



## What do the recommendations mean for each children's service?

The following explores what each of the 25 recommendations in the Every Child, Our Future: Policy Issues and Option Paper might mean for each children's service in the scope of the policy.

- Children's services in general
- Long day care services
- Kindergarten services
- Playgroup services
- Toy library services

Each recommendation contributes to one or more of the seven policy objectives:

**Objective 1:** Council will work with partners to ensure that every child, regardless of their abilities or background, will have access to affordable, safe, accessible, quality Early Years services to support development to their full potential.

**Objective 2:** Council will understand current and future needs of families in the City and influence the provision of Early Years services to meet the those needs.

**Objective 3:** Early Years services will be financially sustainable and consistently aligned with relevant policies and legislation at the local, state and federal level.

**Objective 4:** Council will encourage collaboration across all Early Years' services.

**Objective 5:** Families will have access to the services and information they need, at the times they need it, to make choices appropriate for their needs.

**Objective 6:** Early Years services will be supported by safe, accessible, contemporary, fit-for purpose, sustainable facilities and environments.

**Objective 7:** Children will have access to natural environments which allow them to learn about and experience play in nature. This includes natural environments within early years' services.



## What do the recommendations mean for all children's services in the municipality?

The following recommendations are designed to facilitate universal access to Early Years' Service in the City of Port Phillip and will help achieve all seven objectives. They are likely to have an impact all and any Early Year' Services providers operating and any families accessing these services in the City of Port Phillip.

### **Policy recommendation 1.1**

Create a new grant program to provide a financial subsidy for families experiencing ongoing and situational vulnerability and disadvantage. This subsidy will be available for all eligible City of Port Phillip community members accessing any early years' Service in the City

**What does this mean?** This grant would be designed to remove financial barriers that may prevent families from accessing the services in our municipality that we know will reduce the risk of poor health and development outcomes. The mechanism and criteria would be developed in consultation with service providers.

### **Policy recommendation 1.2**

Support Child Safe Standards implementation across all early years' services (especially toy libraries and playgroups) through an education and capacity-building program

**What does this mean?** Council would make programs and resources available to help all early year's services ensure they are complying with the child safe standards.

### **Policy recommendation 1.3**

Fund an early intervention outreach role to work with relevant service providers in the City (child protection, homelessness, mental health, family violence) to increase participation of vulnerable children in early childhood education services, especially kindergarten services.

**What does this mean?** Council would fund the establishment of a role to increase participation of children whose families may be more vulnerable, in early childhood education services, especially kindergarten services.

### **Policy recommendation 1.4**

Develop a Children's Services website that will provide information on all children's services in the City. This will include services provided, vacancies, specialist expertise, fee levels, educational approaches, target groups served and more. Participation in the website should be a condition for services to receive Council grants.

**What does this mean?** Council would work with all early year's providers to provide information about the availability of children's services.

### **Policy recommendation 4.1**

Facilitate collaborative and collegiate relationships with early years' networks.

· Identify professional development needs for educators (including assistance in sourcing bulk discounts for training and providing free training room space).



- Childcare staff to visit and learn from centres in the municipality or within Melbourne that are consistently receiving an 'Exceeding' or 'Excellent' NQS rating, encouraging a 'community of practice'.
- These recommendations to apply to all providers, including independent and private providers.
- Support of Educational Leaders and networking across services.

**What does this mean?** Council will facilitate a network for all people working in the early year's sector to encourage collaborative relationships, knowledge sharing and professional development.

#### **Policy recommendation 5.2**

Improve communications about the availability of, and access to, all early years' services, especially kindergarten to culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

**What does this mean?** Working with the outreach working and service providers, Council would develop improved ways of communicating the availability of early years' services.

**Policy recommendation 5.5** Develop a centralised portal and communication strategy as part of the Customer Experience and Technology Transformation project, and work with children's service providers and families to establish the best way for families to receive the information they need, in the way they need it, when they need it.

**What does this mean?** Council will work in partnership with service providers to provide information that families need, in the way they need it, when they need it

#### **Policy recommendation 6.1**

Develop an Early Year's Services Facility Framework that will deliver the following outcomes:

- All assets to meet legislative and building compliance over the life of the strategy.
- All assets able to receive co-contribution funding from state government. This will require all assets to meet a minimum of 66 places.

**What does this mean?** Council will work to ensure all assets become compliant with legislation requirements, such as disability access. Council will consider the requirement for capital works to have a minimum of 66 places and will ensure new or redevelopments will have 66 places where this is required to accommodate future growth.

