

Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan

Yarriambiack 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 Yarriambiack 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 Yarriambiack Shire relevant to early childhood education.
- **Section 4:** Unmet demand estimates in Yarriambiack Shire over the life of the reform.

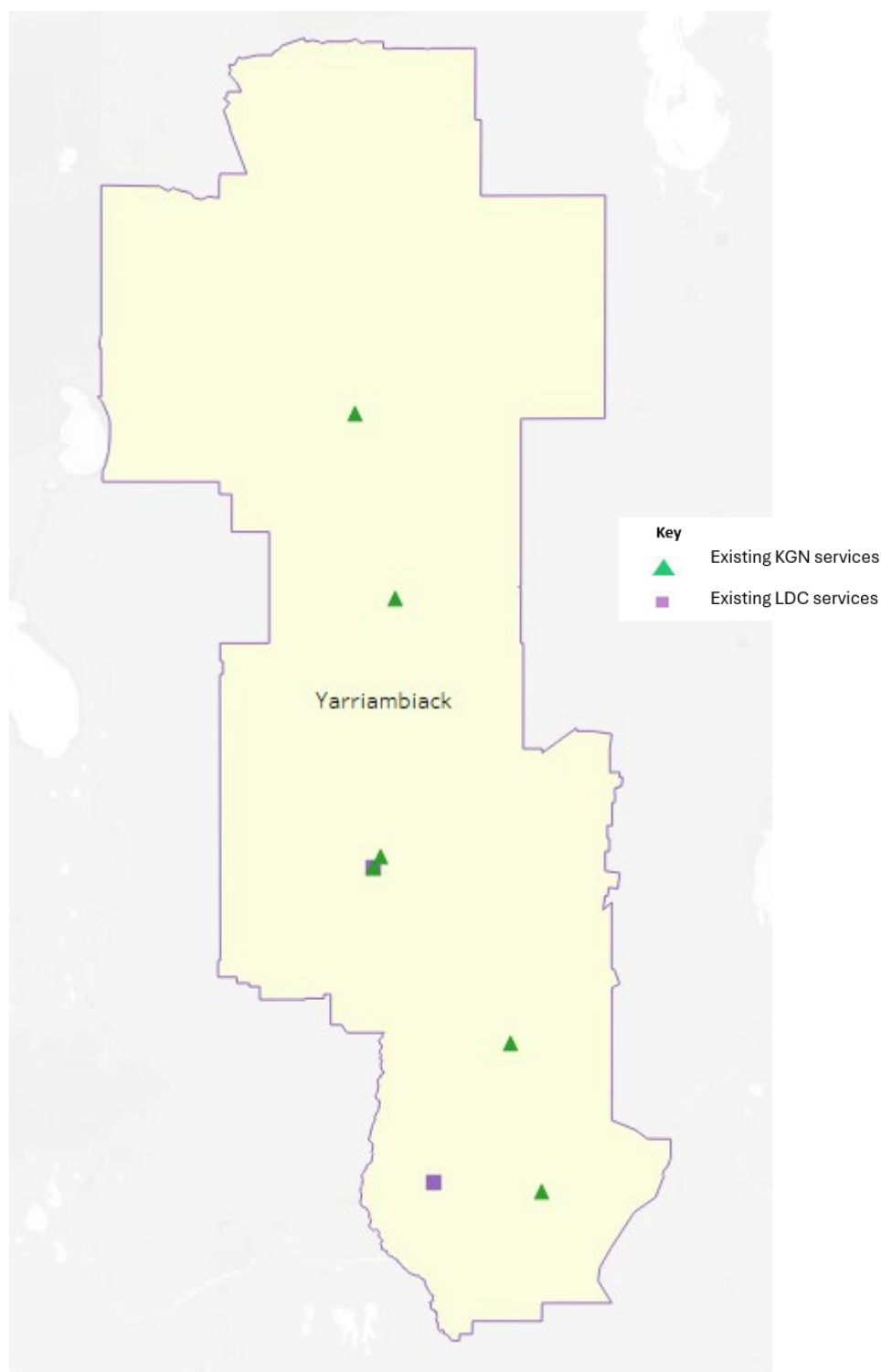
1.4. Disclaimer

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 Yarriambiack 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 Yarriambiack Shire

The map below shows the distribution of currently operating and new State-supported services that are planned to open in the future in Yarriambiack 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

Aboriginal Self Determination in Early Childhood Education and Care

Yarriambiack Shire Council (YSC) has embraced the opportunity to work in partnership with Barengi Gadjin Land Council (BGLC) to develop a Local Government Engagement Strategy and provide support with the ongoing development of our municipality Reconciliation Action Plan. These documents aim to formalise the Yarriambiack Shire Council's commitment to developing respectful relationships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and to foster opportunities in supplier (procurement) and recruitment diversity, along with developing an enhanced understanding of cultural learning.

With the Yarriambiack Shire having a greater proportion of 'ATSI population' (1.7%) than the Victorian proportion (1.0%), it is vital that we acknowledge the rich and thriving culture, knowledge and experience of our First Nations peoples within our kindergarten programs with inclusive, responsive and respectful programs whereby all indigenous people feel safe and can achieve their potential. Yarriambiack kindergartens have highlighted this as a priority, evidenced in past and current School Readiness Funding Plans whereby culturally safe practices, increasing awareness, ensuring systematic processes and equitable opportunities are ongoing goals.

