

7.2.1 DRAFT - CHILDREN YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES INFRASTRUCTURE FRAMEWORK

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RECOMMENDATION

That Council approves the Draft Children Youth and Family Services Infrastructure Framework for the purpose of public exhibition.

INTRODUCTION

Monash Council has a long history of investing in infrastructure that supports children, young people and families. Through the provision, renewal and stewardship of community facilities, Council has played an important role in creating places where children can learn and develop, families can connect and access support, and communities can thrive.

Whilst Council has previously leveraged State and Federal Government grants to help fund new facilities or major upgrades, grant funding is generally not available for ongoing maintenance and repair works. Council bears the majority cost of the infrastructure maintenance and renewal related to the 40 CYFS facilities it owns.

Despite Council's continued commitment, planning for Children, Youth and Family Services (CYFS) infrastructure is becoming increasingly complex. Community needs and expectations continue to evolve, service delivery models are changing, infrastructure is ageing, the broader policy environment continues to shift, and financial pressures are increasing across all levels of government. As a result, decisions about future infrastructure investment, renewal and ownership are becoming more challenging and consequential.

Over the next decade, Council will be required to make significant decisions about the future shape of its Children, Youth and Family Services infrastructure network. These decisions may involve choices about where investment should occur, how existing facilities are used, opportunities to co-locate or integrate services, the role of other providers in meeting community needs, and whether ageing assets should be renewed, repurposed, expanded or consolidated as part of a broader and more sustainable service network. While these decisions will vary depending on local circumstances, all will require Council to balance community benefit, service outcomes, asset stewardship, financial sustainability and broader municipal priorities.

Council has limited resources at its disposal and is obligated to allocate them equitably to benefit the whole community including the management of over 307 community facilities supporting a range of community needs. Any additional Council investment toward CYFS infrastructure must be balanced so that it does not compromise broader community infrastructure needs, such as facilities for seniors, vulnerable people, young people, community groups, sporting groups and community support organisations.

The purpose of this Framework (Attachment 1 – DRAFT CYFS Infrastructure Planning Framework) is not to predetermine those decisions. Rather, it establishes a shared vision, planning principles and decision-making approach to guide future infrastructure planning across the CYFS network. By seeking community input on these foundations now, the Framework aims to create a set of



community-informed principles for future decision-making, helping to ensure that decisions are transparent, evidence-based, balanced and aligned with the long-term interests of children, young people, families and the broader Monash community.

An easy-to-read Summary Version of the Framework (Attachment 2 – DRAFT Summary Version – CYFS Infrastructure Planning Framework) has also been prepared as a public facing companion document, also providing Council, community and key stakeholders with a concise overview of the Framework's key elements.

This report seeks Council endorsement to publish the Children Youth and Family Services Infrastructure Framework for the purpose of public exhibition and community feedback prior to final adoption.

COUNCIL PLAN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

A healthy, safe and connected community

A community where all people have the opportunity to experience enhanced levels of social, emotional, and physical wellbeing.

A well-planned and future ready city

An attractive and well-designed city with connected neighbourhoods, active transport, open spaces, facilities and infrastructure that meets the current and future needs of our community.

A city that promotes environmental sustainability

Where neighbourhoods are designed and developed along environmentally sustainable development and urban design principles, in sympathy with the natural environment.

BACKGROUND

Monash Council has a long history of supporting Children, Youth and Family Services through both service delivery and the provision of community infrastructure. Today, Council owns and manages 40 facilities that support the delivery of kindergarten, maternal and child health, playgroups, family services, youth services and early learning across the municipality. These facilities have developed over many decades in response to changing community needs, service models and government policy settings.

In recent years, the Children, Youth and Family Services sector has experienced significant change. Population growth, evolving service delivery models, changing community expectations and substantial Victorian Government reforms, particularly within the kindergarten system, have altered how services are delivered and how infrastructure is planned, funded and managed. At the same time, many Council-owned facilities are ageing and were designed for earlier service models, creating increasing pressure to ensure infrastructure remains fit-for-purpose, financially sustainable and responsive to future community needs.

In response to the Victorian Government's Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan (KISP) and Best Start, Best Life reforms, Monash Council and the Victorian Government co-invested in a significant infrastructure program between 2021 and 2025. This program delivered nine major projects across the municipality, increased kindergarten capacity by 337 places, modernised



ageing facilities and expanded the network of integrated child and family infrastructure. The program represented a total investment of approximately \$35 million, including a Council contribution of approximately \$15.5 million.

While this investment has strengthened the municipality's infrastructure network, particularly as it relates to kindergarten, and positioned Monash as a strong delivery partner within the broader service system, it has also highlighted the increasingly complex environment in which infrastructure decisions are made. Council continues to operate within a shared service system involving State and Federal Government, community organisations and private providers, while balancing community expectations, service demand, asset stewardship responsibilities and broader financial considerations.

The CYFS Infrastructure Planning Framework has been developed to provide a clear and consistent foundation for future infrastructure planning and decision-making to support all service areas for children, young people and families. This approach recognises that infrastructure decisions should be guided by agreed principles and evidence, rather than being made on a project-by-project basis. It also provides a framework that can respond to changing community needs, service delivery models, government policy and financial constraints over time.

The draft Framework has therefore been developed as the foundational document within this broader planning process.

To support this work, Council is continuing to gather and analyse evidence relating to the performance of the CYFS infrastructure network. This includes consideration of current and future service demand, asset condition and performance, utilisation, demographic change, community need, and the suitability of facilities to support contemporary and future service delivery models. Together, the Framework and this evidence base will provide Council with a robust and transparent basis for identifying future infrastructure priorities, assessing options and informing future strategic directions. Outcomes may include exploring alternative management approaches, identifying new service delivery methods, enhancing user experience, rationalising or co-locating facilities and, where justified, considering the divestment of assets to fund new fit for purpose facilities.

DISCUSSION

The DRAFT CYFS Infrastructure Planning Framework has been developed to provide Council with a consistent, transparent and evidence-based approach to planning, managing and evolving infrastructure that supports children, young people and families across Monash. It has been designed to operate within Council's Integrated Planning Framework, supporting the delivery of the Community Vision and Council Plan and being guided by Council's Asset Plan, Financial Plan and other relevant strategies, plans, policies and frameworks.

The Framework does not identify specific projects, facilities for redevelopment or future capital investment commitments. Instead, it establishes the principles and decision-making framework that will guide future planning and investment decisions across the CYFS infrastructure network.

