

**MOORABOOL
SHIRE**
**MUNICIPAL EARLY
YEARS PLAN**
2015-2021

A close-up photograph of a man with a light beard and mustache, wearing a white t-shirt, smiling as he uses a silver wrench to work on a yellow and teal playground structure. The background is blurred, showing more of the structure and some greenery.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Moorabool Shire Council acknowledges the Indigenous history of its land that was traditionally occupied by and connected to a number of Aboriginal communities, most notably the Wathaurong Tribe in the south and west, and the Wurundjeri Tribe in the east.

Moorabool Shire Council would like to acknowledge and thank the children, families and local service providers who participated in the development of this Municipal Early Years Plan. Special thanks are extended to the children and staff from the following settings for their contribution in the community consultation phase:

- Ballan Childcare Centre
- Ballan Primary School
- Bacchus Marsh Primary School
- Darley Primary School
- Gordon Primary School
- Myrniong Primary School
- Pentland Childcare & Kindergarten
- Pentland Primary School
- Wallace Kindergarten
- Young St Kindergarten

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
INTRODUCTION	6
MESSAGE FROM MAYOR	7
POLICY CONTEXT	8
Global perspectives	9
Federal perspectives	9
State perspectives	9
Local perspectives	10
COUNCIL POLICY AND PLANNING	12
Integrated planning & delivery framework (IPDF)	12
Where do we see Moorabool in 2041?	15
Working together	15
Council strategies and policies	16
Council’s role in Early Years provision	16
Early Years infrastructure planning	16
An integrated approach to Early Years services	17
Planning for the future	17
Bacchus Marsh and Surrounds	17
Ballan and Wallace	19
Council’s Early Years Services	20
Maternal Child and Health Service	20
Breastfeeding Support Services	20
Parenting Support Programs	20
Imagination Magic	20
Supported Playgroups and Community Playgroups	20
Occasional Care Service	21
Kindergarten	21
Non-Council child and family services	21
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE	23
METHODOLOGY	29
KEY FINDINGS	30
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	32
Priority Area One: More available and accessible services	33
Priority Area Two: Connecting and working together	34
Priority Area Three: An improved and sustainable built environment	36
Priority Area Four: Consulting and communicating with community	38
SUMMARY ACTION PLAN	41
EVALUATION AND REPORTING	49
REFERENCES	50
APPENDICES	52

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Moorabool Shire Municipal Early Years Plan (MEYP) is a local area plan that provides a future vision and strategic direction for the municipality in the development, enhancement, coordination and planning of early year's services for children aged from birth - 12 years, and their families. The Moorabool Shire MEYP is a Council initiated plan, developed in collaboration with local child and family service providers. As such, the plan serves as both an inspirational document and a practical tool to guide the actions of Council and non-Council child and family service providers in the municipality, to ensure Moorabool Shire is a great place for families to live, work and bring up their children.

The Moorabool Shire MEYP is informed by Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems model, with children and families at its centre. Critical to its success is the importance of subsequent layers of the system, comprising the local community, including key issues, drivers and trends impacting on the community; and the broader political, economic and social context, including State, Federal and global initiatives and perspectives.

A mixed methodological approach was applied to inform the development of the MEYP. Central to this approach was community consultation with key stakeholders. A total of 676 people participated in the community consultations. This included 301 children, 271 families and 104 service providers. Stakeholders were kept informed about the development of the MEYP through a series of newsletters distributed throughout the consultation process.

Following an analysis of data obtained through the consultation process, four key themes were identified. They are:

1. **A sense of place:** Children and families enjoy getting out and about in their local community, and making connections with the community and the environment.
2. **The environment matters:** Taking care and fostering a sustainable natural environment is especially important to children, who expressed an appreciation of nature and animals.
3. **Feeling heard and having choices:** Having a greater say about issues impacting on their lives is important to children and families, as is having a choice of services, programs and facilities.
4. **An active community:** Children and families enjoy being active in their local community, and making use of the range of sports and recreational facilities available.

Based on these key themes, four priority areas were identified as follows:

1. More available and accessible services;
2. Connecting and working together;
3. An improved and sustainable built environment; and
4. Consulting and communicating with community.

These strategic priorities were incorporated into an action plan, detailing the specific actions to be undertaken to achieve the identified objectives and outcomes. Also included were the indicative measures to gauge progress and success. The action plan will ensure the vision for the MEYP becomes a reality by identifying specific, achievable and measurable steps in relation to each priority area. An overview of the four priority areas and the objectives and outcomes of each is included in Table 1 on page 5.

Evaluation and reporting are critical components of the MEYP, and the responsibility of Council and non-Council child and family service providers. This ensures the sector remains on track in their efforts to enact the plan. It also allows the sector to be responsive to new and emerging priorities and needs, as required. In addition, it provides information to communicate key achievements and successes of the MEYP to the community, and valuable data to inform the development of subsequent MEYPs.

Priority Area 1: More available and accessible services	Priority Area 2: Connecting and working together
<p>OUTCOME: The child and family service sector is responsive to the emerging needs of children and families.</p> <p>OBJECTIVE: Current and future Early Years infrastructure and service planning keep pace to the current and future population needs of families and children.</p> <hr/> <p>OUTCOME: Families and children have access to a range of child and family services and activities.</p> <p>OBJECTIVE: There are opportunities for families to engage with services across the municipality where lack of transport may be a barrier to access.</p> <hr/> <p>OUTCOME: Families and children experiencing family violence have access to coordinated support from services.</p> <p>OBJECTIVE: To promote a collaborative and coordinated agency approach to resource and support for families experiencing family violence.</p>	<p>OUTCOME: A service delivery model that is more integrated and seamless for children and families to access.</p> <p>OBJECTIVE:</p> <p>a) Promote an integrated service delivery model across the child and family service sector.</p> <p>b) Council departments work collaboratively in the planning and provision of programs, services and facilities for children and families.</p> <p>c) Increase the knowledge, skills and collaborative efforts of service providers in responding to the diverse and sometimes complex needs of families.</p>
Priority Area 3: An improved and sustainable built environment	Priority Area 4: Consulting and communicating with community
<p>OUTCOME: Access to services, programs and facilities, for families and children, is integral to the planning and location of child and family services.</p> <p>OBJECTIVE: Families have safe and easy access to child and family services across the municipality, through the provision of a range of transport options and services.</p> <hr/> <p>OUTCOME: There are increased levels of participation and understanding of the importance of play for children aged from birth to 12 years.</p> <p>OBJECTIVE: To increase opportunities for play and outdoor physical activity, for children and their families.</p> <hr/> <p>OUTCOME: Children attending kindergarten programs have access to natural outdoor play spaces that promote learning, exploration and connection with nature.</p> <p>OBJECTIVE: Children have access to well planned natural outdoor play spaces.</p>	<p>OUTCOME: Children and families are aware of what is happening across the community and how their voices have impact and influence activities of Council.</p> <p>OBJECTIVE: The voices and perspectives of children are sought and considered in the planning and design of infrastructure and public spaces.</p> <hr/> <p>OUTCOME: There is two way communication between families, Council and other service providers, about key issues impacting on the lives of children and families.</p> <p>OBJECTIVE: Families can communicate with, and receive information from Council and other service providers, according to their individual needs and preferences.</p>

Table 1: Overview of the four priority areas and the objectives and outcomes

INTRODUCTION

Moorabool Shire Council worked closely with child and family agencies to develop a local Municipal Early Years Plan (MEYP). A MEYP is one of many plans initiated and actioned by local government across Victoria, to provide a future vision and strategic direction for the municipality in the development, enhancement, coordination and planning of early years services and infrastructure for children aged from birth - 12 years, and their families. While MEYPs are typically developed for children aged from birth - eight years, the Moorabool Shire MEYP focuses on the birth - 12 year age group, in recognition of a gap in service planning and delivery for the eight - 12 year age group. The plan acknowledges and builds on the strengths, expertise and experience of the child and family services sector. It also addresses current challenges and areas where improvements can be made.

The Moorabool Shire MEYP builds upon the first MEYP, which was adopted by Council in 2006. The MEYP is informed by the priorities, needs and interests of children and families, and of local child and family service providers. It is also informed by current research impacting on the child and family service sector at the local, State, Federal and global level. This includes evidence highlighting the importance of investing in children's early years, for lasting benefits for children, families and communities.

While Moorabool Shire Council has an important role to play in leading the development, implementation and ongoing review of the Moorabool Shire MEYP, it is a plan for child and family services providers across the municipality. As such, it serves as both an inspirational document and a practical tool across the service sector, which can be utilised in many ways. It can be used to promote collaborative approaches to service planning, delivery and review. It can also be used as an advocacy tool, to raise awareness of the importance of Early Years Service provision, to support the development of suitable infrastructure, and inform the efficient and effective allocation and use of resources. In these ways, the efforts of Council and local child and family service providers will combine to ensure Moorabool Shire is a great place for families to live, work and bring up their children.

MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

Councils, like families, have a responsibility to help raise children to be healthy, active and engaged individuals. We know that the first few years of a child's life are the most important. What children experience and learn before the age of eight will affect their future in a big way. That's why Moorabool Shire Council cares about making the early years the best we can for our children.

For this reason, Moorabool Shire Council has written this plan. The Early Years Plan you have before you, involved lots of consultation with local people. Parents and grandparents, hospitals and schools, community groups and children, were all asked what should go into this plan. It's been a shared project. Moorabool Shire Council has developed its Municipal Early Years Plan in partnership with our local service providers. This plan is a key strategic document which sets the direction for services and infrastructure which impact on children aged from birth - 12 years living in Moorabool.

I would like to thank all the parents, grandparents, carers, children and our local family and children's service providers, education and care services, for their input into the development of this plan.

As the Mayor of Moorabool, I look forward to watching this Municipal Early Years Plan come to life and making Moorabool an even better place for families and children.



Cr Paul Tatchell

Moorabool Shire Council Mayor

POLICY CONTEXT

At the heart of the Moorabool Shire MEYP are the needs, desires and priorities of children and families, as reflected in Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) ecological systems model, seen in Figure 1 below. As such, the conditions required for children to thrive begin with their immediate family. The MEYP acknowledges the role of a child’s parents as their first and most influential teachers (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a).

Given the significance of the child and family within this model, it was important that the ideas and suggestions of children and families were sought, considered, and acted upon, in the development of this MEYP. Accordingly, the opinions and perspectives of children aged under 12 years, and their families, were captured through extensive community consultations. 301 children and 271 family members contributed to the consultation process. Their views, and the views of local child and family service providers, formed the basis of the key themes and priority areas, and the corresponding action plan.

Beyond this level of influence are conditions outside of the family, incorporating the local community, including informal networks of friends, neighbours and extended family; and more formal networks including child and family programs, services and facilities. A further influence is the broader political, economic and social context, incorporating all levels of government (Sayers, 2012).

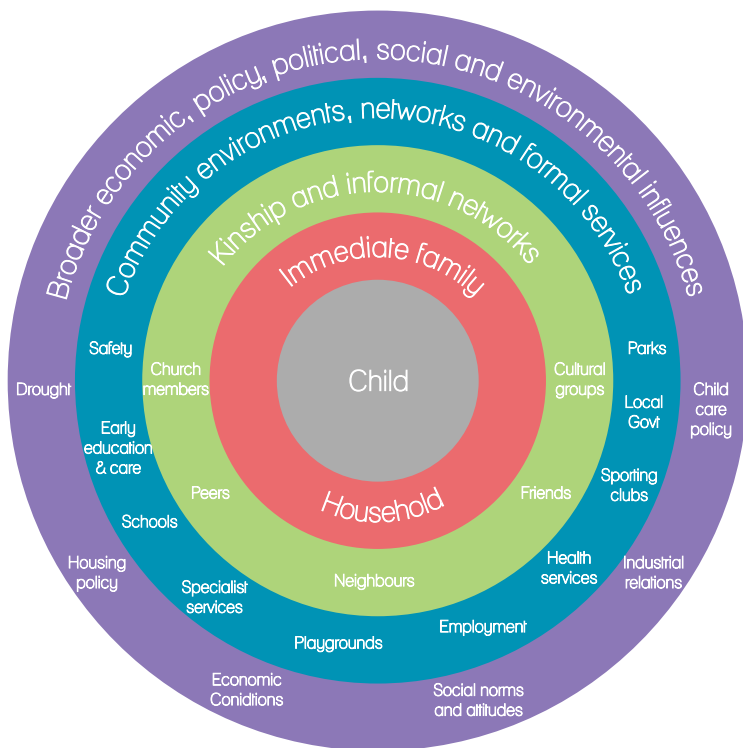


Figure 1: The ecology of child development. Adopted from Bronfenbrenner (1979). Source: Sayers, (2012)



Beginning with broader political context, the Moorabool Shire MEYP builds on global, Federal and State initiatives pertinent to the child and family service sector, described below:

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

From a global perspective, the Moorabool Shire MEYP reflects a commitment to uphold the rights of children, as documented in the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, and evidenced in the UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Initiative (UNICEF, 2009). This is demonstrated through a commitment to ensure the views of children are sought on issues impacting on their lives, as evident in the consultations with children, which were a critical component of the methodological approach used to inform the development of the MEYP.

