

Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan

Swan Hill Rural City

CONTENTS

- 1. Introduction 3
 - 1.1. Reform context 3
 - 1.2. Purpose of Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plans (KISPs) 3
 - 1.3. Structure of the KISP 4
 - 1.4. Disclaimer 4
- 2. Map of Early Childhood Education services in Swan Hill Rural City 5
- 3. Local context 6
 - 3.1 Purpose 6
 - 3.2 Key considerations 6
- 4. Unmet demand estimates between 2025 - 2036 for Swan Hill Rural City 10
 - 4.1 Purpose 10
 - 4.2 Methodology 10
 - 4.3 Summary of current kindergarten provision 12
 - 4.4 Agreed estimates of demand for kindergarten places 12
- 5. Authorisation 15



- any images, photographs, trademarks or branding, including the Victorian Government logo and the DE logo; and
- content supplied by third parties.

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 Swan Hill Rural City in 2027. 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 Swan Hill Rural City relevant to early childhood education.
- **Section 4:** Unmet demand estimates in Swan Hill Rural City over the life of the reform.

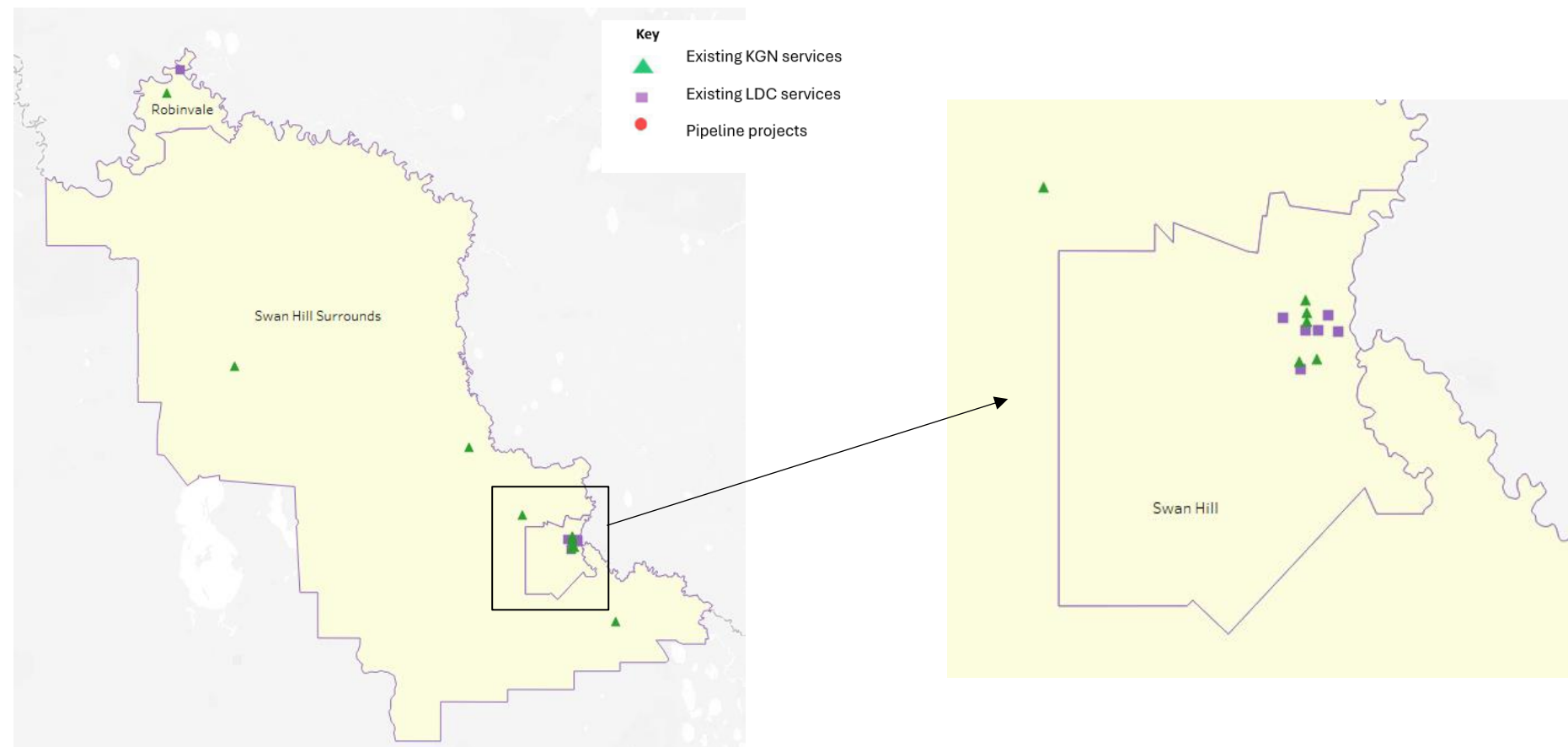
1.4. Disclaimer

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 Swan Hill Rural City 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 Swan Hill Rural City

