

7.4.2 22 CABENA CRESCENT

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Responsible Director:	Jarrod Doake, Director City Services Tanya Scicluna, Director Community Services

RECOMMENDATION

That Council

1. **Notes that 22 Cabena Crescent, Chadstone is no longer fit for purpose for the ongoing delivery of contemporary early years services, and that the final remaining services currently provided from the Cabena site will be transitioned to alternative locations.**
2. **Notes that from 2027, Council playgroup sessions will be delivered from fit-for-purpose early years facilities across Monash, enhancing access, service quality, and equity for families throughout the municipality.**
3. **Endorses demolition of the existing building, levelling of the site, and seeding of grass.**

INTRODUCTION

This report seeks Council's consideration of the future of 22 Cabena Crescent, Chadstone. It outlines the proposed demolition of the existing building and retention of the land as a vacant parcel while a longer-term strategic use is identified.

COUNCIL PLAN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- **A healthy, safe and connected community:** A community in which everyone has the opportunity to improve their social, emotional and physical wellbeing.
- **A well-planned and future-ready city:** An attractive, well-designed city with connected neighbourhoods, active transport, open spaces, facilities and infrastructure that meet current and future community needs.

BACKGROUND

22 Cabena Crescent, Chadstone is a Council-owned property currently occupied only by a Council-operated playgroup service. The facility previously accommodated several complementary early-years services, including Council-run Maternal and Child Health and occasional care services. These services were progressively relocated as service models changed and the site ceased to meet operational, funding and locational requirements. The building was built in 1975.

The ageing facility is no longer fit for purpose and would require significant investment in structural upgrades, modernisation and accessibility improvements.

Alternative playgroup spaces are available at the recently developed contemporary Child and Family Hubs, which are not yet fully utilised, and at other local Children, Youth and Family Services

facilities. Attendance data shows that users of the Cabena playgroups come from across the municipality, rather than only from Chadstone. Distributing sessions across a wider range of locations will therefore improve access for Monash families and addressing recent family feedback.

An updated timetable of playgroup sessions and locations will commence in 2027.

Given the building's condition and the absence of a current operational need, officers have considered options for the site, including demolition.

DISCUSSION

Site Overview

The land comprises Lots 404 and 405 on Lodged Plan 8883 (Volume 6808 Folio 476). Although separately identified on title, the lots are considered together for this report.

Area	~1,851 m2
Title	Lots 404 and 405 on LP8883
Restrictions on title	N/A
Zoning and overlays	NRZ2
Current Use	Occupied until December 2026
Assets (as shown on Weave)	No underground assets
Adjoining land	Residential
Open Space Strategy	Not identified



RED – 22 Cabena Cres, Chadstone

BLUE – Council owned water pipe and pit assets

ORANGE – Yarra Valley

Water hydrants are identified by orange dots, while the shaded area represents Melbourne Water designated works.

Other Information	The surrounding area comprises a mix of public parkland, residential and industrial land uses. The site is identified on the EPA register as being located within an operating landfill area. A small portion of the site's southern boundary is affected by the LSIO.
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ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS

The site is subject to potential contamination constraints. An environmental assessment completed by Landserv in August 2018 identified landfill gas and soil contamination. Further investigation, ongoing management measures and possible remediation may therefore be required before the land is used or developed.

SITE HISTORY

Council acquired the property in 1946. The reason for the acquisition is not recorded, and there is no evidence that the land was acquired for open space purposes.

Council initially used the site to support community objectives through the delivery of community-based services and activities.

Since 2017–2018, the site has been used to deliver some of Council's early-years and playgroup services for families with young children.

The property is currently only used for a Council-operated and supported Playgroup service, which is no longer required for operational purposes.

Environmental Obligations

The environmental issues identified do not prevent any future use of the site, however Council would need to appropriately consider and manage known environmental information as part of future decision-making. Any future demolition, redevelopment, or repurposing of the site may require additional environmental investigations to inform design, construction or land use decisions.

