



Summary

We have planned a balanced approach that maximises capacity within existing facilities, while also undertaking some consolidations of existing facilities and the redevelopment of new facilities. It is anticipated that this plan will assist Council in its forward budget preparations and in its dealings with the State Government, as grants and co-investment opportunities are available for Council to explore.

Through this strategic approach, Council will be well placed to meet the additional capacity requirements arising from a second year of kindergarten education for three-year old children, as well as developing contemporary integrated service developments where this is feasible. This will be a 10-year plan with an annual review of infrastructure progress and update to ensure it remains on track and takes account of any changes to requirements along the way.

The year ahead

We are excited to announce that a new state of the art integrated children's and family hub for the Pinewood community is in design stage. It is anticipated that this facility will be ready to open in mid-2023. It will include beautiful indoor and outdoor spaces including two kindergarten rooms, a two-room Maternal and Child Health service and community playgroup areas.

Monash Early Years Infrastructure Plan 2021

Our Vision: For all children and young people in the City of Monash to have the best opportunities to grow, learn and thrive in a strong and supported community, where they are nurtured by capable, confident families from the time they are born until early adulthood.



In Monash

Victorian local councils including Monash have, over many decades, made significant investments in infrastructure to support learning and development opportunities for local children. In Monash, this includes the provision of 44 buildings which house sessional kindergartens, maternal and child health centres, occasional care services, play groups, toy libraries and long day childcare facilities.

Originally, single purpose buildings in suburban streets that were accessible for families to reach by foot, was the typical service delivery style. Since the 1990s, the preferred model is for services to be provided in larger facilities, where parents can utilise a range of services at one location.

More than 80 per cent of the early years buildings in Monash are over 40 years old, with an average age of 48 years. The building age profile suggests Council will face higher maintenance costs, an ongoing need for refurbishment, and a staged replacement program in coming years.

Planning for the Future

The State Government has recently announced a staged introduction of subsidised three-year-old kindergarten education for all Victorian children. Implementation will be rolled out over time, beginning with five hours per week from 2022 and gradually increasing to 15 hours per week by 2029.

At Monash we are anticipating that with some timetabling changes, we will be able to meet the extra demand up to 10 hours per week in most areas. Beyond this point, and with the forecasted increase in the population of young children, we anticipate that within a decade, our facilities will not have sufficient capacity.

Like many other councils, the provision of early years services for the community of Monash is achieved through a mix of services and service providers. While Council owns a considerable number of early years buildings, it is not the sole service provider. There are a range of community managed, not-for-profit providers who utilise the Monash buildings.

Community managed service providers generally have leases in place for the Council buildings from which they operate and for the first time in 2021, the leases included service provision expectations. This initiative will improve Council's influence over the programs that are offered to ensure that Council facilities operate at their optimal capacity.

Several coinciding factors have influenced the development of this plan for Monash.

These include:

- An expansion of early years educational opportunities for three-year-old Victorian children placing pressure on our existing buildings.
- Ageing early years buildings combined with an increasing level of service demand as the population of children in Monash grows.
- Recent changes to best practice principles that have impacted building design, and eligibility for government funding for capital improvements, requires conformance with building design principles.
- An engaged Monash community with high expectations of Council services and facilities.

The Monash Early Years Infrastructure Plan has been developed to guide a 10-year capital works program which will keep pace with all of the expected changes.



Our Commitment

Monash Council has reaffirmed its commitment to support local children and their families and to support a strong service network through:

- Continuing to provide and maintain facilities to support its community managed early years services sector.
- Considering the distribution of facilities across the municipality that takes account of population-based needs.
- Maximising opportunities to form financial partnerships with other levels of government to support new and redeveloped early years infrastructure.
- Early years infrastructure which will be carefully planned, based on population data, policy directions and community requirements.
- It is accepted that there are limitations to some existing Council infrastructure and there may be limitations to Council's funding capacities to address all identified needs.

Our Approach

The methodology utilised in the development of the Monash Early Years Infrastructure Plan takes account of several data sources to provide a staged and practical approach to addressing short and longer-term needs.

This data includes:

- Demographic forecasts from the Kindergarten Infrastructure Services Plan (KISP) 2021.
- Policy context including key legislation, frameworks, policies, and principles.
- Infrastructure funding and grants available to support early years infrastructure renewal and development.
- Emerging issues, changes to requirements, practice model and associated implications for building design.
- Population analysis, current and forecasted for whole of Monash and for each Statistical Area.
- Demand and supply analysis, including infrastructure planning model, key assumptions, current and projected utilisation/demand for early years services, particularly kindergarten.