The Framework has been informed by -

- analysis of the broader Children, Youth and Family Services system;
- demographic and population trends;

- community engagement undertaken during 2025;
- emerging government reforms and policy changes;
- contemporary infrastructure planning practice; and
- council's experience managing a diverse portfolio of CYFS assets.

A key feature of the Framework is its recognition that Council operates within a broader service system involving State and Federal Government, community organisations and private providers, and that future infrastructure outcomes will be achieved through collaboration across this system rather than through Council acting alone. The Framework is intentionally structured to move from understanding to action. It first identifies the key drivers of change that may influence infrastructure planning over the next ten years, then outlines the priorities and expectations expressed by the community.

In response to these considerations, the Framework establishes eight infrastructure planning principles which provide a consistent basis for future decision-making regarding Council's infrastructure used for children, young people and families. Together, these principles ensure future infrastructure decisions are informed by both emerging trends and community aspirations, while remaining flexible enough to respond to future change and financial sustainability considerations.

Notably, while a broader Council Community Facilities Infrastructure Plan is not currently in place, these principles are sufficiently adaptable to be replicated across all community facility settings and are expected to align with any future strategic infrastructure framework.

CYFS Infrastructure Planning Principles

The following principles guide decisions about future investment, ownership, renewal and provision of Children, Youth and Family Services infrastructure in Monash. Together, they provide a consistent framework for assessing opportunities, responding to emerging needs and prioritising future investment.

PRINCIPLE 1	Investment is guided by community need, equity and evidence Council will use transparent decision-making processes to prioritise investment that delivers meaningful community benefit, improves equitable access and responds to significant needs or service gaps, particularly where vulnerable communities face barriers to participation.
PRINCIPLE 2	Infrastructure planning recognises Council is one part of a broader system Council will consider the roles, responsibilities and capacity of government, community and private sector providers before investing in additional Council-owned infrastructure. Where an important community need is not being adequately met, Council will consider the most appropriate response, which may include advocacy, facilitation, partnership, targeted investment or direct provision.

PRINCIPLE 3	Infrastructure decisions maximise the value and performance of the CYFS network Council will seek to make effective use of its existing assets, while also considering opportunities to consolidate, renew, adapt, repurpose, expand or reconfigure infrastructure where this improves service outcomes, functionality, accessibility, financial sustainability or long-term asset performance.
PRINCIPLE 4	Infrastructure maximises community outcomes through connection and collaboration Where appropriate, facilities should enable community participation, foster social connection, support partnerships and provide opportunities for integrated service delivery.
PRINCIPLE 5	Infrastructure supports equitable access to services Infrastructure planning will consider accessibility, inclusion, affordability, transport connections and barriers to participation
PRINCIPLE 6	Infrastructure investment considers whole-of-life costs Infrastructure should be financially sustainable over its full lifecycle.
PRINCIPLE 7	Infrastructure is planned for flexibility and future change Infrastructure should be capable of adapting to future needs and responding to change over time.
PRINCIPLE 8	Infrastructure contributes to environmental sustainability Infrastructure should support Council's environmental objectives by reducing environmental impact, improving resilience, and considering long-term sustainability outcomes.

This report seeks Council endorsement to publish the Children, Youth and Family Services Infrastructure Framework for public exhibition and feedback prior to final adoption.

While previous engagement has informed the development of the Framework, the proposed consultation will test whether its vision and infrastructure planning principles reflect community expectations and priorities for the future planning of Children, Youth and Family Services infrastructure.

Feedback received through consultation will be considered and will inform the finalisation of the vision and infrastructure planning principles before the Framework is presented to Council for adoption.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications associated with endorsement of the draft Framework for public consultation.



Council's adopted 10-year financial plan 2026-2036 identifies the integrated approach Council intends to take to achieve its financial policies, and financial sustainability incorporating community engagement, service planning and asset planning. Council is committed to making informed decisions on capital investment and asset management by implementing the Asset Plan and Asset Management Plans. These plans contribute to and shape the Infrastructure Funding Plan, a key element of the Financial Plan. The Asset Plan will outline the methods for upgrading, maintaining, or rationalising Council's asset portfolio. This is crucial for service delivery, ensuring our assets are fit for purpose and utilised as efficiently as possible and ensures long-term asset planning exists.

The Framework is a strategic planning document and does not commit Council to any specific capital projects, infrastructure investments or future expenditure. Instead, it establishes the principles and decision-making framework that will guide future consideration of specific child, youth and family infrastructure needs and investment opportunities.

Community consultation will be undertaken using existing budgeted resources.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate policy changes required as a result of this report.

The DRAFT Children, Youth and Family Services Infrastructure Planning Framework supports Council's Integrated Planning Framework by establishing a consistent approach to future infrastructure planning and decision-making.

The Framework aligns with the Community Vision, Council Plan, Financial Plan, Asset Plan and other relevant Council strategies, plans and policies that influence the provision and management of community infrastructure.

The Framework will guide future consideration of asset management, financial sustainability, service planning, property planning, and leasing and licensing arrangements across the CYFS infrastructure network.

CONSULTATION

The draft Framework has been developed through extensive internal and external engagement.

External consultation informing the Framework included community engagement undertaken during 2025 to understand community priorities for children, young people and family infrastructure. This engagement included -

- a community survey for parents, carers and community members;
- a dedicated survey for children and young people aged 8-25 years; and
- an in-person engagement workshop conducted with members of the Monash Junior Advisory Group.

More than 280 community members participated in the engagement process, providing feedback on accessibility, community connection, youth infrastructure, outdoor spaces, inclusion and the future role of community facilities. These insights have directly informed the development of the Framework's vision, planning principles and decision-making approach.

The primary internal consultation mechanism for the development of the draft Framework has been the CYFS Infrastructure Planning Reference Group. The Reference Group has been formed to provide strategic and technical advice over the duration of the wider CYFS Infrastructure Planning Project. It includes representatives from the following departments:

- Children, Youth and Family Services
- Strategic Asset Management
- Property & City Design
- City Planning
- Strategic Planning
- SRL Project Team,
- Finance
- Capital Works
- Facilities and Infrastructure
- Maintenance
- Sustainability
- Communications
- Corporate Performance

In addition, the draft Framework has been circulated for feedback from internal Children, Youth and Family Services Leadership and the Community Services Management Leadership Team.

The proposed community consultation will focus on both the vision and the principles within the framework to ensure we have accurately reflected the feedback the community has previously provided.

