There are no childcare providers in the planning area and an estimated 139 children aged 0 – 4 years in 2023.
  - When the benchmark of 1 licensed place for every 2 children aged 0 – 4 years is applied, there is a shortfall of 69 licensed places.
  - Without additional supply, by 2032 the shortfall will increase slightly to 71.
- Families are reliant on being able to access childcare in Drouin, Warragul, and Longwarry, and all these areas are experiencing high and unmet demand for childcare.

Neerim South – Noojee and District							
Service	Data description	2025	2027	2029	2032	2041	Commentary and assessment
Kindergarten	All 3 and 4 year old children	68	60	60	61	64	Modelling indicates a small shortfall in licensed places will occur from 2025 onwards.
	Total licensed places needed	30	35	36	44	46	
	Surplus / gap	4	9	36	44	46	
	Equiv. prog. rooms surplus / gap	0	1	2	2	2	Assumes 33 place program rooms operating at capacity.
	90% OF CHILDREN ATTEND SESSIONAL KINDERGARTEN						
	Licensed places needed for sessional kinder	27	24	32	40	42	A shortfall in licensed places is expected to commence from 2029.
	Surplus / gap	1	2	32	40	42	
	Equiv. prog. rooms surplus / gap	1	0	1	2	2	Assumes 33 place program rooms operating at capacity.
	65% OF 3 YEAR OLD CHILDREN AND 70% OF 4 YEAR OLD CHILDREN ATTEND SESSIONAL KINDERGARTEN						
	Licensed places needed for sessional kinder	20	24	25	30	32	A shortfall in licensed places is expected to commence from 2029.
	Surplus / gap	6	2	25	30	32	
	Equiv. prog. rooms surplus / gap	0	0	1	1	1	Assumes 33 place program rooms operating at capacity.
Universal MCH	0 year old population	25	25	26	26	27	Using the industry benchmark of 1 room for every 130 children aged 0 years, the existing provision of 1 room supports the needs of the Neerim South – Noojee and District communities for the foreseeable future.
	Consult. rooms existing	1	1	1	1	1	
	Consult. rooms needed	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	

Table 5.11: Key demand data for Kindergarten and MCH in Neerim South – Noojee and District planning area, 2025 – 2041



**SECTION 6:**

# Key findings.





**Council's planning framework** acknowledges Council has an important role in planning for and supporting early years services and infrastructure and has a focus upon ensuring the community has access to the services and programs needed to support families to care for their children, particularly those experiencing vulnerability.

Council recognises the challenges associated with responding to the State government's early years reform agenda and will need to consider the extent of its future footprint in providing infrastructure for kindergarten, given the 4 year old kindergarten reform and the high expectations the State Government has of local government in this space.

**Council has an extensive role in providing infrastructure which supports early years services** including 10 Council owned or managed facilities and sites supporting the delivery of kindergarten, 8 sites where MCH services are or can be delivered from.

- Kindergarten is delivered from 4 school sites and Council is the lessee with maintenance and infrastructure renewal obligations. While there are functionality issues at three of the sites, lessons have been learnt and the fourth site has delivered more functional and higher quality outcomes.
- Two kindergartens operate from community halls (Willow Grove and Thorpdale) 3 days a week, but the committees of management have indicated they are unlikely to make the halls available 5 days a week to support 30 hours of 4 year old kindergarten.
- Several Council owned buildings are identified as being old, in poor condition or with functionality challenges.
  - The Mary Beck Pre-School in Neerim South and Grace Berglund Kindergarten in Warragul are key locations where kindergarten infrastructure needs to be replaced due to the age, condition or functionality issues associated with the facilities.
  - For MCH, key locations which require upgrade are Trafalgar, Yarragon, Neerim South and Erica, although with very low demand in Erica, it is difficult to justify upgrading the infrastructure.
- There are multiple single room kindergartens which may be sufficient in communities where the population is smaller and demand for kindergarten is lower, but the introduction of 30 hours of 4 year old kindergarten will increase the need for dual room kindergartens.
- Playgroups operate from a range of spaces and places, many of which are not Council owned e.g. schools, churches, and community halls. This demonstrates Council does not need to be solely responsible for providing infrastructure for playgroups, however, where new early years infrastructure is being developed, providing spaces which can support playgroups should be a key consideration.

### **The demand for early years services, supports and infrastructure will increase**

significantly because of population growth and sector reforms for kindergarten and MCH. The communities where increased demand will be highest are Warragul and Drouin, but also Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma and Trafalgar – Trafalgar East. Communities where limited or no early years services are available also rely heavily upon the larger urban townships to access services. Broadly, the demand analysis shows:

- **Kindergarten:** Families in Baw Baw Shire prefer to access kindergarten in their local town and have a strong preference to access sessional kindergarten rather than kindergarten integrated with childcare. Unmet demand for sessional kindergarten is expected to commence from 2025 in Warragul and District, Drouin and District, and from Trafalgar South – Yarragon South, from 2027 in Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma, and from 2032 in Longwarry – Longwarry North and Mount Baw Baw – Willow Grove, and Neerim South – Noojee.

Additional infrastructure will be needed in each of these planning areas to support sessional kindergarten. (The unmet demand outlined above assumes 65% of 3 year old and 70% of 4 year old children access sessional kindergarten).

- **Universal MCH:** The existing supply of MCH consulting spaces will meet the current and medium to long term needs of the community with additional space required in Drouin from 2036 and Warragul from 2038, but consideration needs to be given to the distribution of MCH services in Warragul and Drouin. The availability of spaces to support the delivery of MCH services in smaller communities is very important to the accessibility of the service, but a number ceased operating during the Covid 19 pandemic and have not as yet re-opened. While many families have indicated they prefer to access MCH services in their local town, some are prepared to travel to access quality services.
- **Playgroup:** Overall, demand for community playgroups is likely to increase as the population grows with the largest increase in demand likely to occur in Warragul and Drouin. While playgroups access a wide range of community infrastructure not owned by Council, there is some indication community playgroups may find it difficult to access facilities when needed. Consideration should be given to incorporating flexible multiuse spaces as part of new or redeveloped early years infrastructure to support playgroups, new parent groups, children's activities etc.
- **Childcare:** Access to childcare is difficult for families in many communities across Baw Baw Shire. It is a key area of concern for families and their concerns are supported by the supply and demand data. Childcare is not available in 3 planning areas – Trafalgar South – Yarragon South and District, Mount Baw Baw – Willow Grove and District, and Neerim South – Noojee and District. These communities are highly reliant upon being able to access childcare in neighbouring areas which are already experiencing high and unmet demand.
- With population growth, the unmet demand will continue to increase unless additional services and licensed places become available. While Council is not involved in providing infrastructure specifically for childcare, there may be opportunity to work with kindergarten service providers to explore the viability of offering before and after kindergarten care to address some of the care needs of families.