The Moorabool Shire MEYP also acknowledges the increasing evidence base that demonstrates the importance of a child's early years of life, including the importance of early brain development for future learning and wellbeing (Gable & Hunting, 2001); and the long term benefits to children, families and the broader community investing in children's early years of life (Heckman, 2000; Grunewald & Rolnick, 2005).

FEDERAL PERSPECTIVES

At a Federal level, the MEYP acknowledges the **National Early Childhood Development Strategy – Investing in the Early Years** (2009), which informed the *National Quality Framework*, incorporating Australia's two learning frameworks, the *Early Years Learning Framework* (2009) and *My Time Our Place: Framework for School Aged Care* (2011). At the heart of this strategy, is a vision that: "All children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the nation" (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009b).

STATE PERSPECTIVES

At a State level, the MEYP builds on a number of initiatives including:

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (2009)

The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) aims to advance children's learning and development, from birth to eight years of age. It provides early childhood professionals with a shared language for

describing outcomes for children. It describes practice principles to guide early childhood professionals to work together, with children and families, to achieve the best possible outcomes for every child.

The VEYLDF:

- Identifies five Early Years Learning and Development Outcomes for all children;
- Identifies eight Practice Principles for Learning and Development. These describe effective ways for early childhood professionals to work together, with children and with families to facilitate learning and development;
- Emphasises the importance of supporting both children's and families' transitions as they move within and across services throughout the early childhood period (DET, 2013).

Child, Youth and Families Act (2005)

The policy objectives supported by the Children, Youth and Families Act are:

- To promote children's best interests, including a new focus on children's development;
- To support a more integrated system of effective and accessible child and family services, with a focus on prevention and early intervention; and
- To improve outcomes for children and young people in the child protection and out of home care service system (State Government of Victoria, 2006).

Victoria's Vulnerable Children: Our Shared Responsibility Strategy (2013-22)

The Victoria's Vulnerable Children: Our Shared Responsibility Strategy identifies a key role for services in enabling the Government to achieve its goals to improve outcomes for vulnerable children, young people and families. The three goals in the Strategy are:

1. Prevent abuse and neglect;
2. Act earlier when children are vulnerable; and
3. Improve outcomes for children in statutory care (State Government of Victoria, 2013).

Children's Facilities Capital Program

The Victorian Government's Children's Facilities Capital program is designed to support the delivery of high-quality early years programs for children and their families. It aims to:

- Increase infrastructure capacity to deliver a high-quality kindergarten program for all children in the year before school;
- Improve access to a high-quality kindergarten program in the same place as long day care and other children's and family services;
- Improve access to early childhood services by children from vulnerable and/or disadvantaged backgrounds;
- Establish more services for children and families on or near school sites; and
- Promote integrated, inclusive and collaborative early childhood education and care services that provide high-quality programs to meet the needs of young children and their families (DET, 2014).

Victorian Charter for Child Friendly Cities and Communities

The Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) launched the Victorian Charter for Child Friendly Cities and Communities in 2013. The Charter is consistent with global initiatives mentioned previously, and embodies a commitment to ensure that children have a voice in local planning and decision-making, through the following principles:

- Freedom for children to experience environments that consider their needs;
- Respect and dignity for children to express their individual opinions, participate in and contribute to decisions about their communities and their wellbeing; and
- Equitable access to supportive environments and services for children regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion or ability (Victorian Local Governance Association, 2013).

LOCAL PERSPECTIVES

Local Government in Victoria is the national leader in the provision of universal human services. This includes a significant investment in the planning and provision of infrastructure and services for families, youth and early years services. In Victoria, Local Government is the provider of early year's infrastructure, including the provision of maternal and child health and kindergarten services.

The Moorabool Shire MEYP acknowledges existing projects and local or regional initiatives, with a similar or complementary focus. This includes the following:

Central Highlands Children and Youth Area Partnership

The Central Highlands Children and Youth Area Partnership bring together State and Local Government, community organisations and local communities to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and young people in the area. Children and Youth Area Partnerships are a new way of working to more effectively join-up services to reduce the gap in health, learning and wellbeing outcomes for vulnerable children and young people. The roll out of Area Partnerships is being jointly led at the local level by the Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Education and Training.

The Central Highlands Children and Youth Area Partnership already has strong support across State and Local Government with senior representation from the regional Department of Health and Human Services; Education and Training; Victoria Police; Justice and Regulations; the Rural City of Ararat; the City of Ballarat; and the Shires of Golden Plains, Hepburn, Moorabool and Pyrenees.

Initial priorities of the partnership are:

- Stronger families where parents are able to confidently and effectively nurture and protect their children from harm;
- 'Learning matters' – children and young people are engaged in and benefiting from kindergarten and school; and
- A reduction in the incidence of family violence and its impact on children.

Best Start

Best Start is a Victorian government early years initiative, auspiced by the Department of Education and Training. The project is based on the principles of reducing disadvantage and enhancing the outcomes and opportunities for children from birth to eight years of age, and their families. Best Start aims to improve the health, development, learning and wellbeing of all Victorian children, supporting communities, parents and service providers to improve universal early years services so they are responsive to local needs. It has a strong emphasis on prevention and early intervention (DEECD, 2012).

The Moorabool Shire has been a Best Start site since 2007. It is a partnership approach of the following agencies:

- Moorabool Shire Council (lead agency)
- Djerrivarrh Health Services
- Ballan District Health & Care Services
- Early Childhood Management Services
- Centacare
- Child & Family Services Inc. (CAFS)
- Bacchus Marsh School Cluster Group
- Moorabool for Mothers Inc.
- Department of Education & Training (DET).

Best Start projects link in with Moorabool Shire's MEYP. Whereas the MEYP has a broader focus, Best Start focuses on achieving change in the identified Best Start indicators, and more specifically for families who are most vulnerable and/or experiencing disadvantage.

Over the next three years, Moorabool Best Start will focus on the following outcomes:

1. All children have the literacy and numeracy skills to support fulfilling lives.
2. All children and families thrive in a community that is safe, supportive and inclusive.

The goals and priorities of the Best Start Action Plan and the MEYP are closely aligned, so that everyone is working towards the same vision, namely, the best possible outcomes for families and children.

Moorabool Family Violence Prevention Network

The Moorabool Family Violence Prevention Network provides a forum for community agencies, family violence services, and those who have an interest in preventing family violence, to share information, skills and mutual support, and provide community awareness activities.





COUNCIL POLICY AND PLANNING

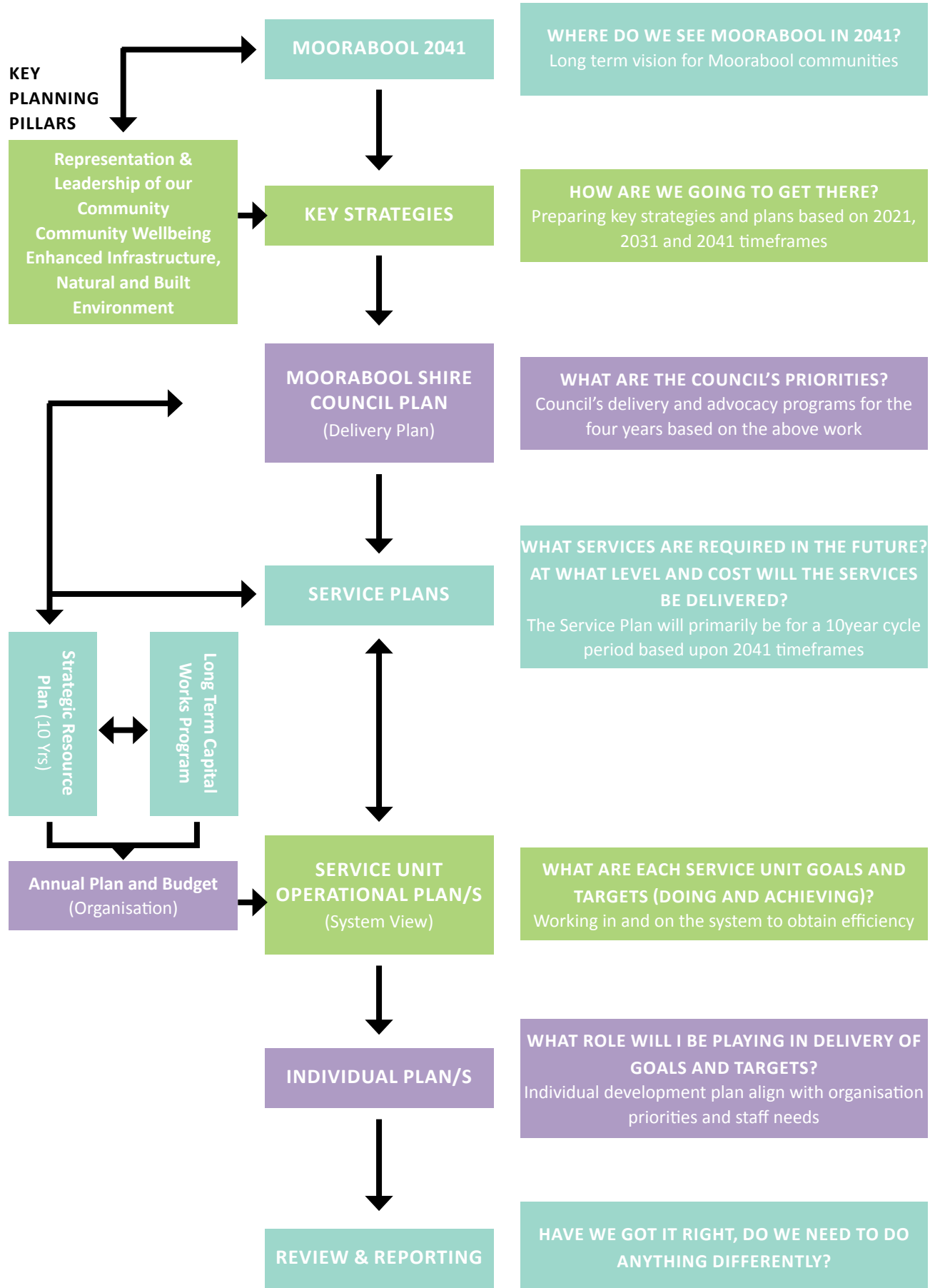
MOORABOOL SHIRE INTEGRATED PLANNING & DELIVERY FRAMEWORK (IPDF)

The Integrated Planning and Delivery Framework provides the basis for improving strategic planning at Moorabool. It creates a long term vision for Moorabool communities by preparing key strategies and plans based on 2021, 2031 and 2041 timeframes. These strategic plans are then directed into short term plans for action, such as operational plans and individual plans and include a process of reviewing and reporting.

The Framework:

- Recognises that planning for in local government is holistic in nature and driven by the community.
- Builds organisational and resource capability to meet community need.
- Optimises success by understanding the integration and interdependencies between plans.
- Emphasises performance monitoring so that local governments can adapt and respond to changes in community needs.

INTEGRATED PLANNING & DELIVERY FRAMEWORK (IPDF)





WHERE DO WE SEE MOORABOOL IN 2041?

Council is planning for the long term direction of our communities and has commenced Moorabool 2041, which is a process/framework aimed at documenting the opportunities, pressures and challenges facing Moorabool, and which sets the vision for the type of community and places Moorabool Shire will be in 2041.

This will lead to a long term vision to guide the development of Moorabool to retain its character and the places we love to ensure change provides appropriate services and opportunities for our residents.

M2041 will be a high order document developed following detailed supporting work over the next three years and will provide a more holistic framework focussed on key strategic issues that prioritise land use planning activities as well as service planning and delivery.

Moorabool 2041 will:

- Guide our planning scheme content to deliver sustainable development.
- Plan for the augmentation of social and physical infrastructure and services.
- Ensure that as the population grows the economy and employment on offer also.

WORKING TOGETHER

The MEYP recognises and builds on existing Council policies, especially those with a specific mention to families and children. The MEYP supports the direction of Council’s Integrated Planning and Delivery Framework, Moorabool 2041 and the Council Plan as well as providing direction and context for early years related planning, reports and studies. Figure 2 provides an overview of how this plan fits with other Council plans and policies and how Council and other agencies work in partnership complimenting each others strategic plans.

