



Education
and Training

Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan

Buloke Shire

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. REFORM CONTEXT

In an Australian first, the Victorian Government has committed to implement Three-Year-Old Kindergarten for all children over a 10-year roll-out with a total investment of almost \$5 billion, including \$1.68 billion to support the infrastructure expansion required for the reform. This reform will add another year of universal funded kindergarten so that, by 2029, all children in Victoria will have access to two years of play-based learning through a funded kindergarten program.

1.2. PURPOSE OF KISPS

Three-Year-Old Kindergarten will require a large expansion of kindergarten across the State. The Government has invited all 79 Victorian Local Governments to discuss and agree upon a Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan (KISP) for their Local Government Area (LGA).

Each KISP has been jointly developed with Local Government and published to estimate the growth in demand for kindergarten within the LGA. The KISPs will help all kindergarten providers meet demand and provide a clear picture of infrastructure need across the State.

While a KISP is not a funding document and does not define required infrastructure projects or commit any party to funding specific projects, it is expected that future investment requests through Building Blocks and funding decisions about Local Government and not-for-profit projects would align with the relevant KISP.

1.3. HOW TO USE THE KISP

Each KISP contains estimates of future kindergarten supply of, and demand for, Three and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten places against existing enrolment capacity. Not-for-profit and for-profit providers can use these estimates to inform their plans to expand kindergarten programs, establish new services or invest in new or extended facilities.

For example, KISPs provide demand estimates in terms of where, when and how much demand for kindergarten places will grow in an LGA. KISPs also estimate where and how many kindergarten places providers can accommodate in existing facilities before an area needs new infrastructure to meet demand. The estimates can be used to inform decisions about where and when expansions of kindergarten program capacity and the construction of new or extended facilities are needed to meet demand growth.

Where there is an agreed KISP for the LGA, the Local Government and not-for-profit kindergarten providers seeking co-investments through the Building Blocks Capacity Building stream must refer to, and align their proposed project with, the infrastructure need identified in the KISP.

1.4. STRUCTURE OF THE KISP

Each KISP consists of the following sections:

- **Section 1:** A short introduction to the Three-Year-Old Kindergarten reform and the KISP.

- **Section 2:** A map of existing and planned Early Childhood Education and Care service locations.
- **Section 3:** Local knowledge and context relevant to the expansion of kindergarten services.
- **Section 4:** Funded kindergarten demand estimates.