**Making sure spaces and places are welcoming and accessible is important for all children and families** With increasing diversity in our community and more children presenting with complex needs and developmental vulnerabilities, it is particularly important to think about how we create spaces which are welcoming and accessible, of a community scale, and support the diverse needs and abilities of children and families.

## **Activating and using early years infrastructure effectively to respond to the needs of our communities.**

Many of the kindergarten services and facilities in Baw Baw Shire operate below licensed capacity. This occurs for multiple reasons including difficulties securing and retaining staff, viability issues where the licensed capacity does not align with child staff ratios, concerns about the quality of education outcomes particularly for 3 year old children, family preferences for smaller group sizes, and issues associated with the functionality of spaces.

The relationships and formal agreements between Council and kindergarten service providers are critical to finding solutions which acknowledge the challenges and constraints service providers experience, and the need for infrastructure to be used in way which provides opportunity for all children to access kindergarten. Council's Kindergarten Central Registration System is highly valued by early years providers and the community and helps to facilitate efficient use of kindergarten program rooms.

There is opportunity to have a more consistent and planned approach to the use and management of early years spaces, especially those which are not licensed spaces, to embed family support, community, and allied health services more effectively into facilities. Aspects to be addressed are lease and licence agreements, fees and charges, priority of access guidelines, and booking arrangements.

**Leisure and community facilities.** Parks and playgrounds, swimming pools, leisure centres, libraries and community events are highly valued by families and are used or participated in often. The things families and children would like to see improved about these facilities are:

- For parks and playgrounds to offer more diverse, challenging, interesting, nature based, accessible, and inclusive play spaces. The age and poor condition of play spaces and parks, the lack of shade and play spaces not supporting children with additional needs and older children are key concerns.
- For libraries to be larger, more contemporary, and offer improved amenities.
- For swimming pools and leisure centres to be larger and offer more fun / play facilities. Children particularly love water play including water parks and water slides. The lack of access to swimming lessons, is a key concern for families which is likely to be linked to small size of facilities.



**SECTION 7:**

# Priority areas and recommendations.





Future planning for and decision making about early years infrastructure will be guided by:

- Priority areas of focus
- Recommendations for Baw Baw Shire as a whole and by planning area.

Combined these elements are designed to provide Council with a clear idea about what to consider when planning for the development and operation of early years infrastructure, and what the priorities are for Council and the community over coming years.

## 7.1 Priority areas

The following areas of focus are underpinned by detailed research completed to support the development of the Early Years Infrastructure Plan.

Priority area		What does it mean?
1	Early years facilities for today and the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Facilities support the delivery of high quality, contemporary, and effective early years services and programs. Spaces are fit for purpose, functional and have high amenity.</li><li>• Opportunities to co-locate or integrate early years facilities and services together and with other complementary community services and activities are actively pursued to improve access to early years services, and to use resources wisely.</li><li>• Facilities are adaptable, allowing for shared use, multiple uses across a day or week, and different uses over time.</li><li>• Investment in facilities is based upon evidence of community need and consistency with Council's strategic priorities.</li><li>• Environmental sustainability and the viability of services underpins the development and operation of early years spaces.</li><li>• Facilities and spaces are located to support the delivery of early years services and activities across our large geographic catchment.</li></ul>

Priority area		What does it mean?
2	Strengthening the use and activation of early years facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governance and management arrangements are transparent, based upon best practice and support the smooth operation of early years facilities and services.</li> <li>• Operating models and agreements respond to both the need to deliver quality services and ensure children and families have access to the services they need.</li> <li>• Shared use of spaces is actively pursued and facilitated, to support access to services and ensure early years facilities are well used.</li> </ul>
3	Spaces are welcoming for all children and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilities are designed and operated to be welcoming, support equity of access, and respond to the diverse needs and capabilities of our community.</li> <li>• Local communities, children, and families are actively engaged in the planning and development of early years spaces.</li> <li>• The design of public spaces and buildings responds to the needs and aspirations of children and families supporting universal accessibility, delivering interesting and diverse spaces, and facilitating access to activities and programs which make our community more liveable for families and children.</li> </ul>
4	Working together to maximise outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships with government agencies who fund the development of early years infrastructure will be constructive and strong.</li> <li>• The use of community infrastructure not owned by Council for early years services and activities will be encouraged and facilitated.</li> <li>• Council will be an active advocate for the provision and full funding of infrastructure needed to support early years services.</li> <li>• Strong partnerships with early years' service providers are facilitated and maintained.</li> </ul>

## 7.2 Recommendations

### 7.2.1 Recommendations for Baw Baw Shire

Priority area	No.	Recommendation
Early years facilities for today and the future	1.1	<p>Explore and articulate Council's preferred response to the kindergarten reforms addressing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent of involvement Council proposes to have in the kindergarten space.</li> <li>• The extent of the capital contribution Council is willing and able to make to the delivery of new kindergarten infrastructure.</li> <li>• Council's future role in relation to kindergartens on school sites i.e. is Council prepared to continue taking on the role of lessee for the sites and the consequent maintenance and renewal responsibilities.</li> </ul>
	1.2	<p>Undertake a more detailed assessment of options to redevelop or expand existing kindergarten and early years sites to address future demand for kindergarten in Baw Baw Shire.</p> <p>The assessment should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify options, the strengths and limitations of each option, potential costs, the recommended direction and timelines.</li> <li>• Consider options for alternate sites and facilities to accommodate kindergarten infrastructure.</li> </ul> <p>The primary purpose of the assessment will be to identify a pipeline of projects to inform Council's long term financial plan and the partnership agreement with the Victorian School Building Authority.</p>
	1.3	<p>Where early years infrastructure is expanded or redeveloped, explore opportunities to incorporate multipurpose community activity space to accommodate community and supported playgroups, new parent groups, children's programs etc. Important components of these spaces will be having connected indoor and outdoor space, storage, amenities, and simple kitchen facilities.</p>
	1.4	<p>Review data annually about kindergarten participation and supply, and population projection data to identify any significant changes in demand and supply. Where a significant change has occurred, a more detailed review will be undertaken e.g. upon release of new ABS Census data.</p>