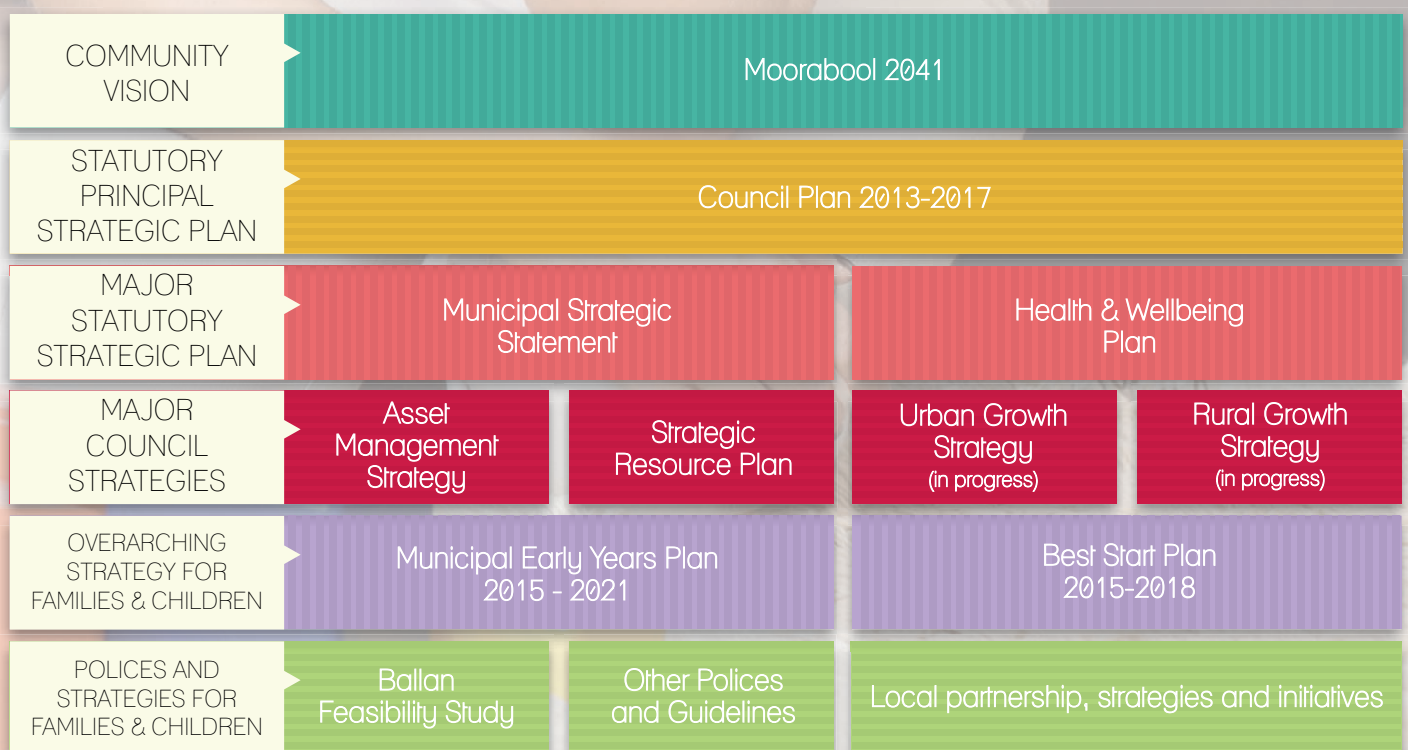


Figure 2: Overview of Council plans, policies and strategies in relation to Moorabool 2041

COUNCIL STRATEGIES AND POLICIES

In developing the MEYP, care has been taken to build on rather than duplicate actions and strategies reflected in other Council strategies and policies. The following strategies and policies currently guide and inform the MEYP planning process:

- Council Plan 2013-2017
- Hike and Bike Strategy (2014)
- Health and Well Being Plan (2013)
- Youth Strategy (2013)
- Urban and Rural Growth Policies (2012)
- Community Engagement Policy & Framework
- Recreation and Leisure Strategy
- Community Infrastructure Plan
- Ageing Well (Live Well Live Better) Strategy
- Access and Inclusion Plan
- Community Development Position Paper
- Road Management Plan

The MEYP also acknowledges that new and emerging trends and needs may arise during the lifespan of the Moorabool Shire MEYP that warrant consideration and attention.

COUNCIL'S ROLE IN EARLY YEARS PROVISION

Moorabool Shire Council recognises that investment in the early years is important if its children are to reach their full potential in terms of social, health, educational and economic outcomes later in life. Council supports the notion that quality, accessible early years services, which focus on children's cognitive, social and emotional development, are the cornerstone to a connected, engaged and productive community in the future.

Council is committed to ensuring that children and families have access to quality early years services and support. Council demonstrates this commitment through the strategic allocation of resources to this area and in its continual pursuit of providing the best possible early years opportunities for children and their families.

Council has a primary role to ensure that services and infrastructure provided to children and families are well planned and respond in a way that meets the needs of the local community. Council recognises that services in the early and middle years are varied, and provided by a range of agencies and organisations, including Council organisations and agencies. Whilst Council is not a direct provider of all services

provided to families and children, it does have a direct role in planning, and influencing the delivery of services to families and children in the Moorabool community.

Council's role in Early Years is as follows:

- **FACILITATE** - facilitate the strategic planning, development and management of services for families and children to cater for identified current and future community needs.
- **PROVIDE** - provide Early Years infrastructure and services through direct funding, shared funding, and facilitated funding arrangements.
- **SUPPORT** - support community groups, service providers, and other stakeholders with the development and enhancement of services for families and children.
- **WORK** - work with the community, service providers, the education sector, and private and government sectors, to ensure that facilities, programs and services for families and children, meet the needs of the community.
- **ADVOCATE** - provide leadership to the community when advocating to potential service providers, State and Federal government departments and funding bodies.
- **CHILDREN'S VOICES** - facilitate a coordinated approach in engaging with children to ensure a partnership approach with agencies and Council service units. A significant focus on engagement with children will underpin the key roles of Council's Early Years unit.
- **NETWORKS** - facilitate networks and partnerships with government and non-government agencies, to deliver programs and services to families and children in an integrated and coordinated manner.

EARLY YEARS INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

The provision of Early Years Infrastructure, including kindergarten, maternal and child health and occasional care facilities, is one of the key functions of local government in Victoria. Moorabool Shire Council prioritises the planning and provision of Early Years Services within the municipality and is committed to ensuring that every four year old child living in the Moorabool Shire has access to a funded four year old kindergarten program in the year before they commence primary school.

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO EARLY YEARS SERVICES

Public investment in the early years is supported by the science of early childhood development, which clearly demonstrates that critical developmental periods in the first years of life are strongly linked to later cognitive, and social and emotional development, and thus to later educational and social achievement. The ability to influence later outcomes by targeted action in the early years clearly represents an important opportunity that is not being adequately realised (Robinson, Silburn & Arney, 2011).

Council recognises that a families functioning and parenting is affected by each family's personal support network, their social connection to their local community, and the quality of the social infrastructure and available services. The social, demographic and technological changes over the past 50 years have dramatically altered the ways in which families are raising young children, making the task of parenting more complex. Services now need to be more integrated to meet the needs of contemporary families more effectively. This is supported by one of the key principles underpinning the Community Infrastructure Framework, which is:

"Council's investment in community infrastructure will seek to develop multipurpose and inter-generational facilities that meet the needs of a broad range of users and services. The Framework will identify opportunities to co-locate or integrate services and involve multiple stakeholders in the planning, design and operation of facilities".

The Federal Government's Early Years Learning Framework, *Belonging, Being and Becoming* (2009) and the Victorian Government's *Early Years Strategic Plan* (2014), support the development of integrating early years services to operate from centralised hubs. Integrated hubs provide families with access to a range of services including maternal and child health, kindergarten, family support services, playgroups, toy library and early intervention services, for their children and themselves, from the one accessible location.

Planning for the future

Adequate planning and provision of infrastructure and services is vital for Council to ensure that all children living in Moorabool have access to maternal and child health services from birth until age six, and that all children living in Moorabool have access to a funded four year old kindergarten place. Moorabool Shire Council will provide a four year old kindergarten place for every four year old child living in Moorabool and kindergartens will be accessible within 20 minute travel time by public transport or private vehicle.

Key Council priorities are the development of a new Early Years Hub in Darley to be completed in mid-2016, and an Early Years Hub in West Maddingley anticipated to be completed in 2019. These major infrastructure projects will be undertaken in response to Moorabool's population growth, addressing the current lack of suitable infrastructure for the delivery of early year's services such as kindergarten, maternal and child health, early intervention, toy library and playgroups.

In 2013 the Moorabool Shire Council undertook a Social and Community Infrastructure Gap analysis using industry benchmarks for kindergarten, maternal and child health and long day care service provision. It examined what infrastructure and services are needed within the Shire now and into the future, and where services should be located to best meet the needs of residents, in the short term (2016), medium term (2021), long term (2031) and beyond.

Bacchus Marsh and Surrounds

Council's Early Years services/infrastructure located in Bacchus Marsh and surrounds are:

- Bacchus Marsh - Young Street Kindergarten, a standalone kindergarten that offers both three and four year old kindergarten programs; managed by Early Childhood Management Services (ECMS)
- Maternal and child health service, temporarily co-located with Djerriwarrh Health Services, in Gell Street; and
- Darley Kindergarten, managed by ECMS located at the Lerderderg Children's Centre with the maternal and child health service, occasional care and playgroups.

Kindergarten Services

A summary of kindergarten future provision demonstrates:

- A predicted population forecast that there will be 276 children aged four years living in Bacchus Marsh and surrounds in 2016.
- There will be an increased need for four year old kindergarten places in 2019 to 2031 and 2041 in Bacchus Marsh and surrounds.
- Completion of the Darley Early Years Hub in mid 2016 will provide an additional 54 four year old kindergarten places in Bacchus Marsh and surrounds.
- Upon completion of Darley Early Years Hub in mid-2016, a total of 274 four year old kindergarten places will be provided in Bacchus Marsh and surrounds to meet the needs of the growing community. This will include 154 four year old kindergarten places at the Darley Early Years Hub and 120 kindergarten places at Young Street Kindergarten.
- New facilities in the Bacchus Marsh and surrounds areas are being designed to accommodate the space requirements to meet the Federal governments change in child to adult ratios in 2016.

The proposed West Maddingley Early Years Hub once opened in 2019-2020, will provide the community with two new kindergarten rooms that will provide a maximum capacity of an additional 132 four year old kindergarten places, with there being enough space to grow the number of kindergarten groups as the community grows, between 2019 to 2031.

Bacchus Marsh and surrounds will have a total of 318 four year old kindergarten places across all sites by 2021. In the longer term, the West Maddingley Hub will have capacity to increase places in the existing infrastructure to provide 384 places by 2031 meeting the anticipated growth for the community.

Between 2031-2041 the number of four year olds are anticipated to continue to grow with all sites being at capacity and therefore an additional kindergarten room maybe be required in the Bacchus Marsh and surrounds area. Figure 3 shows the forecast demand for four year old kindergarten places in Bacchus Marsh and surrounds.

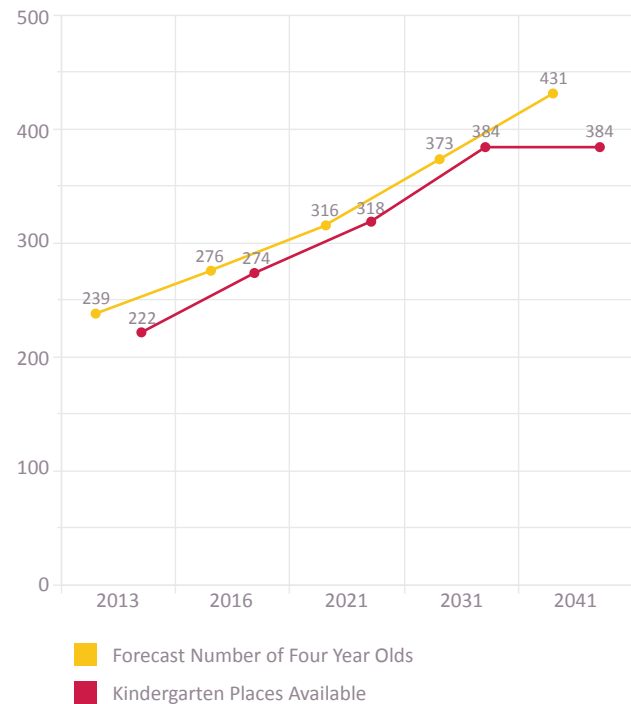


Figure 3: Forecast Demand for Four Year Old Kindergarten Places in Bacchus Marsh & Surrounds

Maternal and Child Health

Additional maternal and child health services will be required to meet the needs of the growing population. Current population forecasts for Bacchus Marsh and surrounds anticipate there will be 2,236 children aged from birth to six years in 2021, 2,642 children aged from birth to six years in 2031, and 3,068 children aged from birth to six years in 2041.