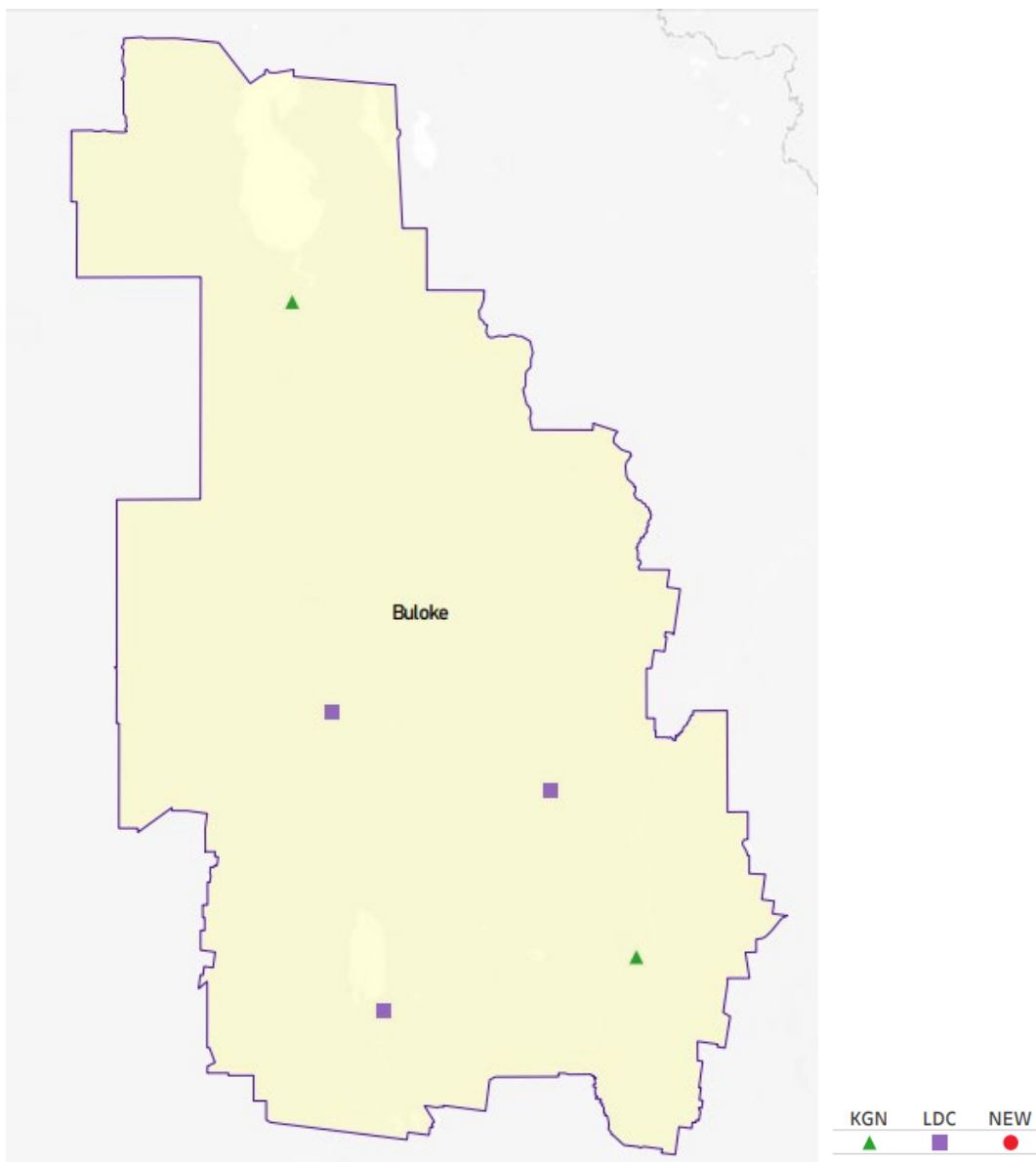
1.5. DISCLAIMER

All data presented in this document are estimates only and are based on the best information available to the Department and Local Government at the time. They are published on an as-is basis and are for informational purposes only. They are subject to adjustment in response to market forces and as new data and other relevant information becomes available. The data may under- or over-estimate both total demand in a given location or year and the capacity for new demand to be met by providers. As a result, operational and business decisions should not be made solely based on this document. Any use of this data is solely at the risk of the user. The Department and Local Government accept no responsibility for any loss or damage, either direct or incidental, that may result from the use of the data.

2. MAP OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SERVICES IN BULOKE SHIRE

The map below shows the distribution of currently operating and new services that are planned to open in the future in the LGA and across its communities.

This map has been prepared using Departmental data, from both the National Quality Agenda IT System (NQAITS) and the Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA). Where applicable, this map has been refined by Buloke Shire Council and the Department to capture other services that are planned to open in the future.



3. LOCAL CONTEXT

3.1 PURPOSE

Local, place-based knowledge and context play an important role in supporting the implementation of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten across Victoria. This section of the KISP documents this knowledge and context and has informed the funded kindergarten enrolment estimates in Section 4.

3.2 KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Key demographic trends that influence demand for kindergarten

The population in Buloke is predicted to decrease gradually in the next few decades, by on average 1.2% for the years 2018-2036 (see Victoria in Future 2019, p14 at https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0032/332996/Victoria_in_Future_2019.pdf)

The table below outlines some demographics and trends which may impact on the demand for kindergartens.

Measure	Situation	Buloke LGA	Victoria
Measure of Developmentally on Track AEDC 2009-2018 PHYSICAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING DOMAIN ¹	Improving	71.2%	81.0%
Measure of Developmentally on Track AEDC 2009-2018 SOCIAL COMPETANCE DOMAIN ¹	Worsening	69.2%	77.0%
Measure of Developmentally on Track AEDC 2009-2018 EMOTIONAL MATURITY DOMAIN ¹	Steady	69.2%	77.7%
Measure of Developmentally on Track AEDC 2009-2018 LANGUAGE AND COGNITIVE SKILLS DOMAIN ¹	Improving	82.7	84.6%
Measure of Developmentally on Track AEDC 2009-2018 COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND GENERAL KNOWLEDGE DOMAIN ¹	Improving	75.0%	79.4%
Measure of Developmentally on Track AEDC 2009-2018 Developmentally on Track VULNERABLE ON ONE OR MORE DOMAINS ¹	Worsening	30.8%	19.9%
Measure of Developmentally on Track AEDC 2009-2018 Developmentally on Track VULNERABLE ON TWO OR MORE DOMAINS ¹	Worsening	17.3%	10.1%
Children reported to have difficulties with speech and/or language ²	Worsening	18.4%	14.7%
Smoking during pregnancy 2009-2014 ³	Worsening	26.7%	15.0%

SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage ⁴	Improving	Ranked 22	Out of 79
Children in out of home care as at June 30 * per 1000 children aged 0-17 years 2016-2019 ⁵	Increased significantly over the past 5 years	6.5 per 1000	6.0
Jobless families with children under 15 years ⁶	Slight increase 2006-2016	13%	11%
Children* in families where the mother has low educational attainment-2016 ⁷	NA	14.7%	12.7%
*Percentage of children in low income, welfare-dependent families 2006-2017 ⁸	Worsening	21.6%	19.3%
Internet not accessed from dwelling 2006-2016 ⁹	Improving but poor	27.6%	13.6%
Health Care card holders ¹⁰	Improving	10.8%	7.9%
Proportion of children attending kinder whose placement attracts a kindergarten fee subsidy 2011-2015 ¹¹	Improving, but very poor	50.7%	26.6%

The existence of low rental housing has an influence on the demographics of the families who choose to move into the district. Unfortunately, this situation also impacts the families themselves, since service provision in general is very thin, plus public transport in many of these areas is almost non-existent, so access to any specialist services is likely to be problematic.

Projects or trends that may influence supply of early childhood education and care

Difficulty in attracting and retaining staff for these facilities has become an issue, particularly since some have expanded their offerings along with the roll out of the 3-year-old kinder. This has also been a concern merely through normal long-term illness/leave of staff in these locations without other short-term staff replacements available. The impact of this is considerable and at times resulted in the closure of some of the centres due to the unavailability of staff. Of course, Covid has had a magnifying impact on this issue, but even without it staffing needs to be a long-term priority. Recently the providers have both had more success with a hiring campaign, although there has still been churn with some staff staying on only for a short period of time.

Charlton is the only town without Childcare at present, a process is currently underway to attract a provider into the new facility when it opens.

Agriculture is the predominant industry in the Shire, although the Council itself is one of the largest employers. Employment in the agricultural sector is stagnant or decreasing, and seasonal fluctuations in terms of income for farmers results in a knock on effect on many businesses in the local community who are support services for agriculture.

The volatile seasons have a real impact on long term planning in these services if any costs need to be directed back to families. The Shire is unlikely to experience any significant increase in its number of employees in the near future.

Anecdotal evidence suggests a recent trend for some young families returning to operate local businesses or farms while they are in their child rearing years, this may have an impact on the age range breakdown in the population. Although these are only low in number, a few families into a small township or district can boost the size of an age range and impact the service provision required for that year. With such small populations, towns can experience a significant difference in the size of cohorts from one year to the next.

Key local geographic considerations or information relevant to Three-Year-Old Kindergarten

Kindergartens which service these towns are accessible to families locally, but the distance between them means that families from one kindergarten district attending another kindergarten is likely to be logistically very difficult. In most cases the time to get to the nearest neighbouring kindergarten is close to 30 minutes, but in some cases will be significantly greater, especially if the family is located in the wrong direction from town.

Other information about the expansion of early childhood services

In another twelve months the Council will have completed the last build of our early years facilities, with four of our five less than three years old, and the fifth only being seven years old. In terms of infrastructure, the Buloke Shire will be very well placed. The Shire will then begin a process of annually reviewing the services, with scheduled conversations in each community around the infrastructure and any changing requirements.

The issue of staffing will need to be addressed in an ongoing manner but appears to be improving with the considerable work that both providers have committed in this space. Differentials in pay scales looks to be one of the greatest barriers to attracting staff into the space, which seems ridiculous given the extremely important nature of the work, and the passion and expertise expected by parents who drop off their children to these facilities.

