

Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan

Murrindindi Shire

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1. Introduction

1.1. Reform context

The Victorian Government's \$14 billion Best Start, Best Life (BSBL) reforms are the most significant change to Victoria's early childhood sector in a generation.

The BSBL reforms include:

- **Free Kinder:** Free Kinder is now available for Victorian 3- and 4-year-old children at participating services in standalone (sessional) kindergartens and long day care centres – a saving of up to \$2,500 per child, every year.
- **Pre-Prep:** Four-Year-Old Kindergarten will gradually transition to 'Pre-Prep' – increasing to a universal 30-hour-a-week program of play-based learning for 4-year-old children in Victoria by 2036.
- **Three-Year-Old Kindergarten:** the continued roll-out of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten, with programs increasing to 15 hours a week across the state by 2029.
- **Early learning and childcare centres:** the establishment of 50 Victorian government-owned and operated early learning and childcare centres. These centres will be built in areas with the greatest need and will make it easier for families to access early childhood education and childcare. The first of the centres will open in 2025.

These initiatives demonstrate a clear commitment to improving early learning outcomes for Victorian children, workforce participation and access for families, and present the most significant change to Victoria's early childhood sector in a generation.

Pre-Prep will roll-out in Murrindindi Shire in 2025. Statewide, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from a refugee or asylum seeker background, and children who have had contact with Child Protection services, will be able to access up to 25 hours of Pre-Prep in 2026, increasing to up to 30 hours from 2028. Children who have (or have a parent or guardian who has) a Commonwealth concession card and children who are a multiple birth child (triplets or more) across the state will be able to access up to 25 hours of Pre-Prep in 2028, increasing to up to 30 hours from 2030.

1.2. Purpose of Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plans (KISPs)

New and expanded infrastructure is key to delivering the BSBL reforms and will require a large expansion of kindergarten facilities across the State. KISPs, which are jointly developed with Local Governments, indicate where and when new infrastructure will be required to support both reform implementation and population growth in each of Victoria's 79 local government areas (LGAs). KISPs help all kindergarten providers meet demand and collectively provide a clear picture of infrastructure need across the State.

KISPs support planning for services and future capital works and include detailed information about:

- Current capacity and demand for funded kindergarten

- Capacity to be delivered for planned infrastructure projects and future demand for kindergarten
- Forecast 'unmet demand' for kindergarten – that is, the kindergarten places needed that cannot be met by current or planned capacity
- Information specific to each local government area and its early childhood education and care landscape.

KISPs were initially developed to support the roll-out of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten and have now been updated to incorporate Pre-Prep.

KISPs are intended to support planning. They are not funding documents and do not commit any party to addressing the unmet demand identified.

However, it is expected that future investment requests through Building Blocks and funding decisions about Local Government, not-for-profit projects (including non-government schools) would align with the relevant KISP (including Section 3: Local Context).

1.3. Structure of the KISP

Each KISP consists of the following sections:

- **Section 1:** A short introduction to the Best Start, Best Life reform and the KISP.
- **Section 2:** A map of existing and planned Early Childhood Education and Care services.
- **Section 3:** Local context and knowledge of key information in Murrindindi Shire relevant to early childhood education.
- **Section 4:** Unmet demand estimates in Murrindindi Shire over the life of the reform.