Key demographic trends that influence demand for kindergarten

The 2021 ABS Census of Population and Housing registered a total of 535 children aged 0-8 years across the Yarriambiack Shire. Of these, 284 were aged between 0-4 years. Over the five years between the 2016 and 2021 ABS Census periods the total population of children aged 0-8 years declined by 63 children from 598 to 535. However, the larger size of the younger cohort (0-4 years, 284 children) and steadily climbing annual Birth Notifications suggests the Yarriambiack Shire Early Years population may be slowly climbing again.

From the Census of Population and Housing data several key Early Years observations can be drawn including that for all communities the proportion of 'children aged 0-4 years' is less than that at the Victorian level (5.8%) with the exception of Brim (6.0%), all Yarriambiack Shire communities were below the Victorian 'Median weekly income – family' (\$2,136), some by more than 50% such as Woomelang (\$924), only Patchewollock had proportionally more 'Couple families with children' (51.4%) than Victoria (45.5%), only Warracknabeal (18.4%) and Minyip (18.4%) had proportionally more 'One parent families' than Victoria (15.2%), and the proportion of 'Employment status couple families - Both not working' was above the Victorian rate of 19.8% for all communities with the exception of Brim (19.2%). For some communities this was more than twice the rate – Woomelang (52.3%) and Beulah (40.0%). Several of these statistics speak to the level of under-resourcing and potential vulnerability in our communities.

The Census SEIFA report generated in October 2024 again demonstrated vulnerabilities within

the local demographic, highlighting a rating of 3 in the index of relative social- economic disadvantage. Within this report, the proportion of the population in the Yarriambiack receiving support payments from the government is substantially higher than the average LGA in Victoria. Early childhood disadvantage, encompassing factors such as poverty, the lack of resources, and limited opportunities, can lead to lasting negative impacts on children's physical, social-emotional, and cognitive development, potentially creating a cycle of intergenerational disadvantage within the community.

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

The geographical location of the Yarriambiack Shire exacerbates difficulties in attracting or developing qualified staff and relief costs cause barriers to quality kindergarten for remote children.

To actively counteract workforce shortages in the Early Years the Yarriambiack Shire Council have onboarded two School Based Apprenticeships in 2025 within the Warracknabeal Memorial Kindergarten. Being a hands-on approach to learning, school- based apprenticeships provide a unique chance for Yarriambiack council to train staff to suit the place-based needs of our services and prevent future skill shortages, safeguarding workplace recruitment and retention.

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

Social and geographical isolation in and across the Yarriambiack Shire rural communities is significant, recognising that whilst geographical isolation is obvious due to the physical separation of populations, social isolation is also very real, especially if various socio-demographic communities are not given supported opportunities to connect. The connection provided by Council's Early Years services is paramount.

The support provided by Yarriambiack Shire's Early Years Team should not be under- estimated or under-valued. Their role as the constant in the lives of many children and families, as trusted information sources, means they have the capacity to positively impact life outcomes for children and families across the Yarriambiack Shire.

Other information about the expansion of early childhood services

To ensure the best start best life reform is a success, we need the sector to continue to deliver programs that are efficient and maximise the use of existing resources, particularly facilities and workforce. To maximise this use, some services may need to consider programming changes such as running additional programs or adapting timetables (moving from short sessions to long day sessions) or implementing rotational models.

Most of the Early Years infrastructure is aging (except for the newly expanded Warracknabeal Memorial Kindergarten), with the added complexity of the Beulah Outreach Preschool operating out of a shared school space, causing compliance and toileting considerations. The Yarriambiack Shire Council is aware of the rising input costs due to the age of assets, leading to a widening maintenance gap with more frequent and costly repairs.

The KISP assumes that kindergarten places currently available are retained into the future without factoring in a reduction of places due to ageing infrastructure or sites that are not fit-for-purpose because of changes to service delivery requirements or legislation. Yarriambiack Shire Council considers that funding to renew or replace existing infrastructure will be required to maintain current supply of kindergarten places in the future.

4. Unmet demand estimates between 2025 - 2036 for Yarriambiack 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 Yarriambiack Shire, Yarriambiack Shire and the department have developed:

1. a summary of the current provision of kindergarten within Yarriambiack 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 Yarriambiack 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 Yarriambiack 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](https://www.abs.gov.au).

Supply contributed by pipeline projects

Yarriambiack Shire 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	6
Long day care centres (including services not currently delivering funded kindergarten)	2

Percentage of services by management type, LGA level (NQAITS)	
Type	Percentage
State/Local Government	88%
Private not for profit	13%
Private for profit	0%
Other	0%

Current kindergarten offering in Yarriambiack Shire	
Three-Year-Old Kindergarten participation rate (KIMS):	73%
Four-Year-Old Kindergarten participation rate (KIMS):	120%
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 Yarriambiack Shire Council and the department to illustrate the estimated:

- 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 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 Yarriambiack Shire

Yarriambiack Shire estimates	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036
Demand for kindergarten places	176	181	183	186	190	193	195	197	199	201	203	204
Unmet demand	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Community estimates

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

Yarriambiack estimates	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036
Demand for kindergarten	176	181	183	186	190	193	195	197	199	201	203	204
Kindergarten supply	309	322	322	325	325	329	329	329	329	329	329	329
Unmet demand	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

5. Authorisation

The Wimmera South West Area Executive Director of the Department of Education and the Chief Executive Officer of Yarriambiack Shire Council endorse this Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan (KISP) for Yarriambiack Shire Council by signing on 01 / 05 / 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 Yarriambiack Shire Council.



.....
Signature

Name: Tammy Smith

Title: Chief Executive Officer

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



.....
Signature

Name: Suzanne Camm

Title: Executive Director, Wimmera South West, SWVR