The Buloke Shire does not manage the early years provision in any of its towns. The YMCA manage four of the five kindergartens/childcare (Birchip, Charlton, Donald and Wycheproof), while Mallee Track Community Health Service manages the Sea Lake facility.

One of the most significant issue regarding three-year-old kindergarten is the impact it has on the childcare model which operates in most of these towns. By removing a significant group from the childcare market, there will be implications in that space.

Sources:

1 AEDC 2009-2018 <https://www.aedc.gov.au/data/data-explorer?id=135264>

2 School Entrant Health Questionnaire (SEHQ)**, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/research/Pages/vcamstableau.aspx> accessed 07/03/2020).

3 Compiled by PHIDU from ABS Census 2006, 2011 & 2016 <http://phidu.torrens.edu.au/social-health-atlases> accessed 20/03/2020

4 2016 data - Mallee Area Profile (2019) DHHS & ABS SEIFA Data Cube 2016, Table 2

5 DHHS CRIS (Client Relationship Information System), ABS 2016 Census-Estimated Resident Population *as at May 2020 Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2020. Child protection Australia 2018–19.

6 Compiled by PHIDU from ABS Census 2011 & 2016 <http://phidu.torrens.edu.au/social-health-atlases> accessed 10/03/2020 * as a percentage of all families with children aged less than 15 years.

7 Compiled by PHIDU based on the ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016 <http://phidu.torrens.edu.au/social-health-atlases> accessed 10/03/2020. 14.7% Buloke 2016 *Children aged

less than 15 years living in families where the female parent's highest level of schooling was year 10 or below/female parent did not attend school.

8 Compiled by PHIDU based on the ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016
<http://phidu.torrens.edu.au/social-health-atlases> accessed 10/03/2020 *Families included are those with children under 16 years

*From 2016 children under 16 years in families – with incomes under \$37,378 p.a. in receipt of the Family Tax Benefit (A) (whether receiving income support payments or not)

9 Compiled by PHIDU from ABS Census <http://phidu.torrens.edu.au/social-health-atlases> accessed 07/04/2020

10 Source: Compiled by PHIDU based on the ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016
<http://phidu.torrens.edu.au/social-health-atlases> accessed 10/03/2020.

* *As a percentage of all people aged 0-64 years*

11 Children's Service On Line (CHISOL), DET
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/research/Pages/vcamstableau.aspx> 21/03/202

4. FUNDED KINDERGARTEN ENROLMENT ESTIMATES BETWEEN 2021-29 FOR BULOKE SHIRE

4.1 PURPOSE

As Three-Year-Old Kindergarten is rolled-out and Victoria's population grows, demand for both Three and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten places will increase significantly. While additional capacity will be needed to meet this demand, this will vary across the State and over time, due to differences in the capacity of existing services, growth trends and sector composition.

To identify where, when and how many additional kindergarten places are expected over the roll-out in Buloke Shire, Buloke Shire Council and the Department have developed:

1. A summary of the current provision of kindergarten within the LGA (**Section 4.3**).
2. An approach to optimising the utilisation of existing services and infrastructure through 'change management' strategies that Buloke Shire Council and the Department will support to help meet additional demand in the LGA (**Section 4.4**).
3. An estimate of the Three and Four-Year-Old kindergarten places that cannot be met through existing services for the 2021-29 period, taking into account the additional demand that can be accommodated by optimising utilisation of existing services and infrastructure through point 2, above (**Section 4.5**).

Local Government and providers can use these published estimates to inform reform implementation activities such as service planning, kindergarten program expansion, infrastructure investments and Building Blocks funding applications in alignment with future demand over the 10-year roll-out.

4.2 METHODOLOGY

The estimated Three and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten places used in the following sections have been agreed between Buloke Shire Council and the Department, and were informed by:

- Estimates developed by the Department which draw on a range of inputs, including population forecasts, current enrolments and results from the Kindergarten Capacity Assessment Program (KCAP), conducted in 2019.
- The estimated capacity of new services that are planned to open in the LGA (Section 2)
- Local knowledge and context provided by the Local Government (Section 3) that explains particular issues and trends in their area.
- The approach to optimising utilisation of existing services in the LGA (Section 4.4), and
- Other sources, such as modelling undertaken by Local Governments and local data.