It is proposed that the consultation will commence on 9 November 2026 for a period of four weeks. The consultation will include a Shape Monash survey targeting current service users, respondents to the 2025 community consultation, and broader interested community members and service providers, alongside in-person and online facilitated workshops to engage young people and services providers operating in Council facilities.

Existing partnerships, networks and multiple media channels will be utilised to promote engagement.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The DRAFT CYFS Infrastructure Planning Framework has positive social implications as it establishes a consistent and evidence-based approach to planning infrastructure that supports children, young people and families across Monash. The Framework recognises the important role that community infrastructure plays in supporting service access, social connection, inclusion and community wellbeing.

The Framework supports positive social outcomes by -

- providing a transparent basis for future infrastructure planning and decision-making;
- recognising the diverse needs of children, young people and families across the municipality;
- supporting equitable access to services through consideration of accessibility, inclusion and barriers to participation;
- promoting infrastructure that strengthens community connection, partnerships and integrated service delivery; and
- ensuring future planning is informed by community needs, demographic change and broader service system trends.



The proposed community consultation process will provide an opportunity for community members to review and provide feedback on the draft Framework's vision and planning principles. This will help ensure the final Framework reflects community expectations and priorities for the future planning of Children, Youth and Family Services infrastructure.

As the Framework does not identify specific projects, facility changes or investment commitments, no direct social impacts are anticipated at this stage. Future social implications associated with specific infrastructure proposals will be considered through future planning stages.

HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

There are no human rights implications to this report.

GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT

A Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) has been completed as part of this work because this policy/program/service is considered to have a direct and significant impact on the Monash community.

The GIA identified that children, young people, families and carers may experience different barriers to accessing services and infrastructure based on factors such as gender, caring responsibilities, disability, cultural background, income, age, safety concerns and access to transport. The assessment highlighted the importance of ensuring infrastructure planning considers accessibility, inclusion, safety, cultural responsiveness and equitable access to services.

As a result of the GIA, the Framework includes a principle that infrastructure should support equitable access to services and consider factors such as accessibility, inclusion, affordability, transport connections and barriers to participation. The Framework also recognises the importance of accessible, welcoming and inclusive facilities and supports the use of community engagement and evidence gathering processes that seek to understand the needs of diverse community members.

CONCLUSION

This report presents the DRAFT CYFS Infrastructure Planning Framework for Council approval for the purpose of public exhibition. The Framework represents the first stage of Council's broader CYFS Infrastructure Planning project and establishes the vision, principles and decision-making approach that will guide future infrastructure planning across the municipality.

ATTACHMENT LIST

1. Attachment 1 - DRAFT CYFS Infrastructure Planning Framework [7.2.1.1 - 16 pages]
2. Attachment 2 - DRAFT - Summary Version - CYFS Infrastructure Planning Framework [7.2.1.2 - 7 pages]

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Children Youth and Family Services (CYFS) Infrastructure Planning Framework

Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
2. Vision for children, families and communities	2
3. The children, youth and family services system	2
4. Drivers of change	4
5. Community perspectives and priorities	8
6. Infrastructure planning principles	10
7. Infrastructure Decision-Making Framework.....	12
8. Monitoring and review	15

1. Introduction

The Children, Youth and Family Services Infrastructure Planning Framework sits within Council's Integrated Planning Framework. It supports the delivery of the Community Vision and Council Plan by providing a structured approach to planning, managing and investing in infrastructure that supports children, young people and families.

The Children, Youth and Family Services Infrastructure Planning Framework establishes principles and a decision-making approach that guide future infrastructure planning, service planning, asset management and investment decisions across the CYFS infrastructure network. The planning principles are the guiding statements that describe what Council will consider important when planning and making decisions about CYFS infrastructure. The Infrastructure Decision-Making Framework puts those principles into practice by providing a consistent series of questions for assessing identified needs, opportunities and potential responses. Together, they ensure individual decisions are not considered in isolation and can be clearly explained against an agreed strategic foundation.

Council owns approximately 40 facilities that support the delivery of Children, Youth and Family Services. These facilities form one part of Council's much broader portfolio of community infrastructure, which also supports recreation, sport, culture, lifelong learning, community participation and other local services. Decisions about CYFS infrastructure therefore cannot be made in isolation. They must be balanced alongside community



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priorities, service planning, asset needs, financial capacity and competing investment requirements across Council's full infrastructure portfolio of 307 facilities. Decisions made under this framework should be informed by, and aligned with, relevant Council strategies, plans, policies and asset management frameworks. This includes consideration of matters such as asset management, financial sustainability, property planning, leasing and licensing arrangements, service planning and other corporate priorities that influence the provision and management of community infrastructure.

This framework is supported by ongoing monitoring, analysis and planning undertaken by Council to understand community needs, assess the performance of the infrastructure network, identify emerging opportunities and challenges, and prioritise future investment. This supporting work ensures infrastructure decisions are informed by robust evidence and respond to changing community needs over time.

The Framework does not determine the outcome for individual facilities. It provides the basis on which future options will be identified, assessed, prioritised and considered through Council's service, asset and financial planning processes. Together, the framework and the supporting analysis undertaken by Council enable a coordinated, evidence-based and transparent approach to planning for the future needs of children, young people and families in Monash.

2. Vision for children, families and communities

Monash aspires to be a community where children, young people and families are healthy, safe, connected and supported to grow and thrive. This vision recognises that strong communities are built through access to services, opportunities for participation, meaningful social connections and environments that support wellbeing throughout all stages of life.

Children, Youth and Family Services infrastructure plays an important role in supporting this vision. More than simply providing buildings and facilities, infrastructure creates places where children can learn and develop, young people can connect and belong, families can access support, and communities can come together.

As both a provider and planner within the Children, Youth and Family Services system, Monash Council seeks to ensure infrastructure supports contemporary service delivery, strengthens community connection and responds to changing community needs. Infrastructure planning should be informed by evidence, community insight and collaboration, while remaining flexible and adaptable in the face of future change.

This framework recognises that infrastructure is not an end in itself. Rather, it is an enabler of positive outcomes for children, young people, families and communities. Decisions about infrastructure should therefore focus not only on physical assets, but on how the broader network contributes to participation, belonging, resilience and long-term community wellbeing.

Vision statement

A connected, adaptable and sustainable network of places that enables children, young people and families to learn, participate, belong and thrive.



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3. The children, youth and family services system

3.1 A shared system

Children, Youth and Family Services in Monash are delivered through a network of organisations working together to support children, young people and families at different stages of life. This includes maternal and child health, playgroups, early childhood education, family support services, youth services, community development programs and other services that contribute to health, wellbeing and social connection.