Additional consulting rooms in the Darley Early Years Hub will ensure that all children and their families have access to the service in the short term (2016).

A permanent location for maternal and child health services in central Bacchus Marsh is required in the short term. (2016).

In the medium to long term, from 2019-2031 the proposed West Maddingley Early Years Hub will provide the additional consulting spaces required to continue to meet the needs of the community.

Between 2031- 2041 it is anticipated that additional maternal and child health consulting offices will be required in the Bacchus Marsh and surrounds area.

Childcare

Families living in Bacchus Marsh and surrounds have access to long day care, occasional care and family day care.

Private providers and community organisations operate long day care programs, family day care and occasional care services. According to the GAP analysis report findings, an additional long day care centre will be needed to meet the needs of the community in the medium to long term, 2021 to 2041.

Council will continue to work with private and community providers in the delivery of this important infrastructure.

Council will continue to advocate on behalf of residents, to State and regulatory departments, for the provisions of additional services on an ongoing basis.

Ballan and Wallace

The Early Years services located in Ballan and Wallace include:

- Ballan & District Kindergarten located alongside the maternal and child health service, and Ballan Child Care Centre. Ballan Kindergarten provides both three and four year old kindergarten programs and currently meets the needs of the community. Families commute to the kindergarten from outlying townships, therefore Council will also need to model demand from the Rural West.
- Wallace Kindergarten and Maternal and Child Health Service operate from an integrated centre in a central location in Wallace. The kindergarten offers both three and four year old kindergarten programs that currently meet the needs of the community. Options for childcare include family day care and long day care, which families travel to attend in Ballan or Ballarat.
- In 2016 the Federal Government's change of child to adult ratios and room space requirement may have an impact on the number of four year old kindergarten places available at Ballan and Wallace Kindergartens, in particular as the community grows beyond 2021 in the Ballan area.

- Figure 4 below indicates the number of four year old children and forecast demand into the future, it is important to note that this graph allows for an additional kindergarten group to operate from the Wallace Early Years Hub. A feasibility study will be completed in 2015 to ascertain the Early Years services needed in Ballan to ensure that as the population grows the provision of infrastructure and services is planned and delivered to meet the community needs.

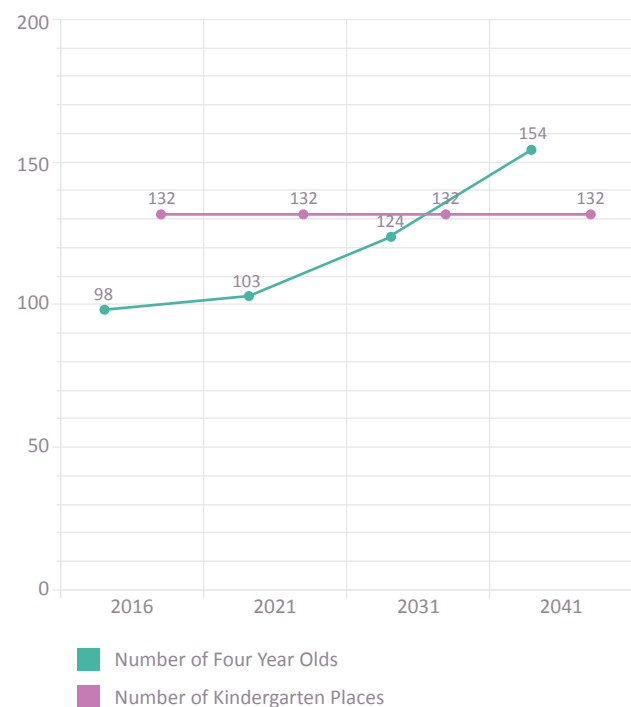


Figure 4: Number of Four Year Old Kindergarten Places Wallace & Ballan



Maternal and Child Health

- In Wallace, the current maternal and child health services operate one day a week. The existing infrastructure will meet the needs of the community into the long term. By 2021 it is anticipated additional consulting days will be required to meet the needs of the growing community.
- In Ballan, the current service operates three days a week from two offices. It is anticipated that additional consulting days will be required in 2016, 2021 and 2031, and that existing infrastructure will meet the demands to expand. Additional consulting space may be required in 2041.

Council's Early Years Services

Moorabool Shire Council provides many services and programs for families and children living in Moorabool including:

Maternal Child and Health Service

The maternal child and health service support families with their parenting and the health, wellbeing and development of their child. The service provides new parents groups, enhanced home visiting, referrals to other professionals, and links families with other families in the local community through playgroups and other support groups. Families have ten 'key ages and stages' consultations including a home visit, followed by consultations at two, four and eight weeks; four, eight, 12 and 18 months; and two, and three and a half years of age. At each consultation, families can discuss their concerns, talk about their parenting experiences, and learn how to improve their child's health, growth and development.

Breastfeeding Support Services

In partnership with Djerriwarrh Health Services, a breastfeeding support service is provided to families in Moorabool. This is a free service which includes a home visit to discuss breastfeeding following the birth of a baby, an antenatal breastfeeding class for new mothers and fathers, an early postnatal home visit to support breastfeeding, and centre visits as required. A qualified lactation consultant provides this service.

Parenting Support Programs

A range of parenting support programs are provided including:

- '123 Magic' parent sessions, which support parents with strategies to assist them with their parenting;
- 'Emotional Wellbeing Group', which is a support group with an art therapy focus that provides support to mothers experiencing post-natal depression; and
- 'Parent Cafes', where parents come together with a maternal child health nurse, to discuss and share tips and ideas on a range of topics, such as sleeping, starting solids etc.

Imagination Magic

Imagination Magic is a performing arts program for infants, toddlers and preschool children and their mums, dads and carers. The program provides children and parents with the opportunity to participate in a variety of performing arts sessions. Imagination Magic program assists children in all areas of their development. It provides opportunities for parent-child interactions and the chance to connect with other families in a fun, creative and stimulating environment.

Supported Playgroups and Community Playgroups

Supported playgroups are funded by the Department of Education and Training and facilitated by Council for families who require additional support. Supported playgroups provide families with access to services and quality play opportunities for children at a critical time in their development.

Community playgroups are held in schools, halls, parks and other venues. They are low cost and usually run by parents and carers. Community playgroups give families the opportunity to meet other families with similar experiences and ease the isolation that can come with caring for young children.



Occasional Care Service

The occasional care service provides children aged from six months to six years of age with the opportunity to explore a wide range of experiences and to build upon their skills, interests and abilities. Families book through a casual booking system for two, three and five hour sessions. Educators plan and deliver an educational program, informed by the Early Years Learning and Development Framework.

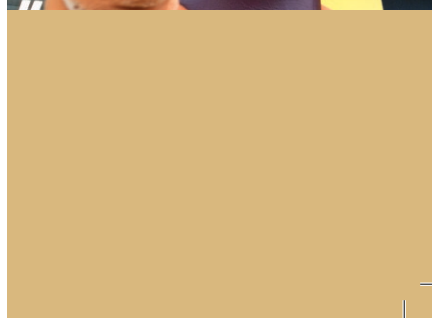
Kindergarten

Kindergarten programs offer developmental and educational experiences for children in the year prior to school entry. State funded kindergarten in Victoria is available to all children who turn four on or before 30 April in the year of attendance. Although three year old kindergarten programs are not funded by the State Government, these programs are highly valued by the community and operate across all kindergarten sites.

Moorabool Shire Council supports the operation of kindergarten programs in the municipality as the owner of the buildings, and by supporting kindergarten providers and committees of management in the delivery of high quality kindergarten programs across the municipality. Each kindergarten currently has a different enrolment process. Information from community consultations advised that this can be a barrier to accessing services for some families and makes it a challenge for Council to analyse trends and plan for the future.

Non-Council Child and Family Services

In addition to the services provided by Council, a range of child and family services are also available across the municipality. For a comprehensive list of services, refer to the Best Start produced 'In the Land of Moorabool', a guide to local services for families.





DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Moorabool Shire is fast-growing peri-urban municipality nestled between Melbourne, Geelong and Ballarat. It offers residents picturesque and friendly surrounds, with the vibrancy of an active, growing community.

The Shire comprises of two main towns, Bacchus Marsh with approximately 20,000 people, and Ballan with approximately 3,000 people. There are seven townships ranging in size from 200 - 600 people. There is a further 24 villages ranging in size from 30 - 200 people are distributed throughout the Shire, plus a number of smaller dispersed settlements.