Priority area	No.	Recommendation
Strengthening how well facilities are used and activated	2.1	Work with kindergarten service providers to identify opportunities and explore the viability of offering before and after kindergarten care.
	2.2	Explore opportunities to activate community spaces with early years activities and services e.g. consulting rooms being used for allied health or family support services when they are not otherwise in use, community halls accommodating playgroups or new parent groups. As part of this, lease and license arrangements will need to be reviewed or considered.
	2.3	Review fees and charges arrangements for early years facilities, identifying where changes are needed to respond to operating and maintenance costs and / or facilitate increased use of spaces.
Spaces are welcoming and safe for all children and families	3.1	Prepare a toolkit to support Council and developers when designing and developing open space and play spaces, to better respond the needs and aspiration of families and children. Offering diverse, challenging, interesting, nature based, accessible, and inclusive play spaces is key.
	3.2	Develop a toolkit to support Council and its partners when designing community facilities and public spaces e.g. what to think about in relation to the needs of families and children, child safe considerations, templates, ideas about how to engage effectively, case studies etc.
Working together to maximise outcomes	4.1	<p>Advocate to the Victorian State Government about the need for a realistic and place-based assessment of future kindergarten demand. Key elements of the advocacy should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not being able to achieve quality education outcomes when licensed capacity is as high as 33 children.</li> <li>• The strong preferences families in Baw Baw Shire have for sessional kindergarten and unrealistic expectations about the uptake of kindergarten integrated with childcare.</li> <li>• The importance of families being able to access kindergarten in their local community or close to their local community to maximise accessibility.</li> <li>• Reducing the capacity multiplier used to assess the number of places available in long daycare to support the delivery of funded 3 and 4 year old kindergarten in Baw Baw Shire.</li> </ul>
	4.2	Advocate to the Victorian State Government for the development of kindergarten infrastructure as part of future schools planned in Baw Baw Shire.
	4.3	A Advocate for the increased provision of childcare throughout Baw Baw Shire.

## 7.2.2 Recommendations by planning area

No.	Warragul and District	Priority
1.1	<p>Explore options and assess the feasibility of redeveloping or expanding existing kindergarten sites in Warragul and District and identify other potential sites where kindergarten infrastructure could be accommodated including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of a child and family hub on the site of the Grace Berglund Kindergarten.</li> <li>• Reconfiguration and expansion of the Warragul Community Preschool.</li> <li>• Expansion of the St Andrews Kindergarten, noting this is not a Council owned site or facility.</li> </ul>	Short term
1.2	Following completion of recommendation 1.1, prepare a recommended program of activity to facilitate the provision of additional infrastructure to support sessional kindergarten in Warragul and District.	Short term
1.3	<p>Advocate for the development of kindergarten infrastructure as part of future schools planned in Warragul and District including in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North West Warragul</li> <li>• North East Warragul</li> <li>• South West Warragul</li> </ul>	Short to medium term
1.4	Explore opportunities to provide space to support the delivery of MCH services South of the Princes Highway.	Medium to long term
1.5	Consider incorporating space for MCH services and multipurpose activity space if a child and family hub is developed on the site of the Grace Berglund Kindergarten. As part of this, consideration should be given to relocating MCH services from the Normanby Street site.	Short term

No.	Drouin and District	Priority
2.1	<p>Explore options and assess the feasibility of redeveloping or expanding existing kindergarten sites in Drouin and District and identify other potential sites where kindergarten infrastructure could be accommodated including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reconfiguration and expansion of the Oak Street Kindergarten.</li> <li>• Development of a second program room on the vacant land beside Drouin Kindergarten.</li> </ul>	Short term
2.2	<p>Following completion of recommendation 2.1, prepare a recommended program of activity to facilitate the provision of additional infrastructure to support sessional kindergarten in Drouin and District.</p>	Short term
2.3	<p>Advocate for the development of kindergarten infrastructure as part of future schools planned in Drouin and District including in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Drouin</li> <li>• South Drouin</li> </ul>	Short to medium term
2.4	<p>Consider providing space to support the delivery of MCH services north of Drouin Primary School or the south of the railway line.</p>	Medium to long term

No.	Longwarry – Longwarry North	Priority
3.1	Advocate for the future provision of kindergarten infrastructure at the Longwarry Primary School.	Medium to Long term
3.2	Investigate opportunities to make Longwarry Kindergarten available for playgroup activity when it is not being used for kindergarten.	Ongoing

No.	Trafalgar – Trafalgar East	Priority
4.1	<p>Explore options and assess the feasibility of redeveloping or expanding existing kindergarten sites in Trafalgar – Trafalgar East and identify other potential sites where kindergarten infrastructure could be accommodated including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expansion of existing kindergarten facilities at Trafalgar Primary School.</li> <li>• Upgrade of the former kindergarten facility returning it to be an operational kindergarten site.</li> </ul>	Short term
4.2	Following completion of recommendation 4.1, prepare a recommended program of activity to facilitate the provision of additional infrastructure to support sessional kindergarten in Trafalgar – Trafalgar East.	Short term
4.3	Advocate to secure access to additional outdoor space at the Trafalgar Primary School for the Trafalgar Kindergarten.	Short term
4.4	Address the age and poor condition of the existing space MCH services operate from. Improvements to the space should also consider how it can support other community and early years activities or programs e.g. playgroups, allied health etc.	Short term



No.	Trafalgar South – Yarragon South and District (Inc. Thorpdale)	Priority
5.1	Assess the feasibility of relocating the Thorpdale and District Kindergarten to the Thorpdale Primary School site. As part of this, assess whether multipurpose space can be provided to support playgroup activity and potentially MCH services.	Short term