No single organisation is responsible for delivering all services or infrastructure. Instead, the system operates through partnerships between different levels of government, community organisations, private providers and the broader community.

While individual organisations may have different responsibilities, all play an important role in ensuring that children, young people and families have access to the services, facilities and support they need.

Monash Council plays an important role within this shared system as a service provider, planner, advocate, partner and owner of community infrastructure.

3.2 The role of the Victorian Government

The Victorian Government is responsible for funding, regulating and setting policy direction for many services delivered through the Children, Youth and Family Services system.

This includes leadership of major reforms, funding and oversight of kindergarten services, contributions towards services such as Maternal and Child Health and Family Services, and planning for future service delivery across Victoria.

The Victorian Government also plays an increasing role in infrastructure planning and delivery through funding programs and delivering Kindergartens on School Sites, reflecting the growing role of the State in shaping the future early years system.

3.3 The role of local government

Local government plays a unique role within the CYFS system by bringing together service delivery, local planning, community engagement and infrastructure stewardship.

Monash Council delivers a range of universal and targeted services directly to the community, including Maternal and Child Health, immunisation, playgroups, youth and middle years programming and family support. Council also performs coordination functions such as the Central Registration Enrolment Scheme for sessional kindergartens, homelessness outreach, strategic planning and advocacy.

In addition, Council owns and manages a significant portfolio of community infrastructure used to deliver services to children, young people and families. This infrastructure supports both Council-delivered services and services delivered by partner organisations. Monash currently owns 40 facilities that support the delivery of Children, Youth and Family Services across the municipality.

Council has an important role in identifying and responding to local service and access gaps. This does not mean Council must directly provide or own all infrastructure. Depending on the nature of the need and the capacity of other providers, Council's response may include planning, advocacy, facilitation, partnership, targeted investment or



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direct provision, particularly where significant needs affecting vulnerable communities may otherwise remain unmet.

3.4 Community and not-for-profit organisations

Community organisations and not-for-profit providers play a critical role in delivering services across the municipality.

Many kindergarten programs, early learning services and community programs are delivered by not-for-profit organisations operating from Council-owned, privately owned or independently managed facilities. These organisations contribute specialist expertise, strong community connections and service delivery capability that contributes extensively across the sector.

Partnerships between Council and community organisations are an important feature of the Monash service system and support local access to a diverse range of programs and services.

3.5 The private sector

Private providers also contribute to the delivery of services for children and families, particularly in early learning and childcare.

Private investment helps meet growing community demand and provides additional service choice for families. Private providers increasingly deliver funded kindergarten programs alongside long day care services, and play an important role in responding to changing population patterns and service demand.

3.6 Schools and education providers

Government, Catholic and independent schools support children's learning and development beyond the early years and increasingly play a role in the delivery of Kindergartens on School Sites (KOSS).

The KOSS program is a key mechanism available to the Victorian Government to respond to kindergarten demand. By delivering kindergarten infrastructure on school sites, the State can increase local service capacity, utilise existing education land and infrastructure, and reduce reliance on local government and other key delivery partners to fund and maintain new facilities. As part of a balanced infrastructure network, school sites have the potential to make a significant contribution to meeting future kindergarten demand within Monash while strengthening pathways between kindergarten and school.

3.7 Children, young people, families and the broader Monash community

Children, young people and families are at the centre of the CYFS system.

Infrastructure exists to support participation, development, wellbeing, belonging and community connection. Community members are not simply users of services but important partners in shaping how services and facilities respond to local needs.

The experiences, aspirations and priorities of the community provide an important foundation for infrastructure planning and decision making. Community feedback consistently highlights the importance of accessible, welcoming and flexible spaces that support learning, wellbeing, recreation and social connection.


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3.8 Working together

The future of CYFS infrastructure will be shaped by decisions made across the entire system.

Population growth, changing community expectations, government policy, service delivery models, infrastructure investment and financial sustainability all influence how infrastructure is planned and delivered.

For this reason, the future CYFS network cannot be delivered by any one organisation acting alone. Achieving positive outcomes for children, young people and families will require ongoing collaboration between governments, community organisations, service providers, private industry and the broader community.

4. Drivers of change

Infrastructure planning does not occur in isolation. The future needs of children, young people and families will be influenced by demographic change, community needs, government policy, service delivery models and broader social and economic trends.

Many of these factors sit outside the direct control of Council, yet they have a significant influence on how services are delivered and what infrastructure is required. Understanding this environment is an important foundation for making informed and sustainable infrastructure decisions.

4.1 Monash population today vs 2036 (forecast data via profile.id)

Cohort	2026	2036	% increase 2026–2036
0–4 years	11,262	12,487	10.9%
5–9 years	10,708	12,570	17.4%
10–14 years	11,977	12,781	6.7%
15–19 years	14,295	14,874	4.1%
20–24 years	19,276	20,840	8.1%

4.2 Demographic change

The City of Monash is a large and diverse municipality that continues to evolve through population growth, housing change and shifting community demographics. While birth rates provide an important indicator of future demand for early years services, infrastructure planning must also consider migration patterns, changing household structures and future development opportunities.

Over the coming decades, growth is expected to occur primarily through urban renewal, infill development and increased housing density rather than traditional greenfield expansion. Strategic developments, including the Suburban Rail Loop and associated precinct planning, have the potential to influence where future population growth occurs and how demand for services may be distributed across the municipality.

These changes will shape demand for infrastructure across the CYFS network and will influence where services are required, how they are accessed and what forms of infrastructure are most appropriate.



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Key planning implications

- Population growth may not occur evenly across the municipality.
- Housing density may increase demand in locations where land is limited.
- Demand for services will continue to evolve over time.
- Infrastructure planning must remain adaptable to changing growth patterns.

4.3 Community need and vulnerability

Infrastructure planning is not solely about population growth. Community need is also influenced by broader social, economic and health factors.

Municipal-level data can mask significant differences in vulnerability and disadvantage within local communities, reinforcing the importance of place-based planning. Factors such as financial hardship, housing affordability, social isolation, transport connections, cultural and linguistic diversity, disability access and the availability of local infrastructure can all influence both the level of need and access to services across different communities.

Infrastructure planning therefore seeks to support equitable access to services by considering both population demand and the specific needs of communities.

Key planning implications

- Population numbers alone are not a measure of need.
- Infrastructure should support equitable access across the municipality.
- Community facilities should be accessible, inclusive and welcoming.
- Infrastructure investment should consider local contexts.