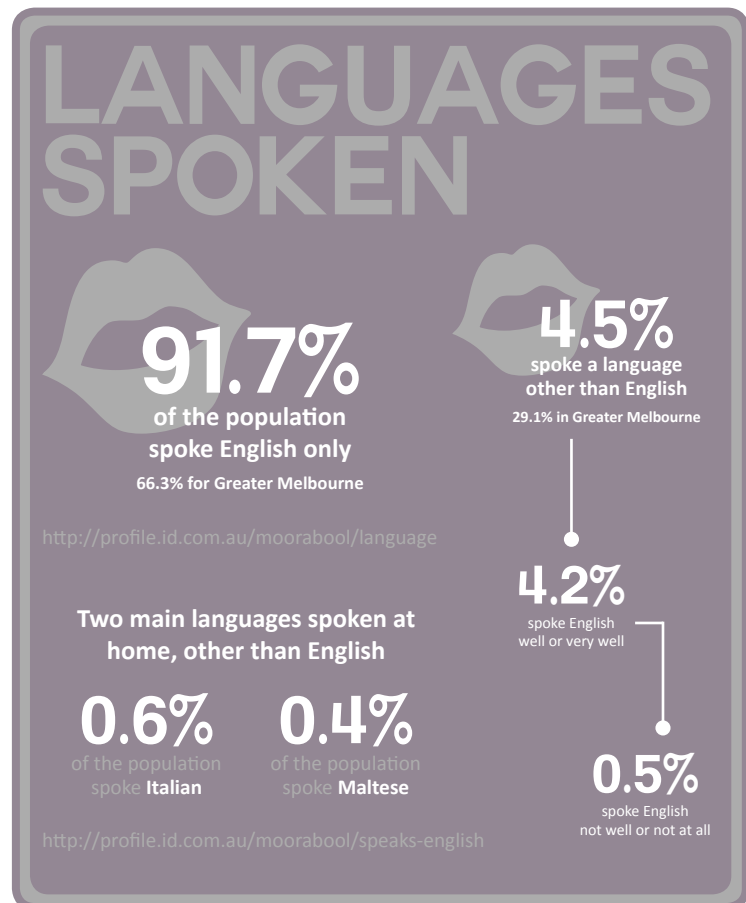
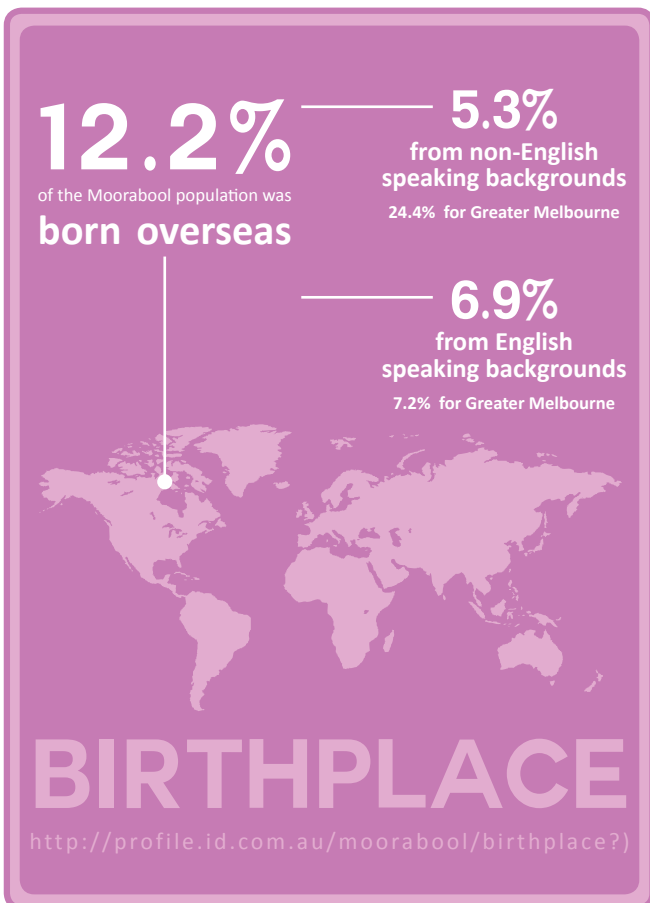
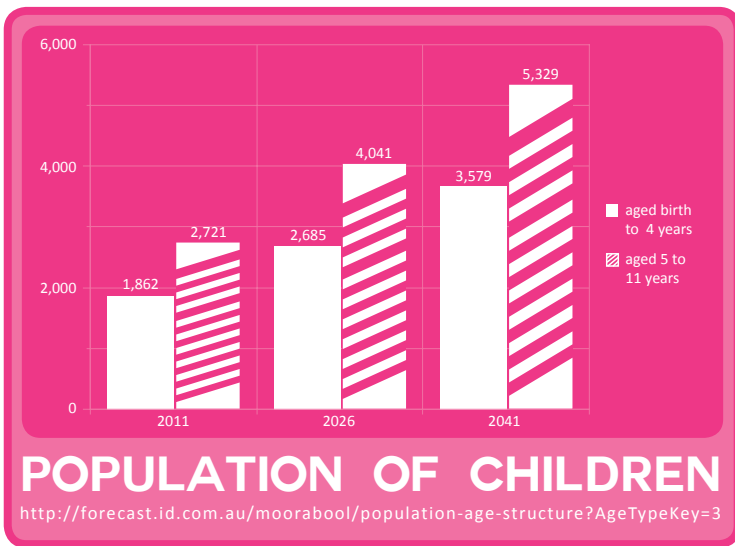
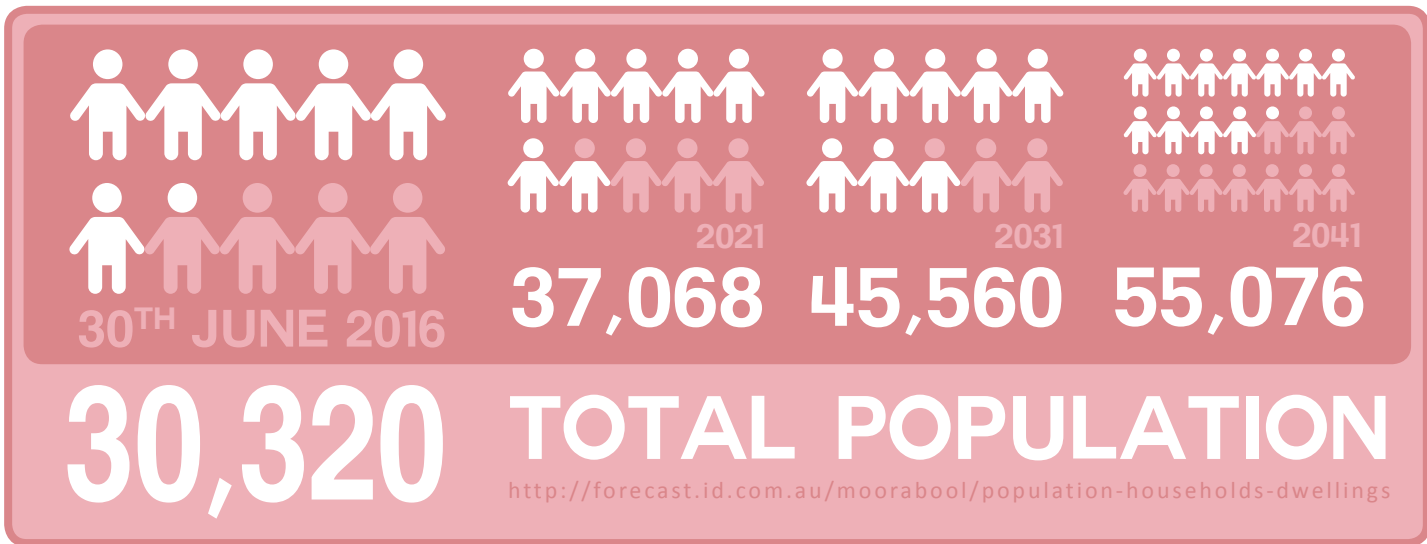
The Shire's population is currently in excess of 31,000 people, however, is projected to increase to more than 51,000 people by 2041.

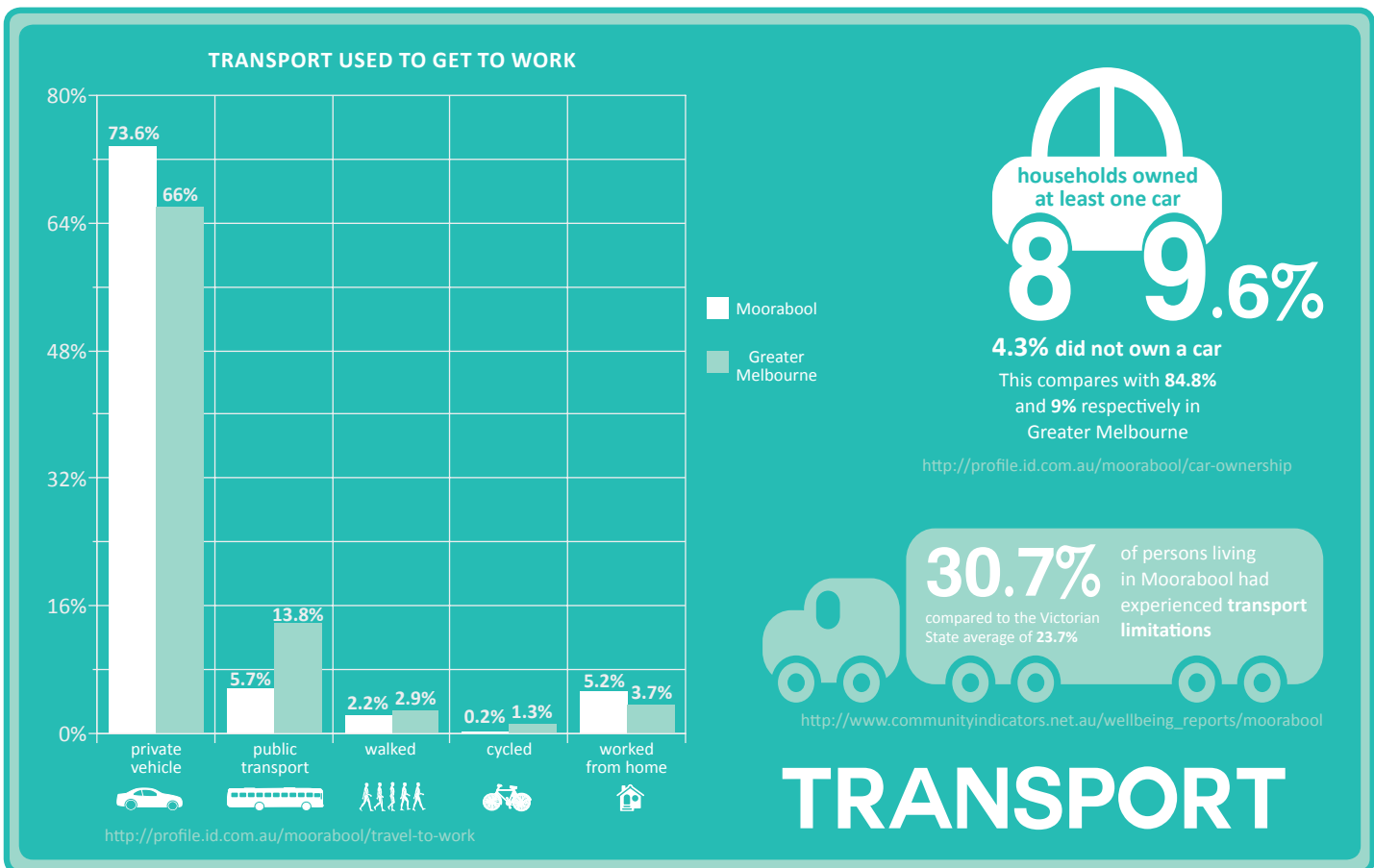
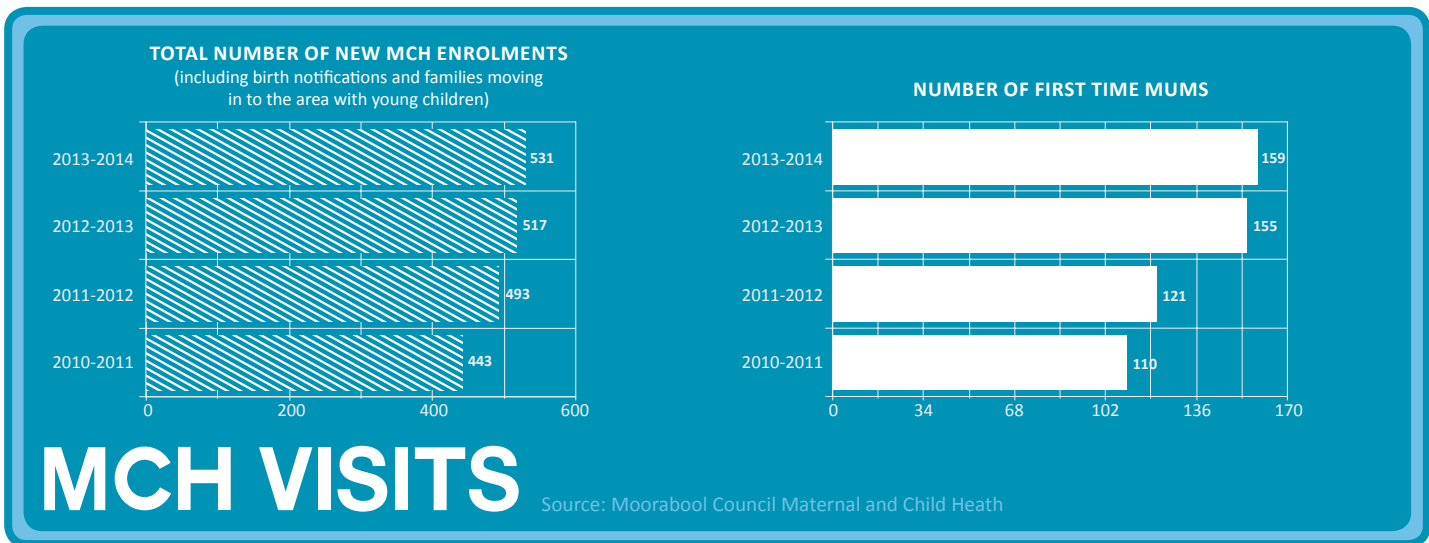
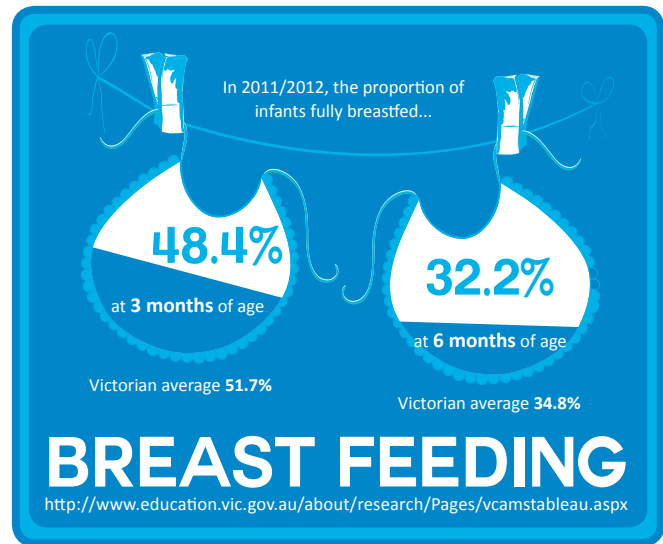
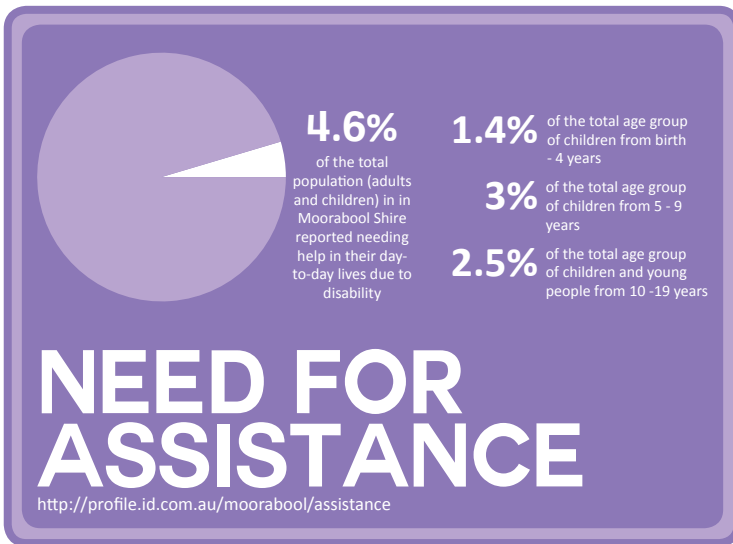
Housing affordability is a major drawcard for young families and couples relocating to the Shire.