Demolition Costs

Based on preliminary advice, demolition costs for the Cabena Child and Family Centre are estimated to be in the order of \$150,000 to \$250,000. This estimate relates to building demolition works, the cost to re-soil, grass the site and appropriate management and monitoring during demolition phase, noting it is a former identified landfill gas and soil contamination site. This excludes any associated costs that may arise, including site remediation, environmental assessments, regulatory requirements or other works necessary to prepare the site for future use.

Capital Works Upgrade or Rebuild

A significant upgrade or rebuild of the existing facility would require substantial capital investment. Current high-level minimum estimates indicate that a *like-for-like* replacement facility would cost approximately \$1.2 million, or approximately \$1.8 million where known major upgrades are included, including upgrades to the rear verandah and ramp to address Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements. These estimates **do not** reflect the full cost of delivering a contemporary facility and should be considered indicative only. We should also note that further costs could be incurred as we are aware of the contamination to the site. These costs will not be known until further investigation is undertaken.

It is important to note that like-for-like replacement does not necessarily reflect the standard to which Council would typically seek to design and construct a contemporary community or early years facility. Additional costs are therefore likely to be incurred to deliver a facility that meets

current community expectations, service delivery requirements, sustainability objectives and contemporary design standards.

Further investigation, concept design and cost planning would be required to determine the full scope of works and establish a more accurate development cost.

Given the playgroup service no longer requires the building due to the availability of other fit for purpose sites, any investment in upgrading or rebuilding the facility would need to be supported by a clearly identified service or community need.

While future kindergarten demand has been identified within the Ashwood-Chadstone SA2 through planning undertaken to support the State Government's Best Start, Best Life reforms, current planning assumptions indicate that this demand can be accommodated through the delivery of a single three-room kindergarten service and is expected to be met by the private market.

The site is also located right on the boundary of the Oakleigh-Huntingdale SA2, where a very small level of future unmet kindergarten demand has been identified. This demand is anticipated to be accommodated through minor timetable and capacity adjustments within existing services.

As such, no current early years operational requirement for the facility has been identified. There is also no broader community need for the facility that has been established at this time.

Implications of Retaining the Building in a Vacant State

A vacant building presents a number of reputational, operational and asset management risks for Council. The continued presence of an unoccupied community facility may create confusion within the community regarding the future use of the site and lead to perceptions that a Council asset is being underutilised.

A vacant facility would also require ongoing maintenance, security monitoring and compliance management to ensure it remains safe and fit for purpose. Over time, vacant buildings can become susceptible to vandalism, trespassing and unauthorised occupation, resulting in additional costs and risk exposure for Council. As the building continues to age, further deterioration may occur, potentially increasing future demolition, remediation or redevelopment costs.

The risk is likely to increase the longer the building remains vacant without a clearly defined future use or redevelopment pathway.

Adjustments to the location of Council Delivered Playgroups

Currently the majority of the general Council delivered playgroups sessions (those open to all families with children aged 0-5years) operate at Cabena Child and Family Centre (four days a week), with some further specialised playgroup sessions delivered two days per week at Essex Heights Children's Services Centre and Dorrington Child and Family Hub, and one day per week at Pinewood Child and Family Hub along with an outdoor playgroup at Reg Harris Reserve.

In 2027 (refer Figure 1 below), Council delivered playgroup sessions will be relocated from the Cabena site (marked in red).

Sessions will continue to be delivered from:

- Essex Heights Children's Services Centre,
- Dorrington Child and Family Hub,
- Pinewood Child and Family Hub, and

- Reg Harris Reserve

Along with the introduction of playgroup sessions at:

- Wellington Child and Family Hub
- South Oakleigh Child and Family Hub
- Glen Waverley South Kindergarten (currently vacant)

This expansion of locations will provide increased access to playgroups across the municipality and support families across Monash to access the newer, more modern and fit for purpose facilities that are currently underutilised.