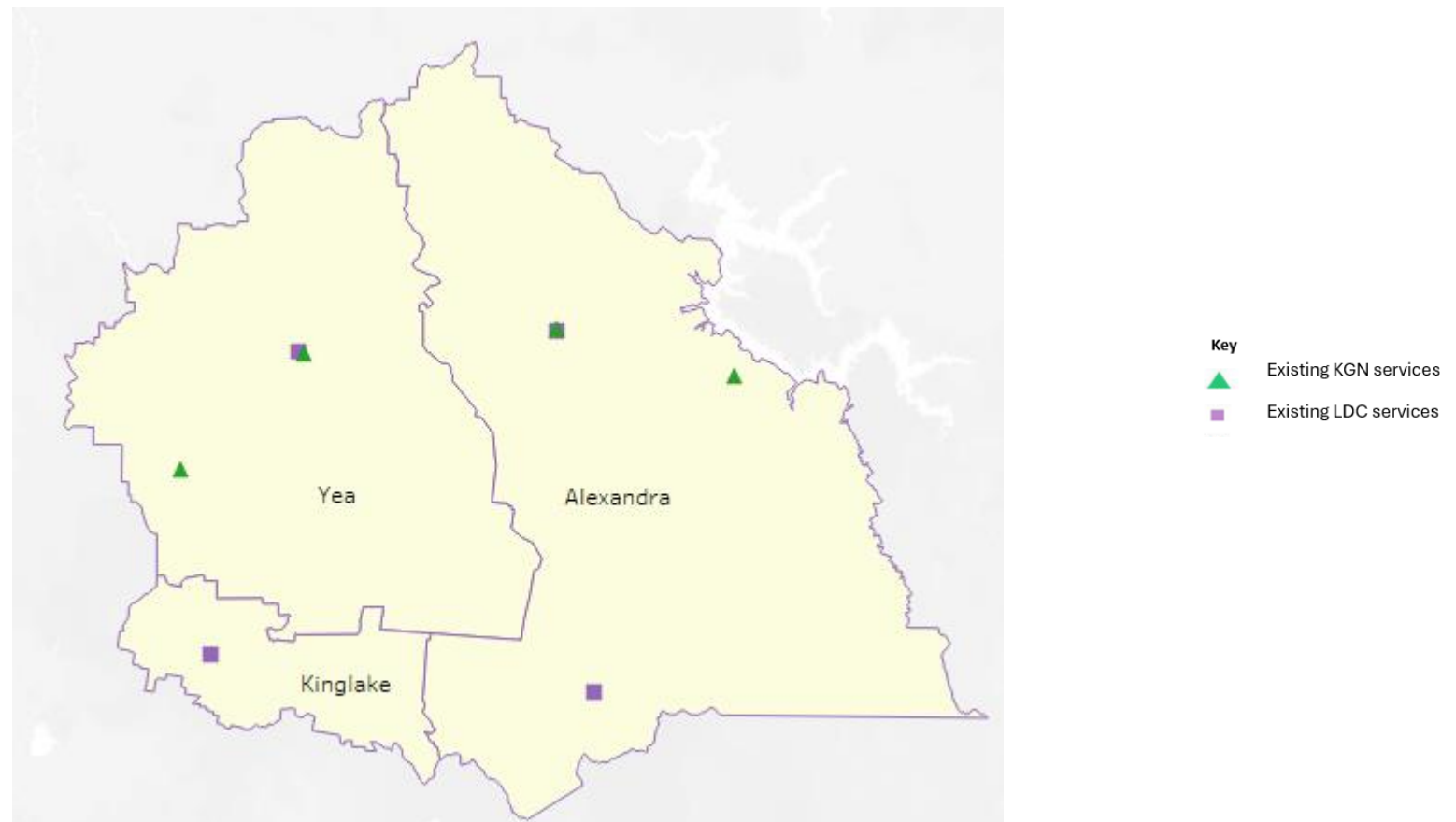
1.4. Disclaimer

All data presented in this document is published for information purposes only. Operational and business decisions should not be based solely on this document. Neither the Department nor Murrindindi Shire Council warrants, guarantees, makes any representation or assumes any duty of care in relation to the data, including as to its suitability, completeness, accuracy or adequacy.

2. Map of Early Childhood Education services in Murrindindi Shire

The map below shows the distribution of currently operating and new State-supported services that are planned to open in the future in Murrindindi Shire. Planned services by the private sector are not included.

This map has been prepared using departmental data, from both the National Quality Agenda IT System (NQAITS) and the Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA).



3. Local context

3.1 Purpose

Local, place-based knowledge and context play an important role in supporting the implementation of the BSBL reforms across Victoria. This section of the KISP documents this knowledge and context and should be considered alongside the kindergarten demand estimates in Section 4.

Information provided as local context may support applications through the Building Blocks Capacity Building and Planning Grants streams.

3.2 Key considerations

Key demographic trends that influence the demand for kindergarten

With the introduction of the Best Start Best Life reforms, Council engaged consultants to assist with planning for any capacity increases required within Murrindindi kindergartens to cater for increased demand to 30 hours per week in 2025.

Ultimate results of that engagement were reflected in the Murrindindi Kindergarten and Childcare Strategy 2024-2029 and examined options for how council could effectively support the sustainable supply of early childhood places to meet growing demand and the move to extended hours for the introduction of Pre-Prep for 2025. The report advised that both the Alexandra and the Yea communities would be faced with unmet demand on current places available despite the KISP data showing no unmet demand.

This is confirmed by Council's Housing and Settlement Strategy (Adopted 14 December 2022) which indicates the largest residential growth areas in Murrindindi will be Yea and Alexandra. It adds that the growth rate in Murrindindi is anywhere between 2 and 5% which is a higher growth rate than originally suggested by the DE data.