No.	Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma	Priority
6.1	<p>Explore options and assess the feasibility of redeveloping or expanding existing kindergarten sites in Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma and identify other potential sites where kindergarten infrastructure could be accommodated including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reconfigure the existing two room kindergarten facility at Yarragon Primary School ELC to accommodate 44 licensed places, noting this is not a Council owned or operated facility.</li> </ul>	Short term
6.2	Following completion of recommendation 6.1, prepare a recommended program of activity to facilitate the provision of additional infrastructure to support sessional kindergarten in Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma.	Short term
6.3	Address the age and poor condition of the existing space MCH services operate from. Improvements to the space should also consider how it can support other community and early years activities or programs e.g. playgroups, allied health etc.	Short term

No.	Mount Baw Baw – Willow Grove and District (Inc. Erica)	Priority
7.1	Assess the feasibility of relocating the Willow Grove Kindergarten to the Willow Grove Primary School site including assessing whether multipurpose space can be included to support playgroup activity and MCH services.	Short term
7.2	Work with the kindergarten service provider to examine opportunities to offer alternate models of service delivery.	

No.	Neerim South – Noojee and District	Priority
8.1	Relocate the Mary Beck Kindergarten away from its current site and incorporate it as part of the proposed community hub in Neerim South. Two program rooms totaling 44 licensed places are recommended.	Short term
8.2	Provide multipurpose space as part of the proposed community hub in Neerim South to support the delivery of MCH services, playgroups and other early years or allied health services.	Short term

## **APPENDIX A: More detailed information about the policy and planning context**

### **POLICY AT THE BROADER LEVEL**

Over the past decade Federal, State and Local governments have shown they understand 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.

### **FEDERAL AND STATE POLICY INITIATIVES**

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.

The State Government's Education State agenda includes the early years and involves building an education system that provides every student with the knowledge and capabilities that will see them thrive throughout their lives, to have the skills that industry needs, and that employers expect.

- The State Government's Early Childhood Reform Plan outlines a comprehensive vision for the early years. The Plan includes expansion of kindergarten programs, strengthening of Maternal and Child Health services and parenting support.
- A focus upon supporting children and families experiencing vulnerability.
- Improving access to kindergarten through the establishment of kindergarten central registration and enrolment systems (CRES) in local government areas 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 introduction of universal access to 15 hours of funded 3 year old kindergarten through a staged roll out between 2022 and 2029. The State Government has released Funding Guidelines to support delivery of 3 year old kindergarten and guide application of School Readiness Funding and Early Start Kindergarten.
- The most recent policy reform proposed by the Victorian State Government is the introduction of 30 hours of 4 year old kindergarten through a staged approach between 2025 and 2032.
- The State Government agenda for Maternal and Child Health is set out in the Early Childhood Reform Plan and complements other initiatives including expansion of kindergarten. It includes:
  - increased investment in parenting supports
  - an increase in key ages and stages hours per child from 6.45 hours to 8 hours
  - expansion of Enhanced Maternal and Child Health programs
  - additional resourcing to address the risk of family violence
  - flexible funding to support people experiencing vulnerabilities
  - investment in workforce development and attraction and improvements to the Maternal and Child Health line
  - expansion to the supported playgroup program

- specific initiatives to support Koori families and children
- additional support for children with a disability

## **LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT**

Baw Baw Shire has a well-developed policy framework to set priorities and guide decision making and service delivery. In relation to the early years the following documents are relevant to planning for service and infrastructure to meet future community needs.

## **COMMUNITY VISION 2021**

The Community Vision for Baw Baw Shire was adopted in 2021 and outlines the aspiration for the municipality for the next twenty years. The Vision includes objectives, strategies and outcomes which are structured around themes reflecting commitments to sustainability, community health and wellbeing and economic development. Of relevance to planning for the early years, the Vision includes an aspiration for healthy and well people, living in safe, connected communities and for thriving, diverse and resilient communities.

The goal to develop healthy and well people and communities is proposed to be supported by the following:

- Availability of high quality, accessible and local healthcare options.
- Health and wellbeing services that are connected and actively work together.
- Investment in health infrastructure.
- Resourced and effective services that support those in our community when they need it, and which positively impact their lives.

A related goal to support connected and inclusive communities, creating a strong sense of safety and belonging is proposed to be supported by:

- Safe, accessible and inclusive community spaces and places
- A welcoming and accepting community for all people

Other relevant strategies include seeking improvements to public transport, creation of vibrant cultural and recreation facilities, an emphasis on learning and education and support for the local economy.

## **COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025**

The Council Plan is prepared in the context of the Community Vision and sets priorities and key directions for the short to medium term. Council's mission is "to be leaders in delivering, innovative and community focused services today that make a difference for tomorrow".

The Plan discusses critical challenges to be faced over the next decade and these include:

- Council's ability to raise funds for services and infrastructure to meet the needs of the community.
- Availability of the full range of services and infrastructure required to support the community.
- The health and wellbeing of the community.
- The changing community demographic including ageing and population growth.
- Community expectations and requirements with regards to child safety, violence against women, and gender equity.



The Council Plan has been structured in line with the Community Vision themes: A sustainable Shire, A healthy community and A thriving community. Focus areas are identified and those of relevance to planning for responsive and accessible early years services and infrastructure include:

- Providing community infrastructure, services and facilities which support sustainable communities and are responsive to changing needs.
- Advocating for strategic priorities and those services and facilities needed by the community.
- Supporting community health, safety, and wellbeing, including mental health.
- Supporting community connectivity, diversity, inclusion, and reconciliation.
- Improving local transport networks and advocating for improvements for roads and public transport for residents across the Shire.

### **MUNICIPAL PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELLBEING PLAN 2021-2025**

The Health and Wellbeing Plan is structured around four priority areas being Active Living, Healthy Eating, Mental Wellbeing, and Gender Equity and Prevention of Family Violence. The Plan informs and supports other Council planning in the arts, sport and recreation, children, youth and family services and community infrastructure planning. It complements planning at the regional level including health promotion plans prepared by other bodies. Key influences informing the Plan include supporting community and economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and responding to climate change.