**Policy recommendation 7.1** Develop model for optimising access to existing assets in the city such as parks, beaches, and adventure playgrounds.

**What does this mean?** Council will look at how it can make existing assets more accessible to early year's providers and families including provision of supported transport and increased hours of access.

**Policy recommendation 7.2** Advocate for the promotion of outdoor learning environments and programs that promote children's connection to nature and environmental sustainability practices, for example Clean up Port Phillip Day, Be Out There, Let's G.O (Get outside), and Indigenous nature-based cultural programs.

**What does this mean?** Council will promote opportunities to service providers and local families that will promote connection to nature and environmental sustainability.



**Policy recommendation 7.3** Develop a minimum design guideline for future playground works/upgrades at childcare centres that can be tailored for each site and implemented in stages, including investigating the development or suitability of nature and sensory play environments within open space settings for excursion purposes, for example developing bush kindergarten setting/s in the municipality.

**What does this mean?** Council will consider nature play when re/developing playgrounds and open spaces.

#### **Policy recommendation 7.4**

Work with early years' networks to consult and promote the range of opportunities to incorporate nature and sensory play into their service settings with supported funding opportunities.

**What does this mean?** Council would provide grant opportunities for any provider to incorporate nature and sensory play into their service.

## **What do the recommendations mean for childcare services?**

#### **Policy recommendation 2.2**

Monitor, track, encourage and report on the market response to childcare demand

**What does this mean?** Council will continue to engage with providers to understand current and future demand for childcare and to make this information available to childcare providers.

### **Policy recommendation 3.1 Council to decide the future service model for its role in childcare services from five options (either A,B,C,D, or E)**

**Policy option A** Council continues operating and subsidising childcare services as is.

#### **What does this mean?**

Continuity for existing families accessing Council-managed and community-managed centres would be maintained and Council's continued role will ensure a mix of service providers in the market.

It is unlikely Council will be able to maintain and renew all existing assets to meet current and future demand, functionality and compliance issues. Some of Council's assets will not be fit-for-purpose or compliant with legislation.

Council will carry a risk that it is non-compliant with National Competition Policy and is distorting the market.

Council subsidies will be untargeted and not based on need.

Option leaves open the possibility that Council explores co-funding or lease-to-own opportunities with tenants of council-owned facilities

**Policy option B** Council continues operating services, but at full cost recovery.

#### **What does this mean?**



Fees at Council-managed childcare services are likely to increase to allow for cost recovery by \$5- \$15 per day. This may price some families out of the service.

Community managed centres will continue to be supported however there would need to be a review of infrastructure and maintenance levies to ensure they cover all renewal and utility costs and exploration of co-funding or lease-to-own opportunities with tenants of council-owned facilities.

Option is likely to meet National Competition Policy requirements because Council will have removed any net advantage that it has over other providers.

**Policy option C** Council ceases operating Council-run childcare services and transition services to not-for-profit providers

**What does this mean?**

This would include full cost recovery rental arrangements, and utilities at cost to new owner. Meets all obligations under relevant agreements and legislation.

It could include purchase, co-funding or lease-to-own opportunities with not-for-profit providers. It is likely that this would provide operational savings to Council in the long-term.

May include asset sales to support transition arrangements and enable not-for-profit providers to deliver sustainable services.

Community managed centres will continue to be supported however there would need to be a review of infrastructure and maintenance levies to ensure they cover all renewal and utility costs and exploration of co-funding or lease-to-own opportunities with tenants of council-owned facilities.

Option is likely to meet National Competition Policy requirements

**Policy option D** Council ceases operating Council-run services and sells or transitions assets for other Council purposes

**What does this mean?**

This assumes that the market will meet current and future demand and leaves uncertainty as to how market failures will be overcome. It is likely that this would provide operational savings to Council. Asset sales to support transition arrangements

**Policy option E** Council chooses a hybrid model based on the options above

**What does this mean?**

Council may decide to use a different combination of elements from options A - D

**Policy option 3.2** Review all funding, subsidy and levy arrangements to ensure return on investment and KPI deliverables for acquittal purposes.

**What does this mean?** Council will review all current subsidies and levies with all community-managed centres to ensure they have an equitable cost allocation and are delivering the best outcomes for families and children through articulated outcomes and KPIs.



### **Policy recommendation 5.6**

Improve the current childcare waitlist and investigate expanding it to include private and independent centres in order to provide families with better information about places for children under the age of three, as well as to inform short- and medium-term planning for places for children under the age of three, as well as to inform short- and medium-term planning for childcare.