4.4 Reform and policy environment

The CYFS system continues to evolve as government policies, funding arrangements and service expectations change.

Ongoing reforms across early childhood education and care are reshaping the service system and will continue to influence kindergarten planning for years to come. Expanding access to funded programs, changes to service delivery models, and increased Victorian Government investment in infrastructure are driving changes in service demand, facility requirements and delivery models.

At the same time, government policies relating to family services, maternal and child health, early childhood education, and community services continue to evolve.

As responsibilities and funding arrangements change over time, Council's role within the broader service system will also continue to evolve. While local government plays an important role in service planning, advocacy and infrastructure provision, it has limited influence over state and federal policy decisions. Changes to policy settings,



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funding programs and service delivery requirements can occur with limited notice, creating uncertainty and risk for long-term infrastructure planning and investment decisions.

Key planning implications

- Government policy can significantly influence infrastructure demand.
- Service expectations may change over the life of this framework.
- Future planning must be responsive to reform and policy change.
- Infrastructure decisions should consider long-term system trends rather than short-term policy settings.
- Long-term infrastructure decisions carry inherent risk when future policy settings, funding arrangements and service responsibilities are determined by other levels of government.

4.5 Evolving service delivery models

The way services are delivered today is different from how many community facilities were originally designed.

Historically, many facilities were developed to support individual services operating independently from one another. Increasingly, there is a preference for more integrated approaches that bring together services and create simpler, more connected pathways for children, young people and families.

Examples include integrated child and family hubs, co-located community services, partnerships between service providers and closer connections between early learning, health and community services.

Changes in workforce availability, technology, community expectations and service delivery models will continue to influence the types of infrastructure required in the future.

Key planning implications

- Greater emphasis on integrated service delivery is likely to continue.
- Flexible and adaptable facilities are increasingly important.
- Multi-purpose community infrastructure can support changing needs over time.
- Infrastructure should support collaboration between services and organisations.

4.6 Future uncertainty

Infrastructure typically lasts for many decades, while policy settings, service models and population forecasts can change significantly over shorter periods.

Future infrastructure planning must therefore operate within an environment of uncertainty.

Future demand may be influenced by factors including:

- Changes to government policy and funding programs.



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- Future stages of the Best Start, Best Life reforms.
- Population growth and migration patterns.
- Housing development and urban renewal.
- Workforce availability.
- Technological change.
- Community expectations and service preferences.
- Economic and fiscal conditions.

Rather than seeking to predict a single future outcome, this framework supports decision-making that is flexible, evidence-informed and capable of responding to change over time.

Key planning implications

- Future infrastructure decisions should remain adaptable.
- Flexibility and long-term resilience should be considered alongside immediate demand.
- Infrastructure should be capable of supporting changing service models and users.
- Planning should recognise that uncertainty is a normal part of long-term infrastructure decision-making.

5. Community perspectives and priorities

In 2025, Monash Council undertook community engagement to inform future planning for Children, Youth and Family Services infrastructure. The engagement included a survey of parents, carers and community members, alongside a dedicated survey for children and young people aged 8–25 years. More than 280 community members participated, providing important insights into how existing facilities are used, what is valued, and how infrastructure can better support future generations.

While demographic analysis, service data and policy settings provide an important evidence base, infrastructure planning must also respond to the lived experiences of the people who use these services and spaces every day. The consultation highlighted several consistent themes that have informed the development of this framework.

5.1 Accessible and local services matter

Across all age groups, proximity and ease of access were identified as critical factors influencing the use of services and community infrastructure. Parents consistently prioritised facilities located close to home or work, while young people highlighted the importance of spaces that can be accessed independently without relying on parents or carers for transport.

Participants emphasised the importance of well-connected facilities located near public transport, community destinations and everyday activity centres. Accessibility was viewed as extending beyond physical distance to include affordability, inclusiveness and ease of use.

Key planning implications



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- Infrastructure should be distributed across the municipality to support equitable access.
- Future facilities should be located near transport networks and community destinations where possible.
- Planning should consider how children and young people can access facilities independently.
- Accessibility should include physical, financial and social considerations.

5.2 Community connection is a core function of infrastructure

The consultation highlighted that community spaces provide more than service delivery. Respondents identified playgroups, kindergartens, parks, libraries and community facilities as important places for social connection, belonging and community participation.

Many parents described community infrastructure as an important mechanism for building social networks, reducing isolation and creating opportunities for families to connect with one another. Young people similarly identified friendships and peer relationships as central to how they use community spaces.

Key planning implications

- Infrastructure should support both formal service delivery and informal community connection.
- Community spaces should encourage interaction, participation and belonging.
- Facilities should include opportunities for gathering, socialising and shared use.
- Infrastructure planning should consider social outcomes alongside service outcomes.

5.3 Outdoor spaces are highly valued

One of the strongest and most consistent findings across both surveys was the importance of outdoor environments. Parents identified outdoor play spaces and playgrounds as the type of infrastructure Monash requires more of, while young people consistently prioritised parks, nature spaces, outdoor recreation opportunities and places to spend time with friends.

High-quality outdoor learning environments were also identified as the most important feature of kindergarten and playgroup facilities.

Key planning implications

- Outdoor environments should be recognised as essential community infrastructure.
- Future investment should prioritise high-quality outdoor play and recreation spaces.
- Facilities should incorporate opportunities for nature-based play and learning.
- Outdoor infrastructure should support a wide range of ages and interests.



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5.4 Demand for youth infrastructure is increasing

A recurring theme throughout both surveys was the need for more spaces dedicated to older children and young people. Many respondents felt that younger children are generally well catered for, while infrastructure and services for tweens and teenagers are comparatively limited.

Young people expressed a preference for youth-focused spaces that support social connection, study, recreation and wellbeing. Parents similarly identified a need for more dedicated youth spaces, youth activities and environments designed specifically for this age group.

Key planning implications

- Future planning should include a stronger focus on youth infrastructure.
- Dedicated, yet flexible and adaptable, youth spaces should be considered as part of the broader CYFS network.
- Infrastructure should support social connection, recreation, learning and wellbeing for young people.
- Youth facilities should be designed with direct input from young people.

5.5 Flexible and multi-use spaces are preferred

Families increasingly access multiple services and community facilities rather than relying on a single destination. Survey participants reported frequent use of libraries, recreation facilities, community hubs, playgroups, early years services and outdoor spaces.

Many respondents supported integrated service models and community hubs that bring complementary services together. At the same time, feedback highlighted the importance of designing spaces that remain age-appropriate, safe and responsive to different user groups.