The Plan is structured around goals, strategies and outcomes. Those of relevance to planning for early years services and infrastructure include:

- Goals to increase participation in active living, arts and culture for everyone and enhancing mental wellbeing by creating resilient, connected, and socially inclusive communities.
- Strategies including the promotion of active living to increase overall wellbeing in the community, support for initiatives that promote equal access to services and resources, increase resilience and promote social inclusion.

The Plan envisages a community concerned to ensure that everyone feels supported, where physical activity and community involvement are encouraged and a welcoming and accepting community for all people, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, ability, sexuality or age.

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND VISITOR ECONOMY STRATEGY 2022-2025, BAW BAW SHIRE COUNCIL**

The Economic Development and Visitor Economy Strategy was developed to focus Council's aspiration for a prosperous economy, to identify opportunities for continued growth and diversification in the local economy and to propose priorities and projects for the future. The Strategy discusses the Shire's location in Gippsland, the proximity to Melbourne, transport corridors and markets, the top industry sectors by economic output and the importance of the visitor economy.

The Shire is described as having experienced significant population growth and this is expected to continue for the next 20 years with the population forecast to grow to 80,000 from the current 54,884 which is a 48% increase.

Of relevance to planning for and supporting the early years is the acknowledgement in the Strategy that the accommodation, health care and education training sectors employ one in three local workers. Conversely, almost one third of working residents leave Baw Baw for work which results in potentially lost local expenditure.

The Strategy recognises that the areas natural attractions and events are important in attracting visitors and contribute significantly to the Shire's liveability. Provision of responsive education, health and recreation services and facilities supports the attraction and retention of a skilled workforce. Access to affordable housing and early years services enables workers to live locally, be part of the community and reduces the need to travel out from or into the Shire for work. Responsive early years and other education services simultaneously create jobs and enable jobs, it supports jobs for those working in the sector and enables parental participation in work, education and training, or other related activities.

### **MUNICIPAL EARLY YEARS PLAN 2024-2027**

Baw Baw Shire Council's Early Years Plan considers children from 0 to 12 years of age. The Plan outlines the policy and local community context for supporting children and families and informs and shapes Council's role in the early years. It includes an extensive discussion on Child Safety Standards, the importance of early years to the development of children and the need to include children's voices in planning and development of services. The Plan builds on the achievements of the previous Plan (2015-2018) and is supported by the functioning of Council's Early Years Advisory Committee.

Council's role is identified as having several important elements:

- Planning and coordination – including planning for Council's overall priorities, as a framework for partnerships and collaboration and to guide decision making.
- Service provision – direct provision of early years services to support children and families.
- Facility planning – planning for and maintaining infrastructure to support service delivery by Council and others including early learning hubs developed in partnership with the State Government.
- Advocacy – seeking opportunities to influence government decision making to improve resourcing and opportunities to support children and families.
- Strengthening community capacity – services and programs to support and develop families' capacity to care for children, particularly those experiencing vulnerability.

The Plan is structured around five priority areas being:

1. Health and development
2. Supports and services for families in a rapidly growing area
3. Children's learning
4. Community safety and accessibility
5. Connection and inclusion.

Objectives and strategies have been developed for all priorities with key directions and initiatives being:

- Fostering of partnerships and collaborative approaches
- Creating a safe, accessible and family friendly community for all
- Development of family friendly spaces
- Support for the social connection and inclusion of all children and families
- Supporting families experiencing vulnerability

The Early Years Plan acknowledges that Council has an important role in supporting children and families in Baw Baw Shire, it sets out priorities for action, promotes a collaborative approach and identifies the need for a whole of Council approach in supporting the early years.

## **MUNICIPAL EARLY YEARS INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN 2020**

The Plan was prepared to assess and guide early years infrastructure provision to meet forecast future demand until 2036. The Plan “provides a framework to facilitate the efficient and sustainable provision of early years infrastructure”. The Plan responds to demographic change in Baw Baw Shire including significant population growth projected for Trafalgar, Yarragon and Longwarry and its distribution across many small and large communities. Other considerations are a commitment to equity across the Shire and provision of accessible early years services within communities. The planning focus is on kindergartens in response to State Government policy directions which will significantly increase demand.

The Plan notes Council’s current role in the early years is primarily in planning, advocacy and support and infrastructure provision. Council’s role in direct delivery of early years services has been limited with Maternal and Child Health and supported playgroups. The preference for hub-based service models reflects an awareness of the efficiencies that can be achieved from this approach and of the community benefits that derive from services being co-located or integrated and accessible.

The Plan was structured around a precinct-based approach which included an audit of current infrastructure and population profile and a forecast future population profile to inform infrastructure planning to meet future community needs. This research was complemented by consultation with service providers, parents and families.

Planning for Maternal and Child Health services also involved demographic analysis and engagement with parents and families and Maternal and Child Health nurses. Recommendations included updating existing facilities and exploring opportunities to co-locating Maternal and Child Health facilities with other early years or community services.

Planning for long day care in Baw Baw Shire involved an assessment of existing and planned supply and demographic analysis to understand likely future demand. Council is not a direct provider of long day care, with services provided by the private sector and community organisations. Council provides a family day care service which is highly valued by the community and provided in private homes. Engagement with services providers, parents and families confirmed the research findings that by 2036 it is likely that additional childcare facilities will be required in Warragul and Drouin but unlikely that an increase will be required in other communities.

## **KINDERGARTEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES PLAN, BAW BAW SHIRE, 2020**

The Plan was prepared to estimate the growth in demand for kindergarten resulting from the impact of State Government reforms to introduce 15 hours of funded 3 year old kindergarten between 2022 and 2029. In Baw Baw Shire increased demand will come from both the introduction of universal funded three-year-old kindergarten and population growth.

The Plan outlines demand estimates for where, when and how much demand for kindergarten places will grow within the Shire. It also estimates where and how this demand can be accommodated in existing facilities before new infrastructure will be needed. It notes recent infrastructure projects including Drouin Early Learning Centre expansion and new Early Learning Centres in Trafalgar and Warragul. Planning permits have also been issued for a number of developments, mainly in Drouin and Warragul.