The map below shows the distribution of currently operating and new State-supported services that are planned to open in the future in Swan Hill Rural City. 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

Aboriginal Self Determination in Early Childhood Education and Care

Alongside the Department of Education (DE), Swan Hill Rural City Council (SHRCC) recognises the importance of Aboriginal Self Determination in Early Childhood Education and Care in fostering a sense of identity, culture, and belonging among our Aboriginal children and families. Whilst SHRCC does not deliver kindergarten programming their contribution to infrastructure, Maternal and Child Health services and early years facilities means they hold a significant role.

To ensure all practices and policies are inclusive, respectful, and reflective of Aboriginal traditions, languages, and values Council actively engage with their Aboriginal communities and incorporate their insights into all planning and delivery. Council uses multiple means of hearing from communities, ensuring representation from the full diversity of families. As an example of this Council's most recent online survey for the Swan Hill Early Years Services Research (SHEYS 2024) which yielded 506 responses included 5.2% of respondents identifying as Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander (above the 4.2% of population identifying as ATSI in the 2021 Census of Population and Housing for the Swan Hill SA2).

Council extends this right to self-determination to early years services which are Aboriginal owned / operated. Significant in this landscape is the Murray Valley Aboriginal Co-op (MVAC) who is the Early Years Manager of the Murray Valley Aboriginal Early Learning Centre. The Murray Valley Aboriginal Early Learning Centre is based in the community of Robinvale and is the only regulated provider of childcare to the Robinvale and surrounding communities. The Murray Valley Aboriginal Early Learning Centre is operated by an ACCHO and provides an integrated kindergarten program.

Following discussions between SHRCC and DE to develop this KISP, it was noted that increasing the amount of funded kindergarten offered by Murray Valley Aboriginal Early Learning Centre could risk displacing childcare places and undermine principles of self-determination. DE adjusted the level of kindergarten supply this service is expected to provide, and this is reflected in the unmet demand estimates presented in section 4.

Key demographic trends that influence demand for kindergarten

There are two components to local context for the Swan Hill LGA of relevance. Firstly, current popular demographic measurement and prediction mechanisms do not accurately reflect our

communities and secondly, several factors specific to our location influence our demographic trends.

1. There is documented evidence of the ABS Census of Population and Housing undercounting the population of Swan Hill Rural City, most acutely in the Robinvale area. Due to the Victorian in Future (VIF) population projections using the ABS Census results as a key data input, there is strong reason to believe that VIF underestimates population growth. Significant attention has been allocated to population counting issues in the following:
 - a. Success Works (2005), Robinvale Mapping Project Final Report
 - b. Geografia (2019), Robinvale Population Determination Briefing Paper
 - c. The Robinvale Early Childhood Education and Care Consultation (2023)
 - d. The Swan Hill Early Years Services Research (2024)

In response to this significant body of work SHRCC is now working with the ABS and a number of key stakeholders to improve participation in the 2026 Census of Population and Housing.

Following discussions between SHRCC and DE to develop this KISP, adjustments in demand modelling were made to account for the population undercounts. SHRCC considers that there are still risks to undercount the population and will, with DE, monitor and review to ensure that there is sufficient kindergarten provision for the local community.

2. Several local context factors also impact key demographic trends that, in turn, influence demand for kindergarten. These are summarised below:
 - a. The Swan Hill LGA is a cross border community and, as such, services a NSW population. Demographic changes from outside of Swan Hill LGA are not considered in the unmet demand estimates, and this may impact their accuracy. Of relevance to this research are the communities of Murray Downs (adjacent to Swan Hill city) and Euston (adjacent to Robinvale). The Murray Downs Suburbs and Localities (SAL) (2021) has a population of 274 people, totaling 78 families and no early years services at all. The Euston SAL (2021) has a population of 822 people, totaling 188 families, Euston does have a preschool and visiting Maternal and Child Health Service, but does not have any formal childcare services.
 - b. Significant industry growth across the region – including horticultural plantings and processing plants, mineral sands mining and renewable energy are all driving workforce demand and population growth. SHRCC estimates a further 2,100 houses are needed across the LGA to meet this and the associated service industry demands.
 - c. In recent data released by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) the Swan Hill LGA surpasses the national total fertility rate for Australia of 1.50 (in 2023) with a total fertility rate of 1.98 <https://aifs.gov.au/research/facts-and-figures/births-australia-2024#fertility-location>. These figures align with local Birth Notifications data provided by our Maternal and Child Health service.