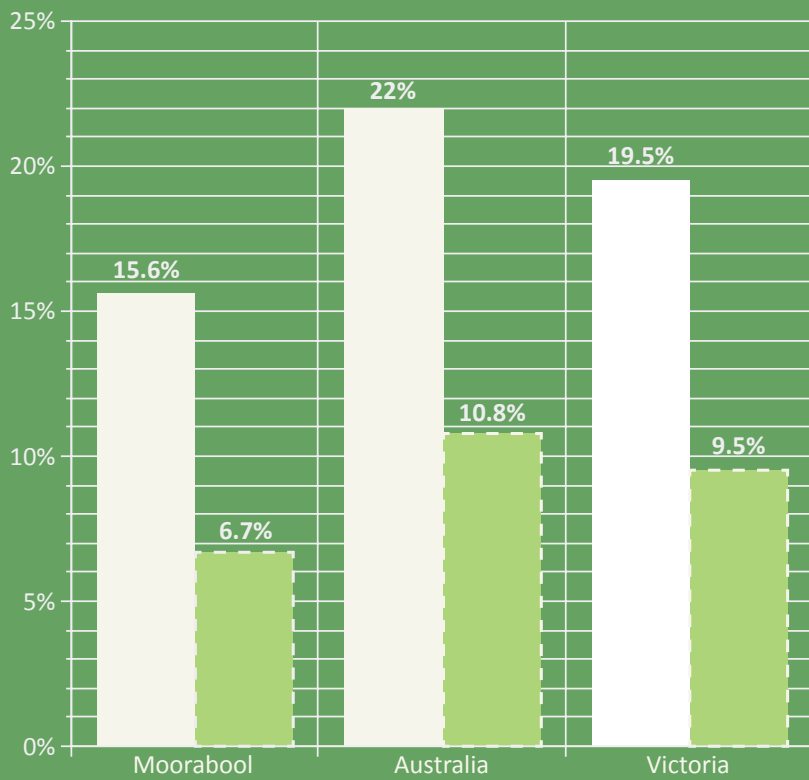
Moorabool is well connected to Melbourne, Geelong and Ballarat, with easy access to major highways. The regular train link between Ballarat and Melbourne services Moorabool with stops at Ballan and Bacchus Marsh. Furthermore, Bacchus Marsh is included as part of the metropolitan public transport ticketing system.

A demographic profile for Moorabool Shire is captured on pages 22 – 25. This draws on data from a range of sources, including: 2011 Census data and Population Forecasts; Australian Early Development Census (AEDC); Victorian Child and Adolescent Monitoring System (VCAMS); and Community Indicators Victoria (CIV). Data has also been obtained from Moorabool Shire Council, including maternal and child health data.

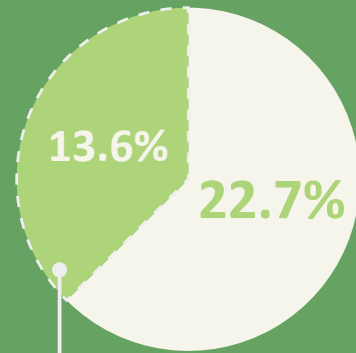








- children developmentally vulnerable on one or more developmental domains
- children developmentally vulnerable on two or more developmental domains



Areas of greater vulnerability are evident across the municipality, requiring more urgent consideration. This is most notably in Bungaree/Gordon as demonstrated in the pie chart above.

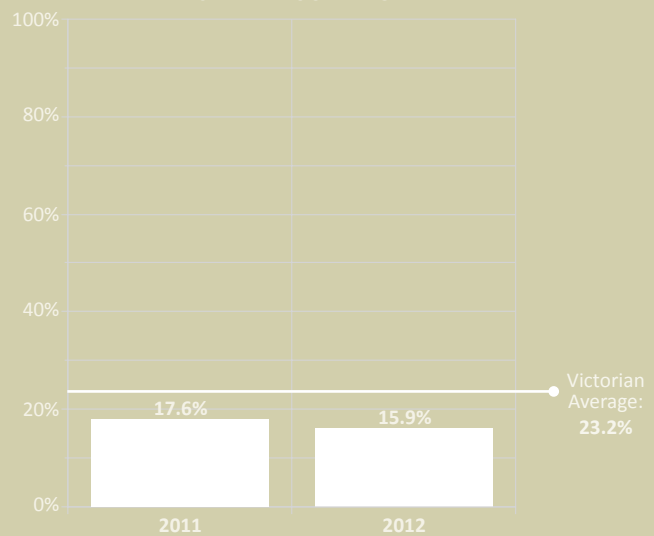
AUSTRALIAN EARLY DEVELOPMENT CENSUS (AEDC) RESULTS

<https://www.aedc.gov.au/data/data-explorer?id=42601>

KINDERGARTEN PARTICIPATION IN THE FIRST YEAR OF ENROLMENT

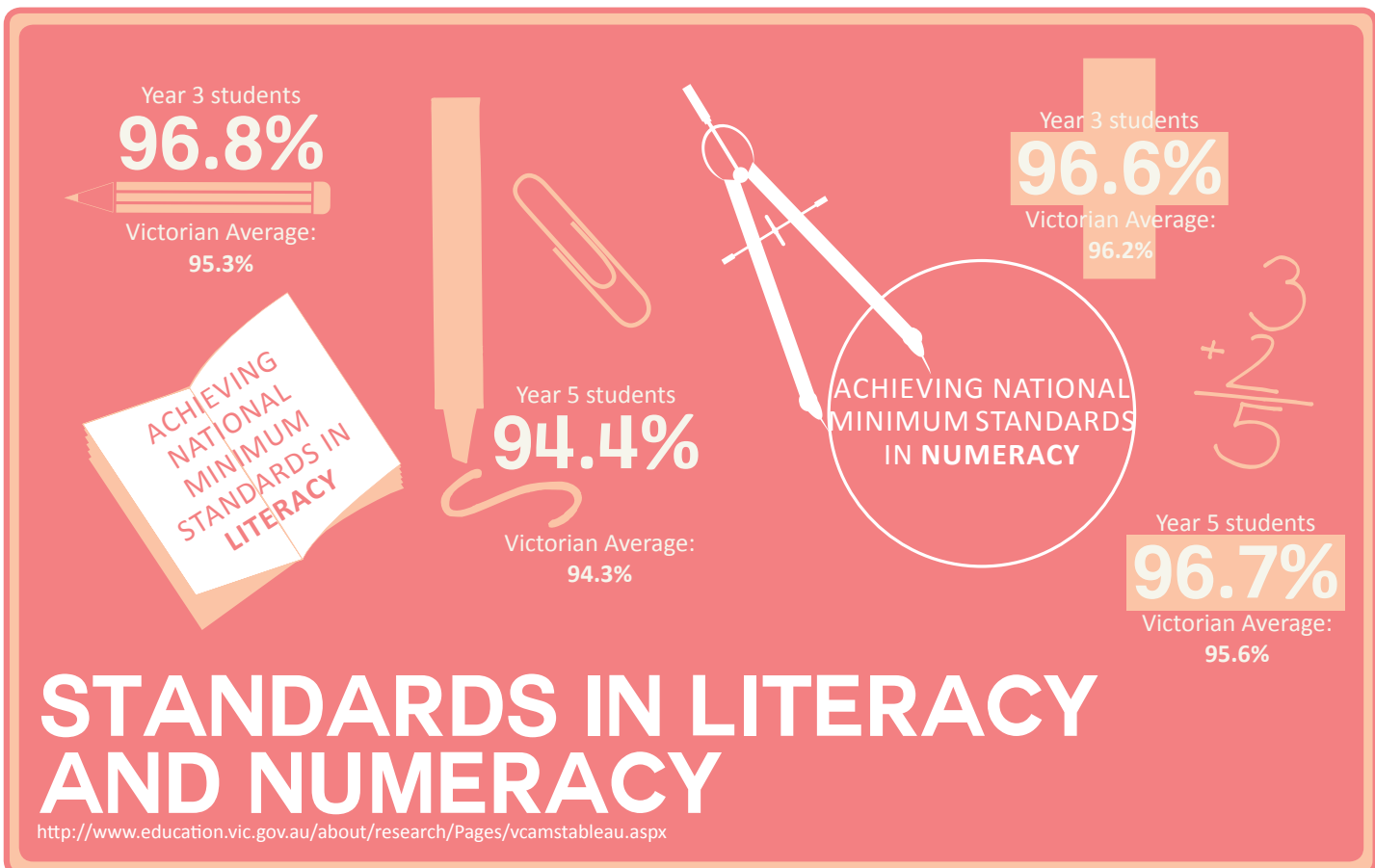
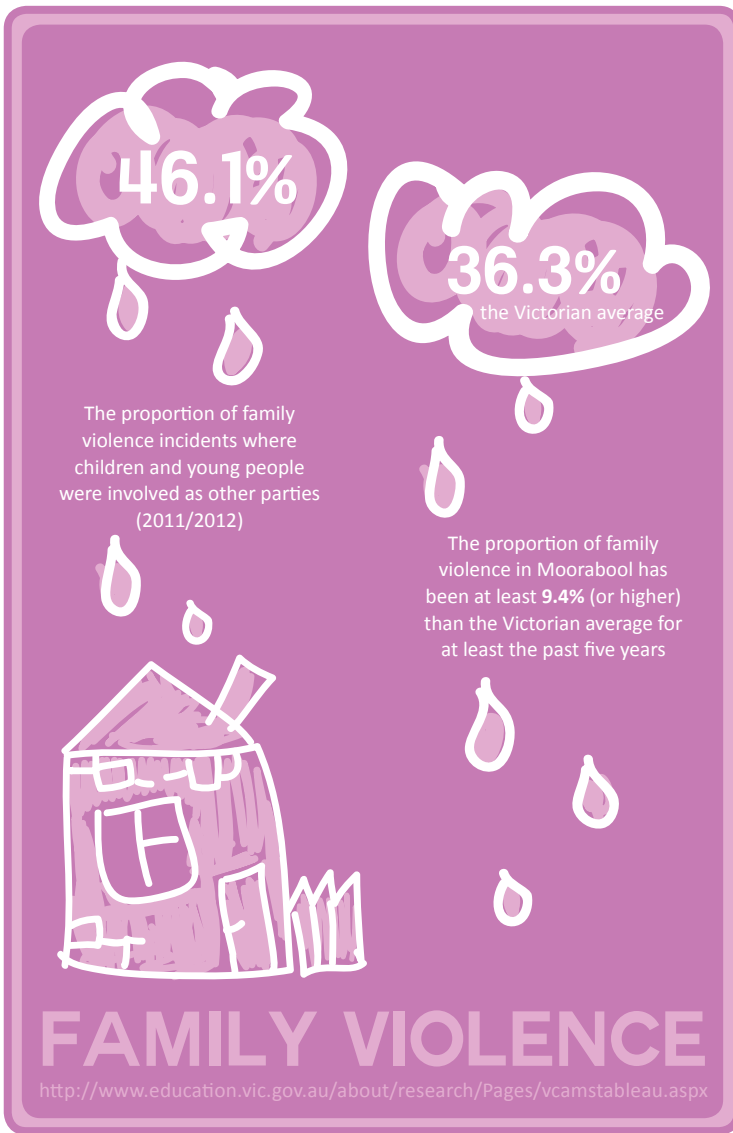


THE NUMBER OF KINDERGARTEN ENROLMENTS IN A LONG DAY CARE PROGRAM OR INTEGRATED CHILDREN'S SETTING



KINDERGARTEN ENROLMENT AND PARTICIPATION

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/research/Pages/vcamstableau.aspx>





METHODOLOGY

A mixed methodological approach was used to inform the development of the Moorabool Shire MEYP. This included an analysis of research pertinent to the child and family services sector. It also included a review of key initiatives, strategies and policies at all levels of government. Moorabool Shire's demographic profile was also considered to ensure the MEYP reflected the local context, and factors impacting on the lives of children and families, now and in the future.

A critical component of the methodological approach was ensuring the voices and perspectives of children, families, and child and family service providers were heard and considered through extensive community engagement. This process was undertaken in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Framework, upholding Council's commitment to engage the community in decisions that impact on them. This included a specific focus on consulting with children.