**What does this mean?** Council would need identify an existing solution (or consider developing a solution) to enable families and family support providers to gain information about and to access long day care.

### **Policy recommendation 6.1**

Develop an Early Year's Services Facility Framework that will deliver the following outcomes:

- All assets to meet legislative and building compliance over the life of the strategy.
- All assets able to receive co-contribution funding from state government. This will require all assets to meet a minimum of 66 places.

**What does this mean?** Council would develop an agreed framework in consultation with affected services to ensure all assets (existing or new) met legislative and building compliance requirements. Council would need to consider whether centres with 66 places were aligned with current and projected future need and consider the value offered by current grant programs.

### **Policy recommendation 6.2**

Work with all community-managed early years services in Council assets over time to implement the framework outlined above.

**What does this mean?** Council will need to work with services in Council assets (community-managed child care and kindergarten services) to manage any changes, such as temporary or long term changes to the service delivery setting.

### **Policy recommendation 6.3**

Ensure additional facilities for services and consolidate existing services if required to meet functionality and compliance are incorporated into integrated facility hubs to address multiple service demands. Council will optimise opportunities for Major Capital Works grant applications available from Department of Education and Training for the building of integrated service hubs, especially on any new school sites, such as in Fishermans Bend.

**What does this mean?** Council would need to identify and plan for increased needs for long day care in existing and in new neighbourhoods. As part of its asset management planning Council will identify and pursue viable opportunities for long day care to be co-located with other children's services.



## What do these recommendations mean for kindergarten services?

### **Policy recommendation 2.4**

With the addition of funded three-year-old Kindergarten, consider transitioning current Council assets into kindergarten facilities to meet future demand where relevant, especially where the private market is meeting the demand/need for childcare services in that area.

**What does this mean?** Funded three-year-old kindergarten will be introduced in 2022 and is likely to increase demand for kindergarten places in the municipality. As part of the facilities framework, Council would look at any assets that could be transitioned to meet the increased demand for kindergarten.

### **Policy recommendation 4.2**

Support the development of a kindergarten network to provide collaborative practice and integrated services that inform pedagogy and practice, for example approved provider responsibilities, professional development, quality referrals and transition to school programs.

**What does this mean?** In addition to the early year's network, Council would facilitate a network that targeted the kindergarten sector that addressed the specific needs of this sector and the needs of kindergarten aged children.

### **Policy recommendation 5.3**

Utilise approved state funding to scope the creation of an effective and centralised municipal-wide enrolment system for community-run and independent kindergartens in Port Phillip. This will require significant consultation with service providers.

**What does this mean?** Council has received a small grant from the Department of Education and Training to investigate the creation of a centralised kindergarten enrolment system. This would provide easier access for families and improved information about demand that will inform ongoing planning. This work is yet to commence.

## What do the recommendations mean for playgroups in the municipality?

### **Policy recommendation 2.3**

Review and update the service model for playgroups to include:

A dedicated, or several functional multipurpose, playgroup space/s to be considered in Fishermans Bend, as part of an integrated hub.

An additional playgroup or children's multipurpose space in the north end of Port Phillip to be considered (South Melbourne or Port Melbourne neighbourhoods).

Make available the playgroup rooms in Bubup Nairn Family and Children's Centre across five days of the week and transition other programs into other Family Services Rooms in the building to increase availability and capacity.

**What does this mean?** Council will continue to work to ensure play groups are supported to operate in neighbourhoods across the city of Port Phillip and are inclusive places for all children and families. This may include re-arranging the use of space in existing assets to facilitate access by play groups and providing space for play groups in newly developed assets.



#### **Policy recommendation 5.4**

Develop a Memorandum of Understanding for playgroups with guidelines regarding:

- size and inclusion
- available support for volunteers, committees and parents
- sustainability, including sharing of resources between groups and recycling

**What does this mean?** Council will work with playgroups to provide information regarding the support it is able to provide including:

- support for volunteers, committees and parents
- facilitating the sharing of resources between groups and recycling
- inclusion support

### **What do these recommendations mean for toy libraries in the municipality?**

#### **Policy recommendation 2.1**

Review and update the service model for toy libraries to include:

- Review funding model and operating subsidy to increase operating hours at current toy library sites to increase access and availability to services for residents now and into the future in existing Port Phillip areas.
- Develop one new toy library site in Fishermans Bend to service the growing population, as part of an integrated hub.

**What does this mean?** Council will work to support toy libraries to expand their hours of operation. Work with the community to identify a model to increase the accessibility of toy libraries and to enable new neighbourhoods to access the toy library service.