Murrindindi traditionally has high levels of kindergarten engagement, so one of the trends that affects demand for kindergarten is population growth, such as we saw during the pandemic with families moving out of suburban metropolitan areas to regional and rural locations.

In future, above average population growth will be influenced by outcomes associated with Council strategic projects including Alexandra East Development, Key Worker Housing, enhanced visitation, and advocacy to establish a local Tertiary education hub.

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

As at March 2025, key localised projects led or supported by Council that could influence the supply and demand ratio of early childhood education and care in Murrindindi include:

- A new private for-profit long day care only centre in Alexandra (Dindi Daycare, 44 places), modular building is onsite. Opening date to be confirmed.
- A planning permit submission granted for a private for profit 110 place long day care including kinder (Pre-Prep) centre in Alexandra. No development progress to date.
- Business case development for a Kinder on School Site (KOSS) at either of the Catholic Primary Schools (Yea or Alexandra). The Melbourne Archdiocese has a partnership with Building Blocks and are working to establish if a KOSS might be viable in Murrindindi.
- Investigation of reconfiguration of the Kinglake Ranges Childcare Centre building to increase the available childcare places and make the space more flexible.

Noting also that Happy Campers (formerly Alexandra Baby Care) located at 13 Coster Street Alexandra could apply for funded 3 and 4 year old kinder programs, but current service focus is long day care with 29 places.

Key local geographic considerations or information relevant to Three-Year-Old Kindergarten and Pre-Prep (4-year-old)

Challenges

Travel:

Murrindindi is a large shire geographically and has several smaller populations in distinct townships that are generally 15 – 30 minutes road travel to the closest town (for kindergarten access this extends to a 30 minute car ride). For families to access kinder outside of their primary town would be difficult for families that have children in school in the town where they live, and/or have limited means to support travel expenses.

There is no public transport in Murrindindi offering services between townships. This is a further barrier to any parent not owning a car and needing to travel outside their local town to access kindergarten. A particular issue for our vulnerable community members, many of whom are supported via our Maternal Child Health Enhanced program.

Large SA2 areas:

The data shown in Table 1 on page 14 indicates no overall unmet demand for kindergarten in Murrindindi for the period covered in this plan, however this assumes any excess demand in one facility will be met by places in another facility in the Shire. As mentioned above there are barriers for travelling within the Shire.

Where kindergartens outside the home town are chosen, it is generally for considerations such as work, older siblings, schooling and child care, with additional consideration given to competing programs or philosophies. For example, a preference for a stand alone kinder against a kinder program within a long day care setting.

It is noted that these considerations are also accurate with regards to accessing school, maternal and child health services and playgroups.

Council has been aware through the Murrindindi Kindergarten and Childcare Strategy of unmet demand in two of the SA2 areas despite data not representing this. This is particularly clear when examining the Alexandra data, where we are aware through the Kindergarten in Alexandra (51 places) of the large amount of unmet demand at that facility. However, because the SA2 area covers the much smaller towns of Eildon (23 places) and Marysville (60 places) that have much less demand, it counteracts the perceived need in Alexandra.

The SA2 area of Yea is in the same situation. This SA2 area includes Yea (67 places) and Flowerdale (41 places). Flowerdale has a very small enrolment which hides the unmet demand in Yea.

Since the announcement of the Best Start Best Life reforms, the Victorian State Government has announced two further initiatives in Murrindindi to address gaps in capacity. The new Kinder on the school site at Yea Primary School has added 44 places for the Yea community. This commenced in the first term in 2025 and is due to be officially opened by the Minister on 4 April.

It was announced by the State Government on 5 December 2023 that Alexandra will be the site of one of the new Government owned and operated Early Learning Centres. The centre will have 110 places, however, at this stage the project is still in planning stages awaiting site selection and is slated for opening by 2032 at the latest.

Family Choice:

Some of the anomaly for the unmet demand data for Kinglake shown in Table 2.2 can be explained by families making choices to attend kindergarten outside the shire in surrounding SA2 areas.

Data from DE across 2023 and 2024, shows that out of all the enrolments for children living in Kinglake, only approximately 58% of children living in the Kinglake SA2 were enrolled at a service in that SA2. This represents an outflow of children (42%) into neighbouring SA2s (like Yea where there are several children attending the Flowerdale kindergarten), including approximately 23% of residents travelling to Healesville, Yarra Glen or Whittlesea to receive their kindergarten entitlement.