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

There are several trends of note:

- > High demand for childcare means LDC services may adjust their programming to maximise childcare places, and therefore reduce their kindergarten offerings. If this occurs, projected supply of kindergarten that informs the estimates in section 4 may be overestimating the level

of kindergarten provision across the LGA. The Robinvale Early Childhood Education and Care Consultation (2023) confirmed a short-fall of at least 50 full-time childcare places in the Robinvale community (based on an estimated 50% response rate to the online survey) and estimated the then supply of one childcare place for every 10 children aged 0-4 years. The Swan Hill Early Years Services (2024) research estimated an additional 90 extra full-time childcare places per week were required to meet demand. The SHEYS survey estimated a 30-50% response rate as such the childcare shortfall may be as much as 180-270 fulltime childcare places per week.

- > There is a broad and enduring community 'cultural appetite' to access kindergarten through standalone services rather than in long day care services. As a result, most families move out of LDC and into the kindergarten setting from age 3 years (even when families may still be accessing childcare on non-kindergarten days). For both the above reasons LDC services across the Swan Hill LGA do not currently significantly contribute to kindergarten place supply. This is especially so in Robinvale for the reasons noted earlier.
- > Workforce shortages are also significantly impacting the supply of early childhood education and care. Based on recent research across the LGA (including the 2023 RECECC and the 2024 SHEYS studies) there is a shortfall in ECEC staff of at least 38 full time equivalents. This shortfall is across all qualification levels including Certificate III, Diploma and Degree. Within this, several factors need highlighting:
 - SHRCC mapped workforce shortfalls apply to current services and available Licenced Places only and do not consider the growth needed to accommodate shortfalls in childcare or preschool demands long-term
 - Based on interviews with services it was noted that Kindergarten staff tend to not want to work full time or across multiple services, as such the above figures likely underestimate the workforce required to meet BSBL because an individual currently not working fulltime may be resistant to being induced into fulltime work. Pressure may only serve to force them to leave the industry altogether
 - Certificate IIIs and Diplomas especially exit the industry into the school sector for higher rates of pay and improved leave entitlements. This is amongst the multiple levers which see movement out of the industry outpace movement into the industry

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

Services in the Robinvale and Swan Hill SA2s cater to many children in the Swan Hill Surrounds SA2, including Liparoo, Wemen, Bannerton, Lake Powell, Annuello, Wandown, Boundary Bend, Kooloonong, Narrung, Kenley Natya, Lake Boga and Woorinen/Woorinen South. These inter-SA2 movements are not comprehensively considered in the unmet demand estimates in section 4, and demand in Swan Hill Surrounds may best be addressed through new infrastructure in Robinvale, Swan Hill and Woorinen South.

Service use between the Swan Hill SA2 and Swan Hill and Surrounds SA2 is fluid, this is especially so between the city of Swan Hill and the surrounding communities of Lake Boga and Woorinen / Woorinen South.

Other information about the expansion of early childhood services

Several additional factors are of significance for this plan including:

- > Appetite for KOSS – across the Swan Hill LGA our families express a preference for kindergartens on school sites (KOSS).
- > High levels of vulnerability – like many rural communities, children and families across the Swan Hill LGA are experiencing vulnerability and under-resourcing at higher proportions than their urban peers.
- > The community in Robinvale is very multicultural and Swan Hill is becoming increasingly multicultural. Whilst this brings many positive benefits and as a municipality Council embraces this it also brings inherent challenges for those families in accessing early years services.
- > Priority of access communities, as identified by the Department, are proportionally higher across the Swan Hill LGA than evidenced Statewide, this is especially so for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children who have had contact with Child Protection services. As a result a higher proportion of children in the Swan Hill LGA should be accessing increased Kindergarten hours from 2026 than would be evidenced statewide.
- > Our existing infrastructure is ageing and several buildings are no longer fit-for-purpose. Currently Council's oldest kindergarten infrastructure was built in 1962 (Manangatang). This building requires an upgrade to be fit-for-purpose. Additional to this a second Council owned kindergarten building in Pye St Swan Hill is closed with the kindergarten service now offered from an alternative site. This building requires such substantial repair that it is now under consideration for decommissioning by Council. The Woorinen South Kindergarten is also identified as no longer fit for purpose.

4. Unmet demand estimates between 2025 - 2036 for Swan Hill Rural City

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 Swan Hill Rural City, Swan Hill Rural City Council and the department have developed:

1. a summary of the current provision of kindergarten within Swan Hill Rural City (**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 Swan Hill Rural City 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 Swan Hill Rural City 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

Swan Hill Rural City 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 April 2025.