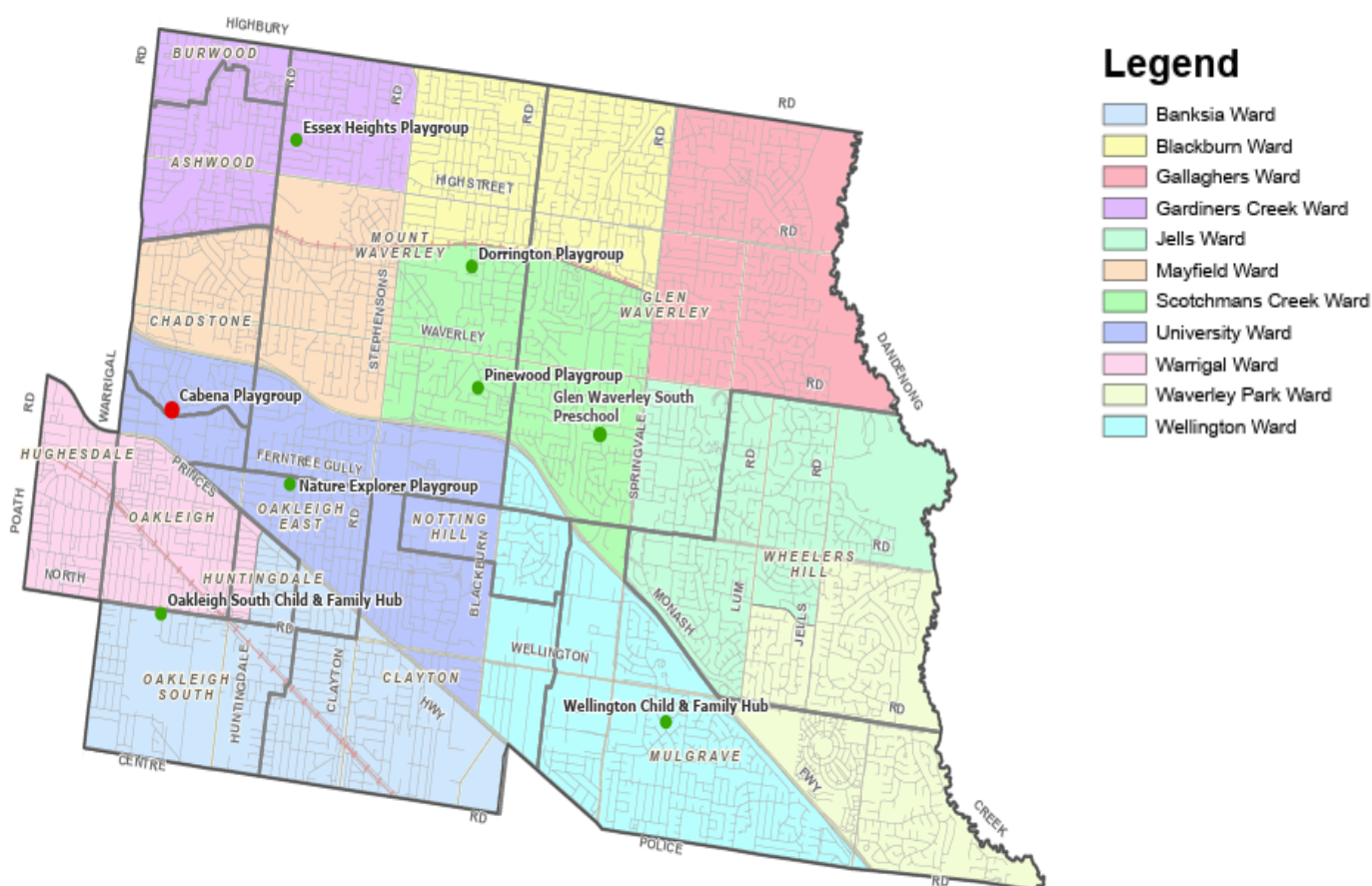


Figure 1. Playgroup

locations 2027 (Marked in green)

Council also delivers state funded supported playgroup programs that are currently integrated with general playgroup sessions. This will be reviewed to ensure that the model is meeting the needs and outcomes of the families experiencing vulnerabilities who participate in the program.