The KISP measures a service's capacity to deliver funded kindergarten in terms of the number of children it could enrol in Three and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten. The number of funded

kindergarten places is different from a service’s licensed or approved places, which count the number of children permitted to attend the service at any one time under the license. Many services can enrol more children in their funded kindergarten program(s) than they have licensed places for because they can run more than one kindergarten program per week. Kindergarten places are therefore a more accurate measure of service kindergarten capacity than licensed places.

Three-Year-Old Kindergarten places have been presented as 15-hour places so they can be easily compared to Four-Year-Old Kindergarten places. Moreover, when Three-Year-Old Kindergarten is fully rolled-out in 2029, every three-year-old child will have access to 15-hours of kindergarten.

From 2023 all providers will have flexibility to determine how many hours of funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten they deliver per week, with a minimum of five hours and a maximum of 15-hours funded pro-rata. It is expected that hours offered will vary. Given this variation, **it is important to be aware that during the transition to all three-year-old children receiving 15-hours of funded kindergarten per week in 2029, the 15-hour places presented in this report may represent multiple three-year-old places that individually receive less than 15-hours of kindergarten per week.**

These estimates have been developed at an LGA and community level to show the overall forecast and variation within an area. The KISP defines community at the Statistical Area Level 2, which is medium-sized areas which represent a community that interacts socially and economically, with a population range of 3,000 to 25,000 people, and an average population of about 10,000 people.

4.3 SUMMARY OF CURRENT KINDERGARTEN PROVISION

The figures below provide a summary of current kindergarten provision within the LGA and provide relevant context for the estimates of demand for funded kindergarten places included in Section 4.5. The data included in this section are largely drawn from:

- The Kindergarten Capacity Assessment Program (KCAP), collected between June and October 2019.
- The Department’s Kindergarten Information Management System (KIMS), as at 2019.
- The Department’s Quality and Regulatory Division (QARD) monitoring data, as at 2019.
- The National Quality Agenda IT System (NQAITS), as at March 2021.
- The Victorian Child and Adolescent Monitoring System (VCAMS), as at 2018.

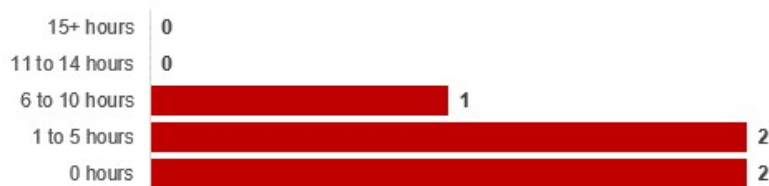
Please note that, because these sources were collected at different points, this may result in slightly different totals appearing in the below data.

Number of services by service type (NQAITS, 2021)	
Stand-alone kindergartens	2
Long day care centres	3

Percentage of services by management type, LGA level (NQAITs, 2021)	
Type	Percentage
Local Government	0%
Private not for profit	100%
Private for profit	0%
Other	0%

Current kindergarten offering	
Four-Year-Old Kindergarten participation rate (VCAMS, 2018):	105%
Number of services that offer a funded kindergarten program (DET, 2019):	5
Number of services that offer an unfunded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program (DET, 2019):	3

Hours of unfunded 3YO programs currently offered (DET, 2019):



4.4 APPROACH TO OPTIMISING THE USE OF EXISTING SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Change management strategies to optimise existing services and infrastructure

Children can often be accommodated through existing spare places and by services ‘unlocking’ unused capacity. As the experience of providers in the 2020 Three-Year-Old Kindergarten roll-out LGAs shows, while the optimisation of existing services can be challenging, it is highly time- and cost-effective compared to building new capacity through infrastructure projects. It also helps target infrastructure investment to the places that need it most and avoids over-supplying the local market.

Buloke Shire Council and the Department will support providers and services to maximise their kindergarten places through the following change management activities and practices:

- Increasing the capacity of any Local Government operated services by:
 - Running additional programs. ○ Using different timetables, including running 7.5-hour days.
 - Changing the delivery model, such as introducing rotational models or mixed-age groups.

- Having degree-qualified kindergarten teachers leading integrated kindergarten programs in long day care settings.
- Encouraging and supporting other providers and services in the LGA to undertake change management.