No data is available as to the reasons why the choices have been made, the Kinglake centre still has vacancies so unmet demand is not a primary reason. But because the Kinglake community is very diverse and is on the border of more than one other Local Government Area, families will take the option that suits them best. Philosophies might be different, some families prefer a stand-alone kinder program, and some families prefer to have their children in a kinder close to where they might be working. Maybe travel time is less than travel time to Kinglake.

Other information about the expansion of early childhood services

The unmet demand predicted for Kinglake (Table 2.2) in 2025 has not occurred. The data suggests that for 2025, the demand will exceed places by 15. Currently there is no waiting list at Kinglake for Kindergarten, where they have 29 children enrolled for 4 year old kinder. In 2025 Kinglake will be offering a minimum of 18 hours up to 30 hours per week for the 4 year old program, with 38 children enrolled for 3 year old kinder at 15 hours per week.

Capacity for kindergarten in Kinglake is 60 licensed places (2x30 room capacity). This covers 30 hours per week of 4 year old Pre-Prep for 30 children (each kinder place equals 15 hours per week), and 15 hours per week of 3 year old kinder for 60 children.

There are no reports of families not being able to access Kindergarten in Kinglake and they still have capacity to accommodate more families. None of our most vulnerable children miss out on a place.

Council will monitor the situation year to year to ensure that the facility continues to have the capacity to accept all enrolments from local families.

4. Unmet demand estimates between 2025 - 2036 for Murrindindi Shire

4.1 Purpose

As the BSBL reforms are rolled out and Victoria's population grows, demand for kindergarten and Pre-Prep 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 to be required over the roll-out in Murrindindi Shire, Murrindindi Shire Council and the department have developed:

1. a summary of the current provision of kindergarten within Murrindindi Shire (**Section 4.3**).
2. an estimate of kindergarten places that cannot be met through existing services for the 2025 - 2036 period, taking into account the additional demand that can be accommodated by optimising utilisation of existing services and infrastructure (**Section 4.4**).

Local governments 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 roll-out.

4.2 Methodology

The estimated kindergarten places used in the following sections have been agreed between Murrindindi Shire Council and the department, and were informed by:

- demand projections developed by the department which draw on a range of inputs, including population forecasts and current enrolments
- the estimated capacity of existing and planned services in the LGA (Section 2)
- where applicable, modelling undertaken by Murrindindi Shire and service level information; and
- local knowledge and context provided by the local government (Section 3) that explains particular issues and trends in their area.

Kindergarten places explainer

The KISP measures a service's capacity to deliver funded kindergarten in terms of the number of **15-hour places** (referred to as "kindergarten places") available for Three-Year-Old kindergarten and Pre-Prep (noting that, by 2036, two kindergarten places will be required for one Pre-Prep enrolment). The number of 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.

Kindergarten places have been presented as 15-hour places so that new Three-Year-Old Kindergarten places and the additional 15-hour places required for Pre-Prep can be easily compared to existing 15-hour Four-Year-Old Kindergarten places. This is because, when Three-Year-Old Kindergarten is fully rolled out in 2029, three-year-old children will have access to 15-hours of kindergarten. When Pre-Prep is fully rolled out in 2036, four-year-old children will have access to up to 30-hours of kindergarten, an increase of the current offering of 15-hours per week.

It is important to note that enrolments are not equivalent to 15-hour places. One 15-hour place can support a total of 15 hours of delivery per week split between one or more children, including but not limited to the following examples:

One 15-hour place (15 hours of delivery)		
Example 1	1 child	1 x 3YO attending 15 hours per week
Example 2	1 child	1 x 4YO attending 15 hours per week
Example 3	2 children	2 x 3YOs attending 7.5 hours per week
Example 4	3 children	3 x 3YOs attending 5 hours per week

Two 15-hour places can support a total of 30 hours of delivery per week split between one or more children, including but not limited to the following examples:

Two 15-hour places (30 hours of delivery)		
Example 1	1 child	1 x 4YO attending 30 hours per week
Example 2	2 children	2 x 3YOs attending 15 hours per week
Example 3	2 children	1 x 3YO, and 1 x 4YO both attending 15 hours per week
Example 4	3 children	2 x 3YOs attending 7.5 hours per week, and 1 x 4YO attending 15 hours per week

Geographic boundaries used in the KISP

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 (SA2), which is a medium-sized area which represents a community that interacts socially and economically, with an approximate population range of 3,000 to 25,000 people, and an average population of about 10,000 people. The KISP uses 2021 SA2 boundaries. More information is available at the [Australian Bureau of Statistics website](#).