The Plan was informed by Council's earlier Municipal Early Years Infrastructure Plan which found that without infrastructure investment, there would be future shortages in kindergarten places in Longwarry, Drouin, and Warragul.

The Plan recommended a number of actions to maximise the capacity of current infrastructure by reviewing service models and timetabling. The main location that is projected to experience a significant shortfall in kindergarten places through to 2029 is Drouin. Council and its partners are encouraged to apply through the Building Blocks Capacity Building Grants stream for State Government funding to assist with the development of the necessary infrastructure to meet forecast future kindergarten demand.



## APPENDIX B: More detailed information about the demographic profile of Baw Baw Shire and planning areas<sup>1</sup>

### Current and forecast population Baw Baw Shire

								CHANGE			
Service	2011	2016	2021	2022	2023	2031	2041	2011 – 2021	2022 – 2031	2031 – 2041	2021 – 2041
Population size	42,861	48,479	57,626	59,110	60,588	72,107	87,281	14,765 34.4%	12,997 22.0%	15,174 21.0%	29,665 51.5%
0 – 4 age cohort	2,915	2,944	3,507	3,829	4,046	4,961	5,880	592 20.3%	1,132 32.3%	919 18.5%	2,373 67.7%
5 – 9 age cohort	2,665	3,365	3,618	3,739	3,828	4,938	5,908	953 35.8%	1,199 33.1%	970 19.6%	2,290 63.3%
0 year old	563		734	783	804	950	1,119	171 30.4%	167 22.8%	169 17.8%	385 52.5%
3 year old	596		691	764	778	1,013	1,204	95 15.9%	249 36.0%	191 18.9%	513 74.2%
4 year old	609		693	744	802	1,024	1,220	84 13.8%	280 40.4%	196 19.1%	527 76.0%

Table B1: Historical and forecast population data for the Shire of Baw Baw

<sup>1</sup> .id community, Baw Baw Shire Community profile and Population Forecast About the profile areas | Baw Baw Shire | profile.id  
Commonwealth of Australia, Australian Early Development Census, 2022. Accessed 1 May 2023. Available online: AEDC

## POPULATION SIZE: HISTORICAL

Significant growth has occurred in Baw Baw Shire the past decade with the population growing from 42,861 to 57,626 between 2011 and 2021.

Most of the growth (77.7%) has occurred in Warragul and Drouin, but consistent and notable growth is also evident across other planning areas including:

- Trafalgar – Trafalgar East
- Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma
- Longwarry – Longwarry North
- Neerim South – Noojee and District.

## POPULATION SIZE: PROJECTED

Continued significant growth is projected for Baw Baw Shire, concentrated in Warragul and Drouin. Between 2021 and 2041:

- The Baw Baw population is projected to grow by over 50%, reaching 72,107 by 2031 and 87,281 by 2041.
- Drouin is projected to increase from 18,062 to 29,578.
- Warragul is projected to increase from 19,889 to 32,452.

## AGE PROFILE: HISTORICAL

Between 2011 and 2021, the growth rate for the 0 – 4 year old population in Baw Baw Shire was consistent, but lower than the growth rate for the overall population (20.3% compared with 34.4%).

- The locations which experienced high growth were Longwarry – Longwarry North (54.7%), Warragul (21%), and Drouin (31.6%)
- Some locations experienced a decline including Mount Baw Baw – Willow Grove and District (27.6%), Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma (5.1%), and Trafalgar – Trafalgar East (5.1%)
- The overall growth rate for the 3 and 4 year old population was low; 3 year old was 15.9% and 4 year old 13.8% compared with the 0 – 2 year old population.

The growth rate for the 5 – 9 year old population was high by comparison to the 0 – 4 population (35.8% compared with 20.3%)

- The locations which experienced high growth were Longwarry – Longwarry North (71.5%), Drouin (58.1%), Trafalgar – Trafalgar East (51.9%), Warragul (31.6%).
- Mount Baw Baw – Willow Grove and District was the only catchment to experience a decline in the 5 – 9 year old population (23.9%).

## AGE PROFILE PROJECTED

Between 2021 and 2041, the 0 – 4-year old population is projected to increase by 67.7%, compared to 51.5% growth projected for the overall Baw Baw Shire population. Consistent with this, the proportion of the population that 0 – 4 year olds will account for is expected to increase from 6.1% to 6.7%.

- Areas where growth in 0 – 4-year-olds is projected to be highest are Drouin, Warragul, Trafalgar – Trafalgar East, Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma. Similarly high levels of growth are also forecast for the 5 – 9-year-old population.
- Trafalgar South – Yarragon South and District is the only catchment where a decline in the 0 – 4 and 5 – 9 year old population is forecast, although growth in Neerim South – Noojee and District is forecast to be very low.

## SEIFA

Between 2021 and 2041, the 0 – 4 year old population is projected to increase by 67.7%, compared to 51.5% growth projected for the overall Baw Baw Shire population. Consistent with this, the proportion of the population that 0 – 4 year olds will account for is expected to increase from 6.1% to 6.7%.

- Areas where growth in 0 – 4 year olds is projected to be highest are Drouin, Warragul, Trafalgar – Trafalgar East, Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma. Similarly high levels of growth are also forecast for the 5 – 9 year old population.
- Trafalgar South – Yarragon South and District is the only catchment where a decline in the 0 – 4 and 5 – 9 year old population is forecast, although growth in Neerim South – Noojee and District is forecast to be very low.

## AEDC

An increasing number of children in their first year of school in Baw Baw Shire are identified as being developmentally vulnerable on 1 or more and 2 or more domains. Between 2018 and 2021 increases in developmental vulnerabilities were evident in:

- In Drouin around physical health and wellbeing. Overall, the proportion of developmentally vulnerable children on 1 or more and 2 domains increased
- The proportion of children developmentally vulnerable on one or more domain, increased from 15.2 to 22.9.
- The proportion of children developmentally vulnerable two or more domains, increased from 8.9 to 13.0.
- In Longwarry around language and cognitive skills, increasing from 3.7 to 13.5. It should be noted the sample size for this community was very small.
- In Trafalgar / Yarragon and surrounds around social competence, emotional maturity, communication skills and general knowledge. Overall, the proportion of children developmentally vulnerable on 1 or more and 2 or more domains increased notably.
- The proportion of children developmentally vulnerable on one or more domain, increased from 15.7 to 30.3.
- The proportion of children developmentally vulnerable two or more domains, increased from 5.6 to 16.9.
- In Warragul around social competence (7.8 increasing to 12.7) and emotional maturity (8.3 increasing to 13.1).