Number of services by service type (NQAITS)	
Stand-alone kindergartens	10
Long day care centres (including services not currently delivering funded kindergarten)	7

Percentage of services by management type, LGA level (NQAITS)	
Type	Percentage
Local Government	0%
Private not for profit	71%
Private for profit	24%
Other	6%

77%

Current kindergarten offering in Swan Hill Rural City	
Three-Year-Old Kindergarten participation rate (KIMS):	77%
Four-Year-Old Kindergarten participation rate (KIMS):	91%
Number of services that offer a funded kindergarten program (KIMS):	14

4.4 Agreed estimates of demand for kindergarten places

The below estimates (**Table 1** onwards) have been developed by Swan Hill Rural City 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 Swan Hill Rural City

Swan Hill Rural City estimates	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036
Demand for kindergarten places	558	630	729	812	873	916	1,003	1,011	1,019	1,029	1,041	1,053
Unmet demand	0	0	27	95	155	184	270	278	287	296	309	321

Community estimates

Table 2-A: Estimated kindergarten places required between 2025 - 2036 in Robinvale SA2

Robinvale estimates	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036
Demand for kindergarten	116	126	143	154	163	170	186	187	190	192	195	197
Kindergarten supply	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143	143
Unmet demand	0	0	0	12	21	27	43	44	47	50	53	55

Table 2-B: Estimated kindergarten places required between 2025 - 2036 in Swan Hill SA2

Swan Hill estimates	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036
Demand for kindergarten	321	361	416	463	498	524	572	578	583	588	596	603
Kindergarten supply	332	394	394	409	409	425	425	425	425	425	425	425
Unmet demand	0	0	22	54	89	99	147	153	158	164	172	179

Table 2-C: Estimated kindergarten places required between 2025 - 2036 in Swan Hill Surrounds SA2

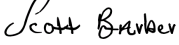
Swan Hill Surrounds estimates	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036
Demand for kindergarten	122	143	171	194	211	222	246	247	247	248	250	252
Kindergarten supply	166	166	166	166	166	166	166	166	166	166	166	166
Unmet demand	0	0	5	29	46	57	80	81	82	82	84	87

5. Authorisation

The Mallee Area Executive Director, Joanne Marshall of the Department of Education and the Chief Executive Officer of Swan Hill Rural City Council, Scott Barber endorse this Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan (KISP) for Swan Hill Rural City Council by signing on 6 / 8 / 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 Swan Hill Rural City Council.

DocuSigned by:

56FEE821997648A:.....
Signature

Name: Scott Barber

Title: Chief Executive Officer

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

Signature 

Name: Joanne Marshall

Title: Executive Director | Mallee Area

Certificate Of Completion

Envelope Id: F2B7C82A-98C5-4444-9B43-CF1B4A840581

Status: Completed

Subject: Complete with Docusign: Swan Hill Rural City Council KISP v 05082025.docx

Source Envelope:

Document Pages: 15

Signatures: 1

Envelope Originator:

Certificate Pages: 1

Initials: 0

Tamara Matthews

AutoNav: Enabled

tamara.matthews@swanhill.vic.gov.au

Envelopeld Stamping: Enabled

IP Address: 203.37.27.74

Time Zone: (UTC+10:00) Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney

Record Tracking

Status: Original

Holder: Tamara Matthews

Location: DocuSign

07-Aug-2025 | 09:13

tamara.matthews@swanhill.vic.gov.au

Signer Events

Signature

Timestamp

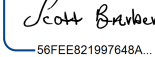
Scott Barber

scott.barber@swanhill.vic.gov.au

CEO

Security Level: Email, Account Authentication
(None)

DocuSigned by:



56FEE821997648A...

Sent: 07-Aug-2025 | 09:17

Viewed: 07-Aug-2025 | 09:25

Signed: 07-Aug-2025 | 09:25

Signature Adoption: Pre-selected Style

Using IP Address: 203.37.27.74

Electronic Record and Signature Disclosure:

Not Offered via Docusign

In Person Signer Events

Signature

Timestamp

Editor Delivery Events

Status

Timestamp

Agent Delivery Events

Status

Timestamp

Intermediary Delivery Events

Status

Timestamp

Certified Delivery Events

Status

Timestamp

Carbon Copy Events

Status

Timestamp

Witness Events

Signature

Timestamp

Notary Events

Signature

Timestamp

Envelope Summary Events

Status

Timestamps

Envelope Sent

Hashed/Encrypted

07-Aug-2025 | 09:17

Certified Delivered

Security Checked

07-Aug-2025 | 09:25

Signing Complete

Security Checked

07-Aug-2025 | 09:25

Completed

Security Checked

07-Aug-2025 | 09:25

Payment Events

Status

Timestamps