Supply contributed by pipeline projects

Murrindindi Shire Council and the department have added 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 projects being delivered by not-for-profit providers (including non-government schools) with support from the Victorian Government, planned Kindergartens on School Sites, and government-owned and operated early learning and childcare centres.

The KISP does not 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.

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 department's Kindergarten Information Management System (KIMS), as at 2023.
- the National Quality Agenda IT System (NQAITS), as at February 2025.

Number of services by service type (NQAITS)	
Stand-alone kindergartens	4
Long day care centres (including services not currently delivering funded kindergarten)	4

Percentage of services by management type, LGA level (NQAITS)	
Type	Percentage
Local Government	0%
Private not for profit	75%
Private for profit	12.5%
Other	12.5%

Current kindergarten offering in Murrindindi Shire	
Three-Year-Old Kindergarten participation rate (KIMS):	91%
Four-Year-Old Kindergarten participation rate (KIMS):	93%
Number of services that offer a funded kindergarten program (KIMS):	6

4.4 Agreed estimates of demand for kindergarten places

The below estimates (**Table 1** onwards) have been developed by Murrindindi Shire Council and the department to illustrate the estimated:

1. Demand – the total number of kindergarten places expected to be required over the roll-out period to support the current provision of Four-Year-Old Kindergarten, the BSBL reforms, and population growth

2. Supply – the total number of kindergarten places that can be accommodated by existing services and infrastructure, and planned, State-supported services which are yet to open.
3. Unmet demand – kindergarten places that cannot be accommodated by optimising existing services and infrastructure (i.e. the shortfall between demand and supply).

Interpreting the estimates

Infrastructure need in the LGA and its local communities is indicated by the bottom rows of the tables in this section (**Table 1** onwards): *Unmet demand*. If the number of kindergarten places in this row is above zero, it means that the area is estimated to need additional infrastructure capacity. Any type of provider – local government, not-for-profit (including non-government schools) or for-profit – can build this additional infrastructure.

Sub-SA2 factors may need to be considered to give a holistic picture of unmet demand. For example, in rural communities, one SA2 may contain several small towns, some with excess supply and some with unmet demand. At the SA2-level, demand may appear to be met because all supply and demand is considered in aggregate; however, it is not feasible to for families to drive long distances to access kindergarten capacity in another town. Sub-SA2 factors are covered in **Section 3: Local context**.

Table 1: Estimated kindergarten places required between 2025 - 2036 in Murrindindi Shire

Murrindindi Shire estimates	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036
Demand for kindergarten places	400	409	412	414	418	426	431	435	439	443	447	449
Unmet demand	15	18	19	20	22	23	24	24	25	26	27	27

Community estimates

Table 2-A: Estimated kindergarten places required between 2025 - 2036 in Alexandra

SA2 estimates	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036
Demand for kindergarten	166	169	169	169	171	172	174	175	177	178	179	181
Kindergarten supply	168	175	175	176	250	254	254	254	254	254	254	254
Unmet demand	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 2-B: Estimated kindergarten places required between 2025 - 2036 in Kinglake

SA2 estimates	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036
Demand for kindergarten	123	126	127	128	130	131	132	132	133	134	135	135
Kindergarten supply	108	108	108	108	108	108	108	108	108	108	108	108
Unmet demand	15	18	19	20	22	23	24	24	25	26	27	27

Table 2-C: Estimated kindergarten places required between 2025 - 2036 in Yea

SA2 estimates	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036
Demand for kindergarten	112	115	116	116	118	122	125	128	130	132	133	133
Kindergarten supply	172	179	179	181	181	183	183	183	183	183	183	183
Unmet demand	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

5. Authorisation

The Goulburn Area Executive Director of the Department of Education and the Livia Bonazzi Chief Executive Officer of Murrindindi Shire endorse this Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan (KISP) for Murrindindi Shire Council by signing on 09 / 04 / 2025.

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 2028 to publish a new version that will replace the previous version.

Signed for and on behalf and with the authority of Murrindindi Shire Council.

Signature:



Name: Livia Bonazzi

Title: Chief Executive Officer

Signed for and on behalf and with the authority of the Department of Education

Signature:



Name: Sharon Hensgen-Smith

Title: Executive Director Area, Goulburn, North East Victoria Region ...