Both parents and young people expressed a preference for flexible environments capable of supporting multiple activities, changing needs and different forms of participation over time.

Key planning implications

- Infrastructure should be designed to support multiple uses.
- Co-location opportunities should be considered where they improve community outcomes.
- Facilities should remain adaptable to future service and community needs.
- Integration should be balanced with the need for age-appropriate and safe environments.

5.6 Quality, inclusion and user experience matter

The consultation reinforced that the quality of facilities influences how people experience services. Welcoming environments, quality indoor and outdoor spaces, inclusive design and family-friendly amenities were all highlighted as important factors shaping participation.


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Participants identified a desire for facilities that are accessible, safe, culturally inclusive and welcoming to diverse communities. There was also growing recognition of the need to support neurodiversity, disability inclusion and changing community expectations regarding accessibility and comfort.

Key planning implications

- Infrastructure should prioritise inclusion, accessibility and universal design principles.
- Facilities should provide a high-quality user experience.
- Safe, welcoming and culturally inclusive environments should be considered essential infrastructure outcomes.
- Planning should support diverse community needs and changing expectations over time.

6. Infrastructure planning principles

The drivers of change and community perspectives outlined in this Framework highlight that planning for CYFS infrastructure is becoming increasingly complex. Over the life of this Framework, Council will need to make choices about where, how and whether it invests in infrastructure. These choices may involve renewing existing facilities, adapting or expanding buildings, bringing services together, repurposing infrastructure, working with other providers, or changing how the infrastructure network is configured over time.

The following principles provide the foundation for this decision making. Together, they provide a consistent framework for assessing opportunities, responding to emerging needs and prioritising future investment.

Principle 1

Investment is guided by community need, equity and evidence

Infrastructure planning and investment should be informed by robust evidence, demographic trends, service demand and community feedback.

Council will use transparent decision-making processes to prioritise investment that delivers meaningful community benefit improves equitable access and responds to significant needs or service gaps, particularly where vulnerable communities face barriers to participation.

Principle 2

Infrastructure planning recognises Council is one part of a broader system

Children, Youth and Family Services are delivered through a shared system involving governments, community organisations and private providers. Infrastructure planning should consider the roles, responsibilities and capacity of all stakeholders, recognising that Council's role is to plan for, facilitate and support access to services across the municipality rather than directly provide all infrastructure required to meet future demand.

Council will consider the roles, responsibilities and capacity of government, community and private sector providers before investing in additional Council-owned infrastructure. Where an important community need is not being



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adequately met, Council will consider the most appropriate response, which may include advocacy, facilitation, partnership, targeted investment or direct provision.

Principle 3

Infrastructure decisions maximise the value and performance of the CYFS network

Infrastructure decisions should consider how the overall CYFS network can best meet community needs now and into the future.

Council will seek to make effective use of its existing assets, while also considering opportunities to consolidate, renew, adapt, repurpose, expand or reconfigure infrastructure where this improves service outcomes, functionality, accessibility, financial sustainability or long-term asset performance.

Principle 4

Infrastructure maximises community outcomes through connection and collaboration

Infrastructure should be planned and designed to support both strong communities and effective service systems.

Where appropriate, facilities should enable community participation, foster social connection, support partnerships and provide opportunities for integrated service delivery. This can improve accessibility, strengthen community outcomes and maximise the value of public investment.

Principle 5

Infrastructure supports equitable access to services

All children, young people and families should have reasonable access to services and community infrastructure, regardless of where they live or their personal circumstances.

Infrastructure planning will consider accessibility, inclusion, affordability, transport connections and barriers to participation.

Principle 6

Infrastructure investment considers whole-of-life costs

Investment decisions should consider not only construction costs, but also the ongoing costs of operating, maintaining, renewing and eventually replacing infrastructure. Council will consider the full costs and benefits of an investment to support sustainable decisions that deliver value for the community.

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Principle 7

Infrastructure is planned for flexibility and future change

Demographics, community expectations, government policy and service delivery models will continue to evolve.

Infrastructure should be capable of adapting to future needs and responding to change over time.

Principle 8

Infrastructure contributes to environmental sustainability

Infrastructure should support Council's environmental objectives by reducing environmental impact, improving resilience and considering long-term sustainability outcomes.

7. Infrastructure Decision-Making Framework

The Infrastructure Decision-Making Framework provides a structured process for assessing infrastructure issues, opportunities and investment decisions across the CYFS network.

It is designed to ensure decisions are evidence-informed, aligned with community outcomes, financially sustainable and consistent with the planning principles outlined in this framework.

Step 1: What issue or opportunity has been identified?

Infrastructure planning may be triggered by:

Community and service drivers

- Population growth
- Community feedback
- Service demand
- Accessibility gaps
- Government reform
- Emerging service needs

Infrastructure and asset drivers

- Asset condition
- Functionality
- Accessibility limitations
- Utilisation trends /Occupancy Rates
- Financial sustainability
- Asset lifecycle requirements
- Changing service delivery models

Key question

What issue or opportunity are we seeking to address?

Step 2: Is the need aligned with community outcomes?

Infrastructure investment should contribute to positive outcomes for children, young people and families.



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Needs should be assessed against the objectives of the CYFS system, Council's broader strategic priorities and relevant corporate strategies, policies and plans.

Key question

Will the decision address an identified need, inequity or gap and improve outcomes for children, young people, families or communities?

Step 3: What is the most effective network response?

Once a need has been identified, Council will consider how the broader CYFS infrastructure network can best respond.

This includes considering the performance, location, functionality, capacity, condition and long-term sustainability of existing infrastructure, as well as opportunities to adapt the network to better meet future needs.

Potential responses may include:

- Retain
- Renew
- Expand
- Adapt
- Repurpose
- Co-locate
- Relocate
- Partner
- Reconfigure the network
- Develop new infrastructure

Key question

What response will deliver the best long-term outcome for the CYFS network and the communities it serves?

Step 4: Who is best placed to respond?

Children, Youth and Family Services are delivered through a shared system involving multiple stakeholders.

Council is one participant within that system and may not always be the most appropriate organisation to provide, fund or own infrastructure.

Potential delivery partners may include:

- Victorian Government
- Australian Government
- Not-for-profit organisations
- Private providers

Key question

Does another provider have the responsibility and capacity to respond to identified needs? Who is best placed to respond to this need?

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Step 5: Is the response financially sustainable?

