



# Investment in Community Childcare infrastructure

## Investing in community childcare centres to meet future demands

Over the coming years, an anticipated rise in demand, and the aging of well used existing kindergarten infrastructure, means our City will face childcare shortages, without pre-emptive action.

### What is the ask?

Council requests to work with the Victorian and Australian Governments to fund the redevelopment of community-managed Childcare Centers across the municipality, starting with Eildon Road Children's Centre (St Kilda), Elwood Children's Centre (Elwood) and The Avenue Children's Centre and Kindergarten (Balaclava).

### What is the issue that this initiative will address?

The City of Port Phillip has a firm commitment to supporting quality early education and care including supporting collaboration across the early education and care sector, directly delivering early education and care and providing facilities meeting the needs of the community.

The City of Port Phillip property portfolio currently includes 17 facilities enabling the delivery of early

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education including community-managed childcare centres.

As noted in the Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan (KISP 021, see [link](#)), much of the portfolio is aging with these properties nearing the end of the working life.

Of particular note are the Eildon Road Children's Centre (St Kilda), Elwood Children's Centre (Elwood) and The Avenue Children's Centre and Kindergarten (Balaclava).

These much-loved centers are converted houses that can each accommodate approximately 40 children. They are no longer fit-for-purpose due to their age and design, and do not comply with contemporary standards of access, health and safety. The cost to remediate and renew the buildings is extensive and would involve long closures.

Significant investment is required to either remedy these centres and bring them to up to standard or rebuild them-nearby.

Over the coming years an anticipated rise in demand, combined with the demise of existing kindergarten infrastructure, means that Our City will face early education place shortages, if there is no action on this issue.

### What is Council proposing?

Council is planning options to meet growing childcare demands. This includes the redevelopment of existing community-managed childcare centres within the municipality to improve capacity and accessibility. Centers in need of urgent redevelopment include Eildon Road Children's Centre (St Kilda), Elwood Children's Centre (Elwood) and The Avenue Children's Centre & Kindergarten (Balaclava).

The upgraded facilities would also meet relevant building codes and Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). The new centres would also better support staff in their delivery of this vital service by providing, a higher degree of functionality, safety and flexibility.

### How does this initiative align with the Council Plan and Victorian/Australian Government Priorities?

#### Council:

The Council Plan 2021-31: —Inclusive Port Phillip. A city that is a place for all members of our community, where people feel supported and comfortable being themselves and expressing their identities.

- We will provide delivery of services and programs for children, young people and their families and

caregivers in our City that meet the aspirations of our Every Child, Our Future: Children's Services Policy including:

- planning and support for children's services to help all children and young people living in Port Phillip to develop to their full potential and to minimise the effects of disadvantage
- providing high quality Council-run early education and care services.

Council's commitment is governed under our Children's Services Policy, *Every Child; Our Future*. Under this policy Council has identified three outcomes:

1. All children living in Port Phillip are supported to develop to their full potential.
2. Parents, carers and families are supported to increase their capacity and capability.
3. The effects of disadvantage on children's development are minimised.

#### Victorian Government:

The municipal Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan (KISP 2021), developed in partnership with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), highlights the need for pre-emptive investment in quality capacity to deliver extra kindergarten places. The plan estimates that by the end of the decade, there will be demand for hundreds of placements for three and four-year-olds which cannot be met by the existing supply.

Under the Building Blocks program, Victorian Government funding is available to plan, build, expand and improve early years infrastructure across Victoria to provide kindergarten places. The aim is to ensure local families can continue to access great local kindergarten programs, no matter where they live.

#### Australian Government:

Access to quality childcare is a federal priority and responsibility. The Australian Government currently provides childcare support through:

- direct financial assistance to families to help reduce the cost of care (Childcare Benefit CCB)
- financial assistance to certain types of childcare in terms of establishment and operating costs
- funding of quality assurance mechanisms
- extra support in remote and rural areas
- extra support for those with special needs
- a National Planning System to help co-ordinate the growth of the system
- funding of various information services.

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Council is requesting the Australian Government to provide additional funding to support the maintenance and renewal of childcare infrastructure in the same way the Victorian Government supports renewal of kindergarten infrastructure.

### How does the initiative assist the community recover from COVID-19?

The project will help the community recover from COVID-19, by:

- immediately stimulating the local construction (and associated) industries,
- creating short- and long-term jobs, including additional employment in the care sector. This also directly supports women's employment and

incomes, as these sectors account for a high proportion of female employment.

- Contributing to the renewal of crucial childcare infrastructure fostering improved community connection and collaboration.

## Cost and current status?

### Cost

The project is estimated to cost approximately \$15 million.

### Status

Council officers are consulting with the community and the Victorian Government on possible options for the three centres.

Preliminary designs and, cost analysis have been undertaken to support this work.