Buloke Shire Council and the Department have estimated how many Three and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten places can be accommodated through existing services in the LGA (**Table 1**). Both parties are committed to helping providers and services offer these kindergarten places before progressing to funded infrastructure solutions to meet demand. This commitment is reflected in the LGA and community level estimates below (**Table 2** onwards), which assume that demand will be met first through existing services and second through additional infrastructure. Note that in some cases the number of kindergarten places that can be offered through existing services may exceed demand for kindergarten places.

Table 1: Total estimated funded kindergarten places that can be offered by optimising existing services and infrastructure across the LGA, between 2021-29 (presented in 15-hour equivalent places)

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Estimated existing supply of kindergarten places*	134	152	152	152	152	152	152	152	152

*This may be higher than current three and four-year-old enrolments as it includes any spare places that are currently available or could be generated by making some minor adjustments to programming approaches.

4.5 AGREED ESTIMATES OF DEMAND FOR FUNDED KINDERGARTEN PLACES THAT CANNOT BE MET THROUGH EXISTING SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The below estimates (**Table 2** onwards) have been developed by Buloke Shire Council and the Department to illustrate the estimated:

1. Total number of Three and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten places expected over the roll-out period.
2. Three and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten places that cannot be accommodated by optimising existing services and infrastructure over the roll-out period.

These estimates have been developed to reflect that the increase in demand for Three-Year-Old Kindergarten places will be gradual.

In estimating how many Three and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten places cannot be accommodated by existing services and infrastructure, Buloke Shire Council and the Department have taken into account any new places that will be made available through planned expansions of existing services or new services, into estimates of existing supply, where this information is available. This may include Local Government owned services being developed and planned Kindergartens on School Sites.

These estimates do not, however, estimate how and when the broader sector will expand to meet the additional demand for kindergarten places that are estimated over the roll-out period.

Infrastructure need in the LGA and its local communities is indicated by the bottom rows of the tables in this section (**Table 2** onwards): 'Total kindergarten places that cannot be accommodated by existing services'. For example, if the number of kindergarten places for the LGA or a community is above zero in this row, it means that the area is estimated to need additional infrastructure (noting that further optimisation which avoids the need for additional infrastructure may be possible). Any type of provider – Local Government, not-for-profit or for-profit – can build this additional infrastructure. If this row shows all zeros, it means that there is no estimated need for additional infrastructure in the area.

Local Government and not-for-profit kindergarten providers must refer to the estimates in this section when applying through the Building Blocks Capacity Building Grants stream for Government funding. Under this stream, projects must be in a community where there is infrastructure need as shown in the community's table of estimated demand for kindergarten places (i.e. there are numbers in the bottom row above zero). Projects in LGAs or communities where demand can be met through existing services (i.e. the bottom row shows all zeros) are not eligible for funding under this stream.

LGA estimates

Table 2: Total estimated three and four-year-old kindergarten places between 2021-29 (presented in 15-hour equivalent places)

LGA level estimates	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Total estimated demand for kindergarten places (three and four-year-old children)	103	101	101	99	98	101	99	98	96
Total kindergarten places that cannot be accommodated by existing services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Community estimates

Table 3: Total estimated three and four-year-old kindergarten places between 2021-29 (presented in 15-hour equivalent places)

Buloke estimates	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Total estimated demand for kindergarten places (three and four-year-old children)	103	101	101	99	98	101	99	98	96
Total kindergarten places that cannot be accommodated by existing services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0


5.AUTHORISATION

The Area Executive Director (Mallee) of the Department of Education and Training and the Chief Executive of Buloke Shire Council endorse this Kindergarten Services and Infrastructure Plan (KISP) for Buloke Shire by signing on 20/05/2021.

This KISP is not intended to create legal relations or constitute a legally binding contractual agreement between the parties. The parties may review this KISP in 2024 to publish a new version that will replace the previous version.

An out-of-cycle review may be triggered if both parties agree that there has been a change in relevant data, information or the local early childhood sector that significantly affects the reliability of a KISP's estimates for planning purposes.

Signed for and on behalf and with the authority of Buloke Shire Council



Signature



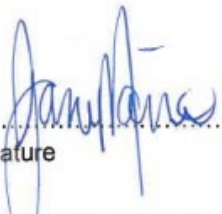
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Signed by Area Executive Director (Mallee), Department of Education and Training



Signature



Witness Signature

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