The consultative approach to working with children was developed with consultants from Semann & Slattery, and representatives from Moorabool Shire Council's Early Years team. The consultation was informed by research highlighting the importance of using tools that are appropriate for and acceptable to the respondents (Lobo, McManus, Brown, Hildebrand & Maycock, 2010); and that provide different ways for them to participate and express ideas (Simons & McCormack, 2007).

Consultations with children were conducted in local schools and early childhood programs and occurred in collaboration with teachers and educators to ensure children felt comfortable and safe throughout the consultation process. Children who were not involved in face-to-face consultations were invited to contribute through suggestion boxes left at local schools. A total of 301 children participated in the consultations. This included 161 through face-to-face consultations and 140 via the suggestion boxes.

Consultations with families and service providers occurred in two ways. Community forums were conducted over two days in a range of settings. In addition, on-line surveys were made available to families and service providers. Families also had the option of completing the survey in a hard copy/paper version. 271 family members and 104 service providers contributed through face-to-face consultations or surveys. In total, 676 children, family members and services providers participated in the community consultations. This response is indicative of the importance of having a say about issues impacting on their lives, for children and families. Consulting with the community was also identified as a key theme and priority area based on the feedback received.

Child and family service providers, including Moorabool Shire Council representatives, contributed to the development of an action plan through a facilitated workshop with consultants from Semann & Slattery. Families, children, and service providers were kept informed throughout each phase of the development of the MEYP through a series of newsletters. The intention of the newsletters was to communicate the purpose, methods and outcomes of the consultations, and to describe the next steps in the development of the MEYP.

KEY FINDINGS

Following an analysis of data obtained through the consultation process, four key themes were identified. They are:

1. A sense of place

Children and families enjoy getting out and about in their local community, making connections with the community and the environment, and accessing the range of facilities available. This includes accessing local parks, playgrounds and sporting facilities. Some families also enjoy the sense of community, and the friendly, relaxed lifestyle of living in Moorabool.

2. The environment matters

Taking care of the natural environment is important, especially for children. This includes keeping the environment clean, tidy and free of rubbish and graffiti.

3. Feeling heard and having choices

Having a say about issues impacting on their lives is important to children and families. Many families reported being dissatisfied with the current level of consultation available to them and their children. Having a choice of services, programs and facilities is also important to children and families. While they value what is on offer, they also believe that having greater choice would make living in the community even better.

4. An active community

Children and families enjoy being active and getting about in their local community. This is also seen as a way to get together with families and friends. Many said that having a greater range of sports and recreational facilities would improve their lifestyle. This includes having access to an indoor pool and indoor play facilities so they can keep active all year round.

Based on these key themes, the following priority areas were identified:

1. More available and accessible services;
2. Connecting and working together;
3. An improved and sustainable built environment; and
4. Consulting and communicating with community.

These strategic priorities have been developed into the action plan, detailing the specific actions to be undertaken to achieve the identified objectives and outcomes. The template used for this plan is included as Appendix A. This may be utilised by Council and non-Council child and family services providers to plan for new and emerging needs and issues identified during the lifespan of the MEYP. A detailed description of each of the strategic priorities follows.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

PRIORITY AREA ONE: MORE AVAILABLE AND ACCESSIBLE SERVICES

"[My wish to improve the lives of all children and their families in Moorabool Shire is] ...more opportunities for parents/families to access services and facilities without needing to rely on private transport... and more low/no cost entertainment options for young children" (Parent)

"...Kids in different situations need different things. My biggest hope would be the provision of sufficient services and opportunities for disadvantaged or abused children" (Parent)

"If numbers keep increasing with the growth of new families in the area we may have difficulties in future years accommodating all these families..." (Service provider)

"[My wish to improve the lives of all children and their families in Moorabool Shire is] ...for the children in the Moorabool Shire to have the same opportunities as children living in Melbourne" (Service provider)

"[I would like] more shops, bigger and better" (Child)

"[What I like about my community] is sport around the town" (Child)

OUTCOME:

The child and family service sector is responsive to the emerging needs of children and families.

OBJECTIVE:

Current and future Early Years infrastructure and service planning keep pace to the current and future population needs of families and children.

OUTCOME:

Families and children have access to a range of child and family services and activities.

OBJECTIVE:


There are opportunities for families to engage with services across the municipality where lack of transport may be a barrier to access.

OUTCOME:

Families and children experiencing family violence have access to coordinated support from services.

OBJECTIVE:

To promote a collaborative and coordinated agency approach, to resource and support families experiencing family violence.



Having access to the full range of services, programs and facilities is important for children, their families, and service providers. The community value and make use of the facilities available to them, with 77% of family members (via the survey), identifying specific services and/or aspects of service delivery as what is working well for them/their family. However, there is also agreement that having greater choice regarding the services available across the community would make Moorabool Shire an even better place to live.

Community consultations with families and service providers highlight a need for greater choice. Specifically, this relates to educational facilities, ranging from early childhood programs through to high schools, and health services, most notably general practitioners. Two key issues raised by families were affordability of prior-to-school programs (e.g. early childhood programs) and waiting time for services.

Service providers completing the online survey agreed with the views of families, to a lesser extent. The issue of waiting time was identified (by 60% service providers) as a barrier for families using or accessing child and family services. Other key barriers identified by service providers include: lack of knowledge of available services (75.6%); access to the service by public transport (75%); services have reached capacity (72.73%); and the geographic location of the service (68.9%). In addition, service providers commented on the high incidence of family violence and family breakdowns across the community, and the need for a more coordinated and collaborative approach to supporting these families.

Children identified having access to a range of sport and recreational facilities as what they like most about living in their community and also what they believe would make it even better. Access to water parks, swimming pools, more (and bigger) parks, playgrounds, indoor play spaces and sports grounds is particularly important to children.

Ensuring adequate service provision to meet current demand, while remaining responsive to the emerging needs of children and families is critical. This requires Council and other service providers to have processes in place to keep abreast of families' priorities, needs and interests. The continued monitoring of projected population increases and changing demographics, in light of the potential impact on future infrastructure planning and development, is also required.

PRIORITY AREA TWO: CONNECTING AND WORKING TOGETHER

“As always, it depends which family you ask! Some feel very connected, some don’t. The ones that don’t are clearly the ones that need support” (Service provider)

“Getting the information out there, having [...] a friendly face to meet and greet support families to engage with and enjoy their community. Once engaged, these families are then more likely to be advocates for helping other new, or disconnected families themselves, fostering healthy connected communities” (Service provider)

“We believe that families are the most important part of their children/s lives and so sharing vital information with them is essential to assist them to feel safe, loved and to encourage learning” (Service provider)

“[One of the major challenges we face in delivering services to children and families is] knowing who we can access, and what they will provide for our families” (Service provider)

“[Council can play a role in] ensuring that the service providers are given the opportunity to work hand in hand to provide the best possible program for our children” (Service provider)

“[I would like] for people to feel safe” (Child)

“I like the people in my community. I like the footy team in my community” (Child)

OUTCOME:

A service delivery model that is more integrated and seamless for children and families to access.

OBJECTIVE:

- a. Promote an integrated service delivery model across the child and family service sector.
- b. Council departments work collaboratively in the planning and provision of programs, services and facilities for children and families.
- c. Increase the knowledge, skills and collaborative efforts of service providers in responding to the diverse and sometimes complex needs of families.

There is an increasing body of evidence demonstrating the benefits of an integrated approach to service delivery for children, families, and communities (Moore, 2008; Press, Sumsion & Wong, 2010). An integrated approach provides easier and timely access for families, more flexible and responsive approaches to service delivery, and stronger and more collaborative partnerships amongst service providers. A commitment to working together in a more collaborative and integrated way is identified as a strength of the child and family service sector, and an opportunity for improvement and strengthening.

CONTINUUM OF INTEGRATION

CO-EXISTENCE - describes services that are located in the same neighbourhood but operate as separate and distinct services.

COMMUNICATION - describes services that share information, are aware of and inform families of other available services, and coordinate services to improve the overall service delivery to families.

COORDINATION - describes services that maintain their individual autonomy but agree to some joint planning and coordination for particular time limited projects or services.

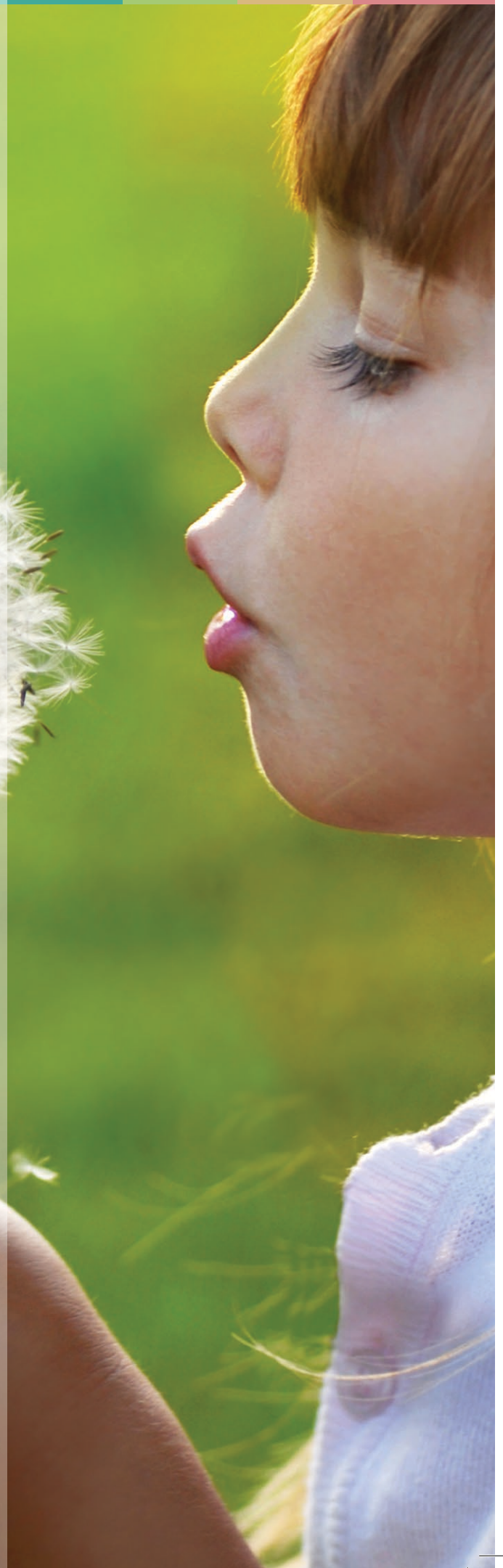
COLLABORATION - describes services that unite under a single auspice to share resources and jointly plan and deliver services.

INTEGRATION - describes a merging of services under a single entity, whereby services and programs have a shared purpose, congruent practices and collaborative relationships.

Adapted from Turnbull & Turnbull, 2000, cited in Moore, 2008.

Integrated service delivery is sometimes described as existing in a continuum (Moore, 2008). Service providers who responded to the online survey were divided as to where they currently sat along this continuum. Just under half (48.94%) describe their current way of working together as communication, while a further 27.66% describe their approach as coordinated. 8.51% report they are working collaboratively, while only 2.13% believe they are working in an integrated way. When describing their ideal approach, there is a desire to improve on current ways of working together. 34.78% seek to work in a more coordinated approach, 17.39% in a more collaborative approach, and 26.09% in a more integrated approach.

The majority of service providers (93.18%) believe that Moorabool Shire Council has a role to play in facilitating networking and communicating amongst service providers. This includes facilitating networking forums, sharing information, and promoting opportunities to learn together. This will assist service providers to ensure families are kept informed and connected within their community. Being connected to community is something that families say can be difficult, and requires considerable effort on their part. For some families this is especially true when they are unsure of where and how to make connections with others.



PRIORITY AREA THREE: AN IMPROVED AND SUSTAINABLE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

“Moorabool Shire is a fantastic area to bring up kids. I think as long as it never loses its sense of community, all kids will benefit in the future” (Parent)

“Isn’t the measure of a good place to live whether or not kids can get around on their bikes? I don’t think this is the case for Moorabool” (Parent)

“We need an indoor swimming pool, because you can have parties and it will be lots of fun for you and your friends” (Child)

“We think Ballan should have an art gallery because it’s an opportunity for people to show their talent in art” (Children)

“[I would like] having a big park with slides and swings and trees” (Child)

“Keep the community small with trees and wildlife” (Child)

“Something that could be improved would be the bikes paths. They are littered with potholes and it is very uncomfortable to ride on. It would also be good to have a friendly town” (Child)

“I would [...] build an animal hospital that saves animals lives if they are sick or hurt” (Child)

“What I don’t like about this community is that the roads always have potholes and are usually bumpy” (Child)

“I like to play cricket, footy and other physical stuff” (Child)

“I don’t like how we don’t have walking tracks or horse riding tracks” (Child)

OUTCOME:

Access to services, programs and facilities, for families and children, is integral to the planning and location of child and family services.