Infrastructure decisions should consider the full costs and benefits of an investment, including lifecycle costs, ongoing operational impacts, asset stewardship responsibilities and the extent to which the investment represents the best use of available resources.

Assessment should consider:

- Capital cost and Council's financial capacity
- Funding opportunities
- Maintenance costs
- Indirect and support costs
- Renewal obligations
- Operational impacts
- Asset ownership implications
- Competing service and infrastructure priorities across Council's broader asset portfolio

Key question

Can the response be sustained over the life of the asset and does it represent the best use of Council resources when considered against other community, service and infrastructure priorities?

Step 6: Does the response support the planning principles?

Potential responses should be tested against the infrastructure planning principles.

This ensures decisions remain aligned with:

- Community need
- Equity and access
- Community connection
- Partnership opportunities
- Asset stewardship
- Financial sustainability
- Flexibility and future change

Key question

Is the proposed response consistent with the framework?

Step 7: Prioritise and implement

Where multiple opportunities are identified, projects should be prioritised based on:

- Urgency
- Community benefit
- Strategic alignment
- Financial sustainability
- Deliverability
- Partnership opportunities
- Equity and unmet demand

Key question

How should the opportunity be prioritised relative to other infrastructure needs?



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8. Monitoring and review

This framework is intended to guide Children, Youth and Family Services infrastructure planning in Monash over a 10-year period. It provides the strategic foundation for infrastructure decision-making and should be applied alongside evidence and Council's broader integrated planning framework to support transparent, consistent and informed decision-making.

As infrastructure needs and potential projects are identified, additional analysis will be undertaken to assess feasibility, financial sustainability, whole-of-life costs, funding opportunities and broader investment implications. This detailed analysis will be guided by this framework and inform future project development, prioritisation and business case preparation.

The framework will be reviewed by Council officers in line with Council's broader integrated planning framework to ensure it remains relevant and responsive to changes in the operating environment. The review will consider whether updates to the framework's vision, planning principles or decision-making framework are required, it will also consider changes to relevant Council strategies, plans, policies and asset management frameworks to ensure the framework remains aligned with Council's broader planning and property management directions.

A full review of the framework will be undertaken at the conclusion of the 10-year planning period.

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Children Youth and Family Services

Draft Infrastructure Planning Framework
– summary version

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Introduction

The Children, Youth and Family Services Infrastructure Planning Framework provides a consistent approach to planning, managing and investing in the infrastructure that supports children, young people and families across Monash. It supports transparent, evidence-informed decision-making that considers community need, service outcomes and long-term infrastructure sustainability balanced alongside broader community priorities.

Operating within Council's integrated planning framework, it aligns community outcomes, service needs, asset stewardship and financial sustainability to guide future infrastructure decisions.

Supported by ongoing monitoring, analysis and planning, the Framework enables coordinated, evidence-based and transparent decision-making that responds to changing community needs and future demand.

This document provides a summary of the Framework. The full Children, Youth and Family Services Infrastructure Planning Framework is available at <https://www.monash.vic.gov.au/XXXX>.



Vision for Children, Families and Communities

Vision Statement

A connected, adaptable and sustainable network of places that enables children, young people and families to learn, participate, belong and thrive.

Monash is a community where children, young people and families are supported to be healthy, safe, connected and able to thrive.

Children, Youth and Family Services infrastructure plays an important role in achieving this vision. More than buildings and facilities, it creates places where children can learn and develop, young people can connect and belong, families can access support, and communities can come together.

As both a provider and planner within the CYFS system, Council seeks to ensure infrastructure supports contemporary service delivery, strengthens community connection and responds to changing needs. Infrastructure planning should be evidence-informed, collaborative and adaptable to future change.

This Framework recognises that infrastructure is an enabler of positive outcomes. Infrastructure decisions should focus not only on physical assets, but on how the network supports participation, belonging, resilience and community wellbeing.

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Drivers of Change

Infrastructure planning must respond to changing community needs, policy settings and broader social, economic and service trends.

Demographic Change

Population growth and urban change will influence future demand for Children, Youth and Family Services infrastructure.

Key Planning Implications

- Population growth may not occur evenly across the municipality.
- Housing density may increase demand in locations where land is limited.
- Demand for services will continue to evolve over time.
- Infrastructure planning must remain adaptable to changing growth patterns.

Community Need and Vulnerability

Community need and vulnerability influence how and where services and infrastructure are required.

Key Planning Implications

- Population numbers alone are not a measure of need.
- Infrastructure should support equitable access across the municipality.
- Community facilities should be accessible, inclusive and welcoming.
- Infrastructure investment should consider local context and vulnerability.

Reform and Policy Environment

Government reform, policy change and funding settings continue to shape service delivery and infrastructure needs.

Key Planning Implications

- Government policy can significantly influence infrastructure demand.
- Service expectations may change over the life of this Framework.
- Future planning must be responsive to reform and policy change.
- Infrastructure decisions should consider long-term system trends.

Evolving Service Delivery Models

Changing service models require infrastructure that is flexible, connected and able to support collaboration.

Key Planning Implications

- Greater emphasis on integrated service delivery is likely to continue.
- Flexible and adaptable facilities are increasingly important.
- Multi-purpose infrastructure can support changing needs over time.
- Infrastructure should support collaboration between services and organisations.

Future Uncertainty

Long-term infrastructure planning must remain adaptable as future conditions and community needs change.

Key Planning Implications

- Future infrastructure decisions should remain adaptable.
- Flexibility and resilience should be considered alongside immediate demand.
- Infrastructure should support changing service models and users.
- Planning should recognise uncertainty as part of long-term decision-making.

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Community Perspectives and Priorities

In 2025, Council engaged more than 280 community members, including children and young people, to understand how Children, Youth and Family Services infrastructure is used, valued and can better support future generations. The feedback provided important community insights that have informed this Framework.

Accessible and Local Services Matter

Community members value services and facilities that are easy to reach, affordable and close to everyday destinations.

Key Planning Implications

- Infrastructure should be distributed across the municipality to support equitable access.
- Future facilities should be located near transport networks and community destinations where possible.
- Planning should consider how children and young people can access facilities independently.
- Accessibility should include physical, financial and social considerations.

Community Connection is a Core Function of Infrastructure

Community infrastructure supports social connection, belonging and participation as well as formal service delivery.

Key Planning Implications

- Infrastructure should support both formal service delivery and informal community connection.
- Community spaces should encourage interaction, participation and belonging.
- Facilities should include opportunities for gathering socialising and shared use.
- Infrastructure planning should consider social outcomes alongside service outcomes.