On a positive note, there has been a notable decrease in developmental vulnerability in Neerim, noting the sample size for this community is very small.

## HOUSEHOLD MAKE UP

The number and proportion of households with dependent children has increased as the Baw Baw Shire as the population has grown, and this is projected to continue over the next 10 – 20 years.

In most communities around 36 – 40% of households have dependent children but this is a slightly lower in Mount Baw Baw – Willow Grove and District (32.4%), and Neerim South – Noojee and District (32.5%). Forecasts indicate this will remain similar into the foreseeable future.

The communities with the highest proportion of households with young children (children aged under 15 years) in 2021 were Drouin, Warragul, Trafalgar – Trafalgar East, and Longwarry – Longwarry North.

## CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Cultural diversity is low in Baw Baw Shire especially when compared with metropolitan Melbourne, but it is increasing steadily. The most significant increases between 2016 and 2021 occurred in Warragul and Drouin.

Overall, Warragul is the most culturally diverse community.

## NEED FOR ASSISTANCE

The number of people with a need for assistance in their daily lives is increasing steadily in Baw Baw Shire with the most significant increase between 2016 and 2021 occurring in Warragul, Longwarry – Longwarry North, Neerim South – Noojee and District, and Drouin.

The number of children aged 0 – 4 years and 5 – 9 years with a need for assistance in their daily lives is small by comparison to older age groups, but it is growing (45% growth for 0 – 4 year olds and 63.3% growth for 5 – 9 year olds between 2016 and 2021). The largest growth in the need for assistance for:

- 0 – 4 year olds occurred in Drouin.
- 5 – 9 years olds occurred in Warragul but it was also significant in Drouin, followed by Longwarry – Longwarry North.



## Key characteristics of the current and forecast population by planning area<sup>1</sup>

### SA2 Warragul

Warragul						
	2016	2021	2031	2041	Change 2021 – 2041	
Population size	15,762	19,889	25,865	32,452	12,563	63.2%
0 – 4 age cohort	904	1,235	1,853	2,226	991	80.2%%
5 – 9 age cohort	1,033	1,192	1,797	2,202	1,010	84.7%
SEIFA		997.5 Warragul North				
		1021.9 Warragul South				
Aust. Early Dev. Census 2018 – 2021	Significant ↑ in the % of children developmentally vulnerable on the social competence and emotional maturity domains.					
	Significant ↓ in the % of children developmentally vulnerable on the language and cognitive skills domain.					
Households with children	2,333	3,013	4,166	5,217	2,203	85.9%
	37.6%	38.6%	40.9%	40.5%		
Households with young children	1,125	1,539	% of households with children that have young children			
	48.2%	51.1%				
Born OS	1,809	2,783	53.8% increase between 2016 and 2021			
	11.5%	14.0%				
Speak a language other than English	863	1,392	61.3% increase between 2016 and 2021			
	5.5%	7.0%				
Need for assistance 0 – 4 year olds	12	21	75.0% increase between 2016 and 2021			
Need for assistance 5 – 9 year olds	29	68	134.5% increase between 2016 and 2021			

<sup>1</sup> .id community, Baw Baw Shire Community profile and Population Forecast  
 About the profile areas | Baw Baw Shire | profile.id  
 Commonwealth of Australia, Australian Early Development Census, 2022.  
 Accessed 1 May 2023. Available online: AEDC

## SA2 Drouin

Drouin and District						
	2016	2021	2031	2041	Change 2021 – 2041	
Population size	14,875	18,062	23,699	29,578	11,516	63.8%
0 – 4 age cohort	967	1,184	1,755	2,132	948	80.1%
5 – 9 age cohort	1,099	1,197	1,662	2,033	836	69.8%
SEIFA		993.8 Drouin Nth 985.4 Drouin Sth 1,066.0 Drouin W		Drouin Sth second highest levels of disadvantage in Baw Baw, Drouin W lowest levels of disadvantage in Baw Baw		
Aust. Early Dev. Census 2018 – 2021	Significant ↑ in the % of children developmentally vulnerable on the physical health and wellbeing domain.  Overall, significant increase in the % of children developmentally vulnerable on both 1 or more and 2 or more domains.					
Households with children	2,172 38.9%	3,013 38.6%	3,661 39.8%	4,562 39.2%	2,203	85.9%
Households with young children	1,097 50.5%	1,453 52.2%	% of households with children that have young children			
Born OS	1,671 11.2%	2,216 12.3%	32.6% increase between 2016 and 2021			
Speak a language other than English	576 3.9%	839 4.6%	45.7% increase between 2016 and 2021			
Need for assistance 0 – 4 year olds	0	21	2,100% increase between 2016 and 2021			
Need for assistance 5 – 9 year olds	45	76	68.9% increase between 2016 and 2021			

Longwarry – Longwarry North						
	2016	2021	2031	2041	Change 2021 – 2041	
Population size	2,515	2,997	3,714	4,382	1,385	46.2%
0 – 4 age cohort	176	229	286	328	99	43.2%
5 – 9 age cohort	208	211	289	333	122	57.8%
SEIFA		966.9	Highest level of disadvantage in Baw Baw – higher than Gippsland region and regional Victoria			
Aust. Early Dev. Census 2018 – 2021	Significant ↑ in the % of children developmentally vulnerable on the language and cognitive skills domain.					
Households with children	399 42.0%	474 40.4%	615 42.3%	727 41.9%	253	45.0%
Households with young children	213 53.4%	256 54.0%	% of households with children that have young children			
Born OS	276 11.0%	296 9.9%	7.2% increase between 2016 and 2021			
Speak a language other than English	82 3.3%	131 4.4%	59.8% increase between 2016 and 2021			
Need for assistance 0 – 4 year olds	6	0	100% decrease between 2016 and 2021			
Need for assistance 5 – 9 year olds	3	15	400% increase between 2016 and 2021			