OBJECTIVE:

Families have safe and easy access to child and family services across the municipality, through the provision of a range of transport options and services.

OUTCOME:

There are increased levels of participation, and understanding in the community of the importance of play for children aged from birth to 12 years.

OBJECTIVE:

To increase opportunities for play and outdoor physical activity, for children and their families.

OUTCOME:

Children attending kindergarten programs have access to natural outdoor play spaces that promote learning, exploration and connection with nature.

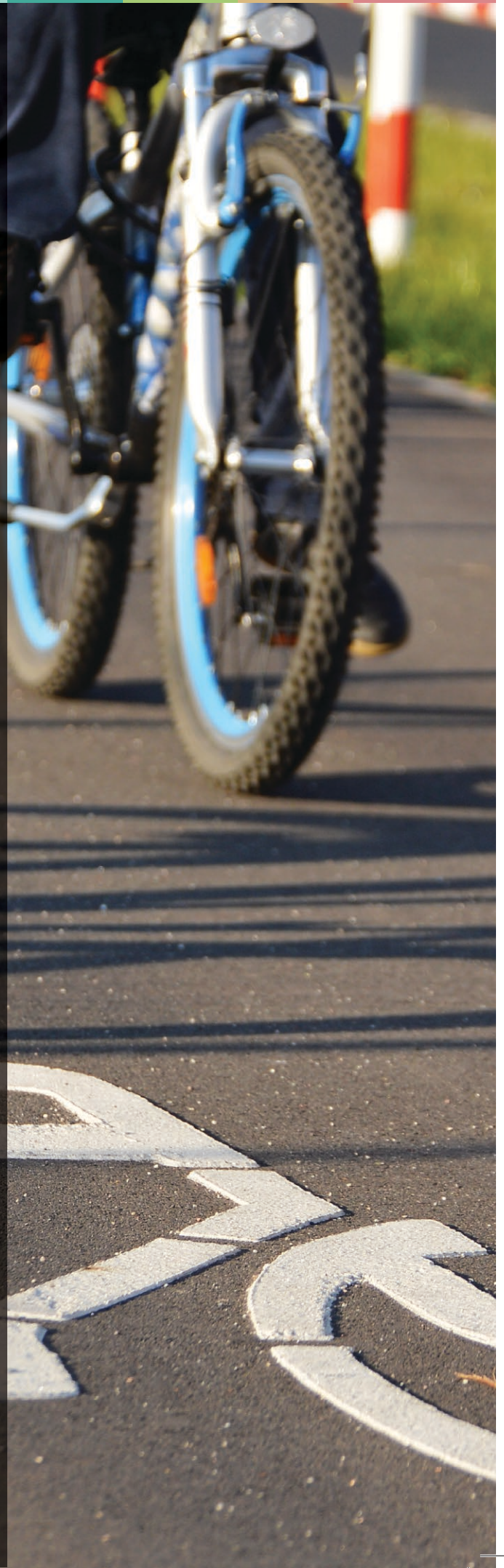
OBJECTIVE:

Children have access to well planned natural outdoor play spaces.

Families and children are generally satisfied with the range of services, programs and facilities available in the community and make good use of these. However, greater attention to urban infrastructure is identified as being critical to meeting the needs of families, now, and in the future. Families highlighted the need for the continued care and enhancement of existing facilities, most notably sporting facilities, an indoor pool and indoor play spaces. More playgrounds and parks and the maintenance of existing outdoor spaces, is also identified as needing attention.

How children and families get around within the community is also highlighted as deserving further consideration. This includes the provision and maintenance of well-connected roads, bike paths, walkways and access to public transport. Being active and getting out and about in the community is particularly important to children, and is noted as one of the areas community members liked most about living in the municipality.

These findings complement the key themes and priorities of the *Moorabool Health and Well-being Plan (2013 - 2017)*, the *Hike and Bike Strategy*, and the *Recreation and Leisure Strategy*. It is envisaged that this combined focus and commitment will lead to better outcomes for the community by promoting an active and healthy lifestyle, supporting community engagement and connectedness, and increasing the health and well-being of children and families.



PRIORITY AREA FOUR: CONSULTING AND COMMUNICATING WITH COMMUNITY

“Other than this survey, I know of no other contact to ask these sorts of questions; I think the survey is a good first step though!” (Parent)

“[My wish to improve the lives of all children and their families in Moorabool Shire is] ...for information on what is available to be clear, easy to find, and not based on word of mouth” (Parent)

“It is great that the community, including children, are being consulted again after a significant period of time since the last MEYP. This current program is really seeking to engage with the community about their ideas and needs” (Service provider)

“I think we have a little way to go here, if you are not aware of services then how do you refer?” (Service provider)

OUTCOME:

Children and families are aware of what is happening across the community and how their voices have impact and influence activities of Council.

OBJECTIVE:

The voices and perspectives of children are sought and considered in the planning and design of infrastructure and public spaces.

OUTCOME:

There is two way communication between families, Council and other service providers, about key issues impacting on the lives of children and families.

OBJECTIVE:

Families can communicate with, and receive information from Council and other service providers, according to their individual needs and preferences.

Community consultation was a critical component of the development of this MEYP. In total, 676 people took part in the consultations, including 301 children and 271 families. This response alone demonstrates that having a say on issues impacting on people’s lives is important to the community. In an open-ended survey question, 61% of families expressed dissatisfaction with the level of consultation across the community. In addition, significantly more families than service providers believed neither families’ nor children’s opinions were sought, listened to, or acted upon.

Being kept informed about what is happening across the community, including information about available services, is important to families. Service providers who completed the online survey rate a lack of knowledge about available

services as the main barrier encountered by families. While most families responding to the online survey (69.2%) agree that it is easy to get information about services, some disagree (15.4%), and the same percentage (15.4%) does not offer an opinion.

Families’ preferences for receiving information about services, programs and facilities varied, with the most favoured methods including:

1. Email (64.4%);
2. Local newspaper (61.7%);
3. Flyers (32.9%);
4. Facebook (31.1%);
5. Community noticeboards (30.7%); and
6. Council website (29.3%).

Families’ preferences for offering suggestions and feedback also vary, with email being the most highly rated option (77.4%) followed by Facebook (31.7%), mail/post (23.5%), and face-to-face communication (23.5%). Ongoing communication strategies for sharing information and receiving feedback need to be responsive to this range of preferences, in addition to families’ differing backgrounds, needs and abilities.

For children, not having a say is the main thing they don’t like about living in their community. However, as highlighted in the consultations with children, they have strong views and opinions about what they like and dislike about their community, and what would make it better. Consulting with children needs to be more than a one off event (Harris & Manatakis, 2013). Identifying consultation as a priority area reflects an ongoing commitment to consult regularly with children and their families, and identify consultation as a critical component of service delivery.





SUMMARY ACTION PLAN

The Moorabool Shire MYEP Action Plan is available in a separate document. A summary of the actions in each of the four priority areas included in the Action Plan are listed below.

PRIORITY AREA ONE: MORE AVAILABLE AND ACCESSIBLE SERVICES

Summary of actions	Year
Plan and construct the Darley Early Years Hub.	1-2
Review the Terms of Reference of the Family Violence Network.	1
Identify, review and simplify current referral and support systems for families experiencing family violence, to ensure a collaborative, coordinated response from participating agencies.	1-2
Advocate to State and Federal governments, for an ongoing commitment to 15 hours of kindergarten.	1-2
Develop formal kindergarten agreements between Council and kindergarten providers to provide a more effective and responsive delivery of universal kindergarten services across the municipality.	1-2
Participate in the Municipal Association of Victoria's (MAV) trial kindergarten central enrolment project to implement a streamlined approach across the municipality to improve access to kindergarten programs.	1-2
Provide coordinated 'pop up' services across the municipality, to give families greater access to key family and children's services.	2
Monitor the Victorian Royal Commission on Family Violence.	1-3
Explore, scope and cost opportunities to realign and readjust current service provision towards more flexible service delivery models to meet current and future needs of families and children.	3
Council will continue to monitor projected population growth of families and children; to ensure current and future infrastructure planning to accommodate the needs of families and children.	1-7
Plan and construct the West Maddingley Early Years Hub.	1-4
Advocate for the provision of locally based services, including advocating to State and Federal governments for increased funding for the provision of services.	1-4
In line with the Health & Wellbeing Plan explore the feasibility of gender equity or violence prevention initiatives that assist parenting. This includes advocating to State and Federal governments for increased funding to ensure the continued provision of resources for families experiencing family violence.	1-7
Increase participation of vulnerable families in services.	1-7



PRIORITY AREA TWO: CONNECTING AND WORKING TOGETHER

Summary of actions	Year
Identify, develop and review the range of child and family service networks that exist across the community.	1
Evaluate current service delivery models to respond to emerging needs and preferences of families accessing services. Evaluation will address current barriers to access, including: service operating hours; and the potential for providing programs and services from local primary schools.	2
Council will ensure there is representation across internal departments in all community projects, activities and facilities relevant to children and families.	3
Develop and implement a partnership agreement, which binds local services to work in a collaborative manner and provides protocols for an integrated service delivery model.	2-3
Actively engage with and support the work of the Central Highlands Child and Youth Area Partnership, to support the collaborative efforts of local service providers to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families.	1-3
In partnership with service providers, Council will source and facilitate professional development across a range of topics, including training specific to best practice integrated service delivery.	1-7



PRIORITY AREA THREE: IMPROVED AND SUSTAINABLE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Summary of actions	Year
Consult with children and their families during the redesign and redevelopment of outdoor spaces.*	2-3
Audit and identify opportunities for the integration of play based activities in previously unused spaces e.g. in and around shopping centres.*	1-7
Review existing play spaces to ensure they meet the needs, interests and abilities of children and adults with varying ages and abilities, and where possible, advocate for and resource the necessary modifications to be made.*	1-7
In consultation with Public Transport Victoria (PTV), Council will advocate for efficient and effective public transport options across the municipality, to promote easy access to child and family services.**	1-2
In line with Council's Long Term Capital Improvement program, Council will maintain and enhance well-connected roads, walkways and bike paths to promote safe and easy access to child and family services across the municipality.**	1-7
Develop a framework for Council and local Kindergartens to ensure future planning and additional works in children's play spaces provide natural play environment for children that promote their learning, exploration and connection with nature.	3

*In line with Moorabool's Recreation & Leisure Strategy.

** In line with Moorabool's Hike & Bike Strategy.



PRIORITY AREA FOUR: CONSULTING AND COMMUNICATING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Summary of actions	Year
Council undertakes an analysis of the costs and benefits of endorsing the Victorian Local Governance Alliance (VLGA) Victorian Charter for Child Friendly Cities and Communities.	1
Develop and implement a communication strategy to ensure families have a range of options for communicating with Council and other service providers.	1
Develop a Moorabool Framework for consulting with children, as part of the Community Engagement Policy and Framework. Framework to include protocols and processes for appropriately consulting with children in an authentic and evidence based manner.	3-4
Council will consult with children in the planning and design of infrastructure and public spaces to ensure it is meeting and acknowledging their needs, preferences and interests.	3-4



EVALUATION AND REPORTING

The successful implementation of this MEYP requires attention to a number of factors. These include:

- Shared ownership and responsibility;
- A commitment to the identified outcomes and objectives;
- Implementation of the action steps; and
- Processes for monitoring progress, evaluation and reporting.

This requires Council and non-Council child and family service providers to set aside time to regularly reflect on and review progress towards identified action steps in line with the indicative measures. Ongoing review of the MEYP ensures it remains a working document, which guides Moorabool Shire child and family service providers in their efforts to promote better outcomes for children and families.

This review process will assist service providers to remain on track in their individual and collaborative efforts; acknowledge and celebrate key achievements and successes; and remain responsive to new and emerging priorities and needs. It also provides valuable data to share with the community and inform the development of the next MEYP.

The following diagram outlines the process for the annual review of the MEYP, and reporting to Council and the Moorabool community, including children and families.



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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Moorabool Shire MEYP Action Planning Template

PRIORITY AREA: _____

Outcome: <i>What we hope to achieve</i>	Objective: <i>The broad target we are aiming for</i>	Actions: <i>What we will do to achieve our outcome</i>	Responsibility: <i>Who will be responsible</i>	Indicative measures: <i>How we will measure progress</i>	Timeline: <i>When will the action be completed</i>