Outdoor Spaces are Highly Valued

Outdoor spaces are highly valued by families, children and young people for play, learning, recreation and connection.

Key Planning Implications

- Outdoor environments should be recognised as essential community infrastructure.
- Future investment should prioritise high-quality outdoor play and recreation spaces.
- Facilities should incorporate opportunities for nature-based play and learning.
- Outdoor infrastructure should support a wide range of ages and interests.

Demand for Youth Infrastructure is Increasing

Community feedback indicates a growing need for dedicated, flexible spaces that support older children and young people.

Key Planning Implications

- Future planning should include a stronger focus on youth infrastructure.
- Dedicated, yet flexible and adaptable, youth spaces should be considered as part of the broader CYFS network.
- Infrastructure should support social connection, recreation, learning and wellbeing for young people.
- Youth facilities should be designed with direct input from young people.

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Flexible and Multi-Use Spaces are Preferred

Community members value infrastructure that can support multiple uses while remaining safe and age appropriate.

Key Planning Implications

- Infrastructure should be designed to support multiple uses.
- Co-location opportunities should be considered where they improve community outcomes.
- Facilities should remain adaptable to future service and community needs.
- Integration should be balanced with the need for age-appropriate and safe environments.

Quality, Inclusion and User Experience Matter

People value facilities that are welcoming, inclusive, accessible and comfortable for diverse users.

Key Planning Implications

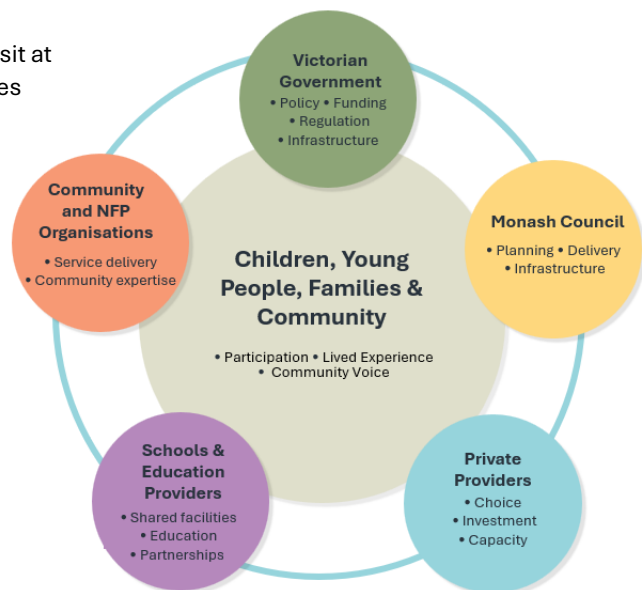
- Infrastructure should prioritise inclusion, accessibility and universal design principles.
- Facilities should provide a high-quality user experience.
- Safe, welcoming and culturally inclusive environments should be considered essential infrastructure outcomes.
- Planning should support diverse community needs and changing expectations over time.

A shared responsibility

Children, young people, families and communities sit at the centre of the Children, Youth and Family Services system.

Supporting positive outcomes is a shared responsibility across government agencies, community organisations, schools, private providers and the broader community.

As needs, policy settings and service models evolve, ongoing collaboration is essential to ensure services and infrastructure continue to meet the needs of the Monash community.



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Infrastructure Planning Principles

The following principles guide decisions about future investment, ownership, renewal and provision of Children, Youth and Family Services infrastructure in Monash. Together, they provide a consistent framework for assessing opportunities, responding to emerging needs and prioritising future investment.

Principle 1

Investment is guided by community need, equity and evidence

Infrastructure planning and investment should be informed by robust evidence, demographic trends, service demand and community feedback. Council will use transparent decision-making processes to prioritise investment that delivers meaningful community benefit improves equitable access and responds to significant needs or service gaps, particularly where vulnerable communities face barriers to participation.

Principle 2

Infrastructure planning recognises Council is one part of a broader system

Children, Youth and Family Services are delivered through a shared system involving governments, community organisations and private providers. Infrastructure planning should consider the roles, responsibilities and capacity of all stakeholders, recognising that Council's role is to plan for, facilitate and support access to services across the municipality rather than directly provide all infrastructure required to meet future demand.

Council will consider the roles, responsibilities and capacity of government, community and private sector providers before investing in additional Council-owned infrastructure. Where an important community need is not being adequately met, Council will consider the most appropriate response, which may include advocacy, facilitation, partnership, targeted investment or direct provision.

Principle 3

Infrastructure decisions maximise the value and performance of the CYFS network

Council will seek to make effective use of its existing assets, while also considering opportunities to consolidate, renew, adapt, repurpose, expand or reconfigure infrastructure where this improves service outcomes, functionality, accessibility, financial sustainability or long-term asset performance.

Principle 4

Infrastructure maximises community outcomes through connection and collaboration

Where appropriate, facilities should enable community participation, foster social connection, support partnerships and provide opportunities for integrated service delivery.

Principle 5

Infrastructure supports equitable access to services

Infrastructure planning will consider accessibility, inclusion, affordability, transport connections and barriers to participation.

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Principle 6

Infrastructure investment considers whole-of-life costs

Infrastructure should be financially sustainable over its full lifecycle.

Principle 7

Infrastructure is planned for flexibility and future change

Infrastructure should be capable of adapting to future needs and responding to change over time.

Principle 8

Infrastructure contributes to environmental sustainability

Infrastructure should support Council's environmental objectives by reducing environmental impact, improving resilience and considering long-term sustainability outcomes.

Decision making framework

The decision-making framework consists of seven stages that guide the assessment of infrastructure issues, opportunities and investment decisions across the CYFS network. At each stage, a key question is considered to support consistent, transparent and evidence-informed decision-making.

Stage 1

Identify the issue or opportunity

What issue or opportunity are we seeking to address?

Stage 2

Consider community outcomes

Will the decision address an identified need, inequity or gap and improve outcomes for children, young people, families or communities?

Stage 3

Assess the network response

What response will deliver the best long-term outcome for the CYFS network and the communities it serves?

Stage 4

Determine who is best placed to respond

Does another provider have the responsibility and capacity to respond to identified needs? Who is best placed to respond to this need?

Stage 5

Assess financial sustainability

Can the response be sustained over the life of the asset and does it represent the best use of Council resources when considered against other community, service and infrastructure priorities?

Stage 6

Test against the planning principles

Is the proposed response consistent with the framework?

Stage 7

Prioritise and implement

How should the opportunity be prioritised relative to other infrastructure needs?