## SA2 Trafalgar

Trafalgar – Trafalgar East						
	2016	2021	2031	2041	Change 2021 – 2041	
<b>Population size</b>	4,338	4,751	5,658	6,509	1,758	37.0%
<b>0 – 4 age cohort</b>	265	281	388	437	156	55.5%
<b>5 – 9 age cohort</b>	338	313	405	465	152	48.6%
<b>SEIFA</b>	993.0					
<b>Aust. Early Dev. Census 2018 – 2021</b>	<p>Significant ↑ in the % of children developmentally vulnerable on the social competence, language and cognitive skills, communication skills and general knowledge domains.</p> <p>Overall, significant ↑ in the % of children developmentally vulnerable on both 1 or more and 2 or more domains.</p>					
<b>Households with children</b>	650 38.6%	732 39.3%	921 40.2%	1,066 40.3%	334	42.8%
<b>Households with young children</b>	334 51.4%	389 53.1%	% of households with children that have young children			
<b>Born OS</b>	374 8.6%	472 9.9%	26.2% increase between 2016 and 2021			
<b>Speak a language other than English</b>	214 4.9%	173 3.6%	19.2% decrease between 2016 and 2021			
<b>Need for assistance 0 – 4 year olds</b>	6	13	116.7% increase between 2016 and 2021			
<b>Need for assistance 5 – 9 year olds</b>	17	18	5.9% increase between 2016 and 2021			



Trafalgar South – Yarragon South and District						
	2016	2021	2031	2041	Change 2021 – 2041	
Population size	3,807	4,080	4,055	4,122	42	1.0%
0 – 4 age cohort	179	192	148	151	–41	21.4%
5 – 9 age cohort	243	257	181	188	–69	26.8%
SEIFA	1,039.0					
Aust. Early Dev. Census 2018 – 2021	Significant ↑ in the % of children developmentally vulnerable on the social competence, language and cognitive skills, communication skills and general knowledge domains. Overall, significant ↑ in the % of children developmentally vulnerable on both 1 or more and 2 or more domains.					
Households with children	518 38.6%	569 36.3%	601 35.9%	610 35.3%	41	25.8%
Households with young children	235 45.4%	254 44.6%	% of households with children that have young children			
Born OS	374 8.6%	472 9.9%	14.0% increase between 2016 and 2021			
Speak a language other than English	214 4.9%	173 3.6%	39.8% increase between 2016 and 2021			
Need for assistance 0 – 4 year olds	0	6	600% increase between 2016 and 2021			
Need for assistance 5 – 9 year olds	6	5	16.7% decrease between 2016 and 2021			

Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma						
	2016	2021	2031	2041	Change 2021 – 2041	
Population size	2,745	3,059	4,097	5,029	1,970	64.4%
0 – 4 age cohort	177	168	285	344	176	104.8%
5 – 9 age cohort	193	204	319	384	180	88.2%
SEIFA	1,016.8					
Aust. Early Dev. Census 2018 – 2021	Significant ↑ in the % of children developmentally vulnerable on the social competence, language and cognitive skills, communication skills and general knowledge domains. Overall, significant ↑ in the % of children developmentally vulnerable on both 1 or more and 2 or more domains.					
Households with children	405 40.5%	442 37.6%	553 38.5%	698 38.8%	256	41.0%
Households with young children	200 49.4%	206 46.6%	% of households with children that have young children			
Born OS	255 9.3%	310 10.1%	21.6% increase between 2016 and 2021			
Speak a language other than English	64 2.3%	67 2.2%	4.7% increase between 2016 and 2021			
Need for assistance 0 – 4 year olds	0	5	500% increase between 2016 and 2021			
Need for assistance 5 – 9 year olds	4	8	100% increase between 2016 and 2021			

## SA2 Mount Baw Baw

Yarragon – Darnum – Nilma						
	2016	2021	2031	2041	Change 2021 – 2041	
Population size	2,109	2,109	2,254	2,365	256	12.1%
0 – 4 age cohort	89	97	106	115	18	18.6%
5 – 9 age cohort	156	108	122	134	26	24.1%
SEIFA		989.6	Third highest levels of disadvantage in Baw Baw but lower than both Regional Victoria and the Gippsland Region			
Aust. Early Dev. Census 2018 – 2021	No significant changes in developmental vulnerabilities between 2018 and 2021 and overall, the % of children is consistent with the Shire of Baw Baw as a whole.					
Households with children	283 32.9%	287 32.4%	333 35.4%	357 36.4%	70	74.5%
Households with young children	136 48.1%	131 45.6%	% of households with children that have young children			
Born OS	227 10.8%	186 8.8%	18.1% decrease between 2016 and 2021			
Speak a language other than English	70 3.3%	64 3.0%	8.6% decrease between 2016 and 2021			
Need for assistance 0 – 4 year olds	0	0	No change between 2016 and 2021			
Need for assistance 5 – 9 year olds	5	7	40.0% increase between 2016 and 2021			

Neerim South – Noojee and District						
	2016	2021	2031	2041	Change 2021 – 2041	
Population size	2,329	2,675	2,764	2,844	169	6.3%
0 – 4 age cohort	110	130	141	148	18	13.8%
5 – 9 age cohort	120	150	163	171	21	14.0%
SEIFA	1,013.9					
Aust. Early Dev. Census 2018 – 2021	Significant ↓ in the % of children developmentally vulnerable on the physical health and wellbeing, social competence, language and cognitive skills, communication skills and general knowledge domains. This has led to, significant ↓ in the % of children developmentally vulnerable on both 1 or more and 2 or more domains.					
Households with children	302 33.6%	344 32.5%	366 32.6%	373 32.5%	89	32.6%
Households with young children	132 43.7%	154 44.0%	% of households with children that have young children			
Born OS	262 11.2%	271 10.1%	3.4% increase between 2016 and 2021			
Speak a language other than English	66 2.8%	70 2.6%	6.1% increase between 2016 and 2021			
Need for assistance 0 – 4 year olds	0	0	No change between 2016 and 2021			
Need for assistance 5 – 9 year olds	0	7	700% increase between 2016 and 2021			