The increase in locations also responds to recent feedback that has been received through the annual survey of playgroup participants.

Annually, all families who are enrolled in Council delivered playgroups are surveyed to inform the delivery model for playgroups. In the 2026 survey, resounding feedback was received from families in relation to the lack of playgroup sessions available in varied locations, especially in the

Mulgrave area, with most sessions currently concentrated to the north-western side of the municipality. This will be addressed somewhat through the revised locations that are currently available for playgroups from 2027 and will continue to be reviewed to ensure equitable access for families in future years.

Further feedback received in the 2026 survey relates to the need for more age specific playgroups, smaller group sizes, varied session times and booking processes. Officers will capitalise on the process of revising locations to also address this feedback and more broadly adjust the playgroup service delivery model to ensure it is meeting current participants needs.

Council officers will also continue to support community led playgroups to access appropriate sites. Broader Children, Youth and Family Services Infrastructure Planning is currently underway which will inform ongoing provision of facilities in which playgroup may operate into the future.

Future of the Site

Given the condition of the existing building, the absence of an identified operational or community need, the significant capital investment required to upgrade or replace the facility, and the environmental constraints affecting the site, officers consider demolition to be the most appropriate option at this time. The site will be levelled and grass sown. The land will be retained as a vacant parcel and it remains open to Council to consider what may occur at the site in the future should it choose to.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

It is anticipated that there will be no increased cost to the delivery of the playgroup service in relation to the updated service delivery model.

The current operating cost of the Cabena Child and Family Centre is estimated at approximately \$28,000 per annum, including maintenance and utility costs. It is anticipated that there will be a reduction in operating costs in relation to maintenance once the playgroups are operating from newer facilities.

The site is no longer fit for purpose, is ageing and would require a significant financial investment for structural upgrades and modernisation including accessibility, of at least \$1.8m of Capital upgrades, however as outlined in the discussion section of this report, these estimates do not reflect the full cost of delivering a contemporary community facility and should be considered as a minimum standard and indicative cost only.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are no policy implications to this report.

CONSULTATION

Benchmarking has been undertaken with other local government areas to support and inform the playgroup team's adjustment to the service delivery model along with feedback received from current playgroup participants in the 2026 annual survey. A consultation process will take place to support the relocation of the impacted staff to alternative sites.



Changes to the delivery of playgroups and updated locations will be communicated to current and future users of the playgroup service.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Monash Playgroups are a vital early years initiative that support families with young children by fostering social connection, child development and community engagement and have a long-standing tradition of being accessible to all interested families in Monash. This is done through the delivery of both State funded supported playgroup programs that are targeted at families experiencing vulnerabilities and Council funded supported playgroups offering support and connection for all families with young children, as well as supporting community members to create their own playgroups.

Current attendance data at the Cabena site shows that families accessing these playgroups are not only those from the Chadstone area, but live more broadly across the municipality.

Whilst the relocation from using the Cabena site will constitute a change of location for the families currently accessing playgroups, it also presents an opportunity to better utilise the newer playgroup spaces at the four Child and Family hubs, increase accessibility to playgroups across the municipality (especially for those families experiencing vulnerabilities) and maintain and honour the unique integrated playgroup model currently offered at the Cabena site at the interim location of Glen Waverley South Kindergarten whilst broader Children, Youth and Families Services infrastructure planning is being undertaken.

Officers anticipate that there may be a sense of loss of a much-loved facility for the playgroup community and will provide opportunities for a celebration of the service that has been available and enjoyed by many families over recent years.

HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

There are no human rights implications to this report.

GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT

A Gender Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of this work because this policy/program/service is considered to have a direct and significant impact on the Monash community.

CONCLUSION

That Council consider demolishing the site due to the site not being fit for purpose along with the end of useful life.

ATTACHMENT LIST

Nil