

Kindergarten Service Statement

Date of Adoption:	28 February 2023
Date of Last Review:	28 February 2023
Date of Next Review:	February 2028
Responsible Officer:	Manager Community Strengthening

Purpose of Statement

This Service Statement affirms Council's approach to the provision of kindergarten services and facilities in the Surf Coast Shire. It articulates Council's vision, sets the direction for the development of integrated models of service delivery at its existing facilities when redevelopment occurs and articulates Council's role as a kindergarten service provider in the shire.

Context

State funded universal access integrated kindergarten is delivered by a range of private providers across the Surf Coast Shire. Surf Coast Shire Council is the sole provider of universal access standalone sessional kindergarten. Council recognises that families require flexible options and a diversity of service models to meet their needs and therefore supports both integrated and sessional kindergarten being operated within the community.

The purpose of the State funded universal access kindergarten program, known as Best Start, Best Life Kindergarten, is: *Free Kinder for three and four year olds is provided to ensure every Victorian child gets the best start in life no matter where they live. It is strongly encouraged that all children attend kinder programs for two years before school as a crucial part of their educational journey.*

In 2022, the Best Start, Best Life Kindergarten program began its implementation across Victoria with a range of local providers opting in to deliver the program within the Surf Coast Shire. Delivery of the Best Start, Best Life program by private providers is through an integrated kindergarten model where a kindergarten program is incorporated into a long day care model. Council will deliver the Best Start, Best Life Kindergarten program as a standalone sessional kindergarten model.

By 2032, the Best Start, Best Life Kindergarten program will be fully implemented and provide Victorian children with 15 hours of free three-year-old kindergarten per week and 30 hours a of free four-year-old kindergarten per week.

Council directly operates a cluster of six standalone sessional kindergarten services within Surf Coast Shire:

- Jan Juc Preschool
- Kurrabee Myaring Kindergarten (Torquay KMCC)
- Torquay Kindergarten (Children's Hub)
- Lorne Kindergarten
- Anglesea Kindergarten
- Helen M Kininmonth Kindergarten (Winchelsea)

Council has been an approved Early Years Management (EYM) organisation since 2012. As an EYM, Surf Coast Shire is responsible for providing and offering fee for service professional leadership and centralised management of kindergarten enrolment services in the shire. As at February 2023, Council manages enrolments and timetabling for its existing cluster of six kindergarten services with private providers opting to manage their own.

Since 2015, the number of long day care and integrated kindergarten private providers in the shire has grown by almost 250%. Councils standalone sessional kindergarten remains the sole provider of affordable / free, three and four-year-old kindergarten in the municipality providing significant benefit to our local community and achieving the Best Start, Best Life kindergarten reform objectives of:

- Saving families money
- Supporting women to return to the workforce

The significant increase in private provider delivered long day care and integrated kindergarten programs since 2015 relieves pressure on Councils standalone sessional kindergarten services and provides the following important benefits to our community that are supported by Council:

- More choice for families to find a service that meets their needs;
- More services creates pricing competitiveness;
- Greater access to kindergarten and childcare for vulnerable families;
- Helps attract high quality early childhood professionals to the area;
- Contributes to the local economy by allowing families to return to work; and
- Allows Council to operate within the limitations of its existing infrastructure to provide services.

Scope

This statement affirms Councils position in relation to:

- Direct service delivery of funded kindergarten services.
- Redevelopment and renewal of existing infrastructure (kindergarten facilities).
- Future growth and demand (service delivery and infrastructure).

Vision

Surf Coast Shire families have access to three and four-year-old kindergarten programs that support the capacity of the family through a range of targeted and integrated programs that respond to local community needs and aspirations.

The delivery of kindergarten services in Surf Coast Shire align with contemporary National and International models of best practice and ensures a universal access model is available for all Surf Coast Shire families.

Value Proposition

Families have access to locally responsive and affordable/free standalone sessional kindergarten programs within Council facilities that meet government standards. Council recognises that families require flexible options and a diversity of service models to meet their needs.

Council's Role

Council is committed to ensuring that all children in Surf Coast Shire have access to State funded three-year-old and four-year-old kindergarten place (Best Start, Best Life obligation). It will do this as a Local Government and Early Years Manager providing services and through supporting Surf Coast Shire's local Early Years Partners (private providers).

By providing access to State funded standalone sessional kindergarten, Surf Coast Shire Council is ensuring:

- Our local children can have the best start in life with free access to kinder programs for two years before school as a crucial part of their educational journey.
- We are helping our local families save money (\$2,000 - \$2,500 per year).
- We are helping more women return to the workforce.

Leader

Lead the provision and operation of standalone sessional kindergarten services to ensure all three and four-year-old children in the Surf Coast Shire have access to free kindergarten as part of the Best Start, Best Life Kindergarten reform.

Provider

Deliver three and four-year-old kindergarten services from our current cluster of six facilities that respond to the diverse needs of children, families and communities and are delivered, where possible, within the context of service integration and best value, including; efficiency, cost effectiveness (free kinder), transparency and accountability.

In relation to existing facility renewal and redevelopment - plan, design and build infrastructure that supports and meets the needs of early years services and programs provided by both Council and other organisations for the benefit of local families and children.

Offer management of the centralised registration and program timetabling function to private providers of all State funded kindergarten programs within the municipality. This comes at a cost to private providers.

Partner

Work in partnership with a range of stakeholders including children, early years providers, agencies, the State Government and schools to build a strong local early years system that values and supports children and their families in Surf Coast Shire.

Council will work closely with any Surf Coast Shire Early Years partner to deliver three and four-year-old kindergarten programs from existing Council facilities (Moriac Pre-School).

Planner

Work with a range of community support services, early years providers, agencies, State funding providers, education providers and families to plan and facilitate effective and coordinated services for children and their families in the municipality, this includes; service system planning and developments as well as a whole of community approach to meeting the needs of three and four year old children and their families.

Work with other providers, including long day care centres, to build capacity of the sector to meet demand.

Facilitator/Broker

Play a key role in information dissemination and in connecting local service providers through the facilitation of networks and the maintenance of information sharing systems.

Council also supports the capacity of the sector through the provision of Early Years professional development opportunities.

EYM organisations play an important role in attracting, retaining and investing in a highly skilled, collaborative workforce, through mentoring programs and strong partnerships with other organisations.

Advocate

Advocate to State and Federal Government on behalf of the Surf Coast Shire community to ensure that the funding for and commitment to the provision of Early Years services meets the community’s needs and Council’s ability to deliver services that are financially sustainable.

Service Commitment

Council commits to ongoing delivery of its existing cluster of six standalone sessional three and four-year-old kindergarten services, by opting in as a provider of the Victorian Government’s Best Start, Best Life kindergarten reform.

Council will deliver the Best Start, Best Life three and four-year-old kindergarten program through its existing services and facilities and will support partners across the shire to grow three and four-year-old kindergarten services in the most cost effective and preferred method for service users.

Council will aim to renew existing Council owned kindergarten infrastructure in accordance with asset renewal program requirements.

Council commits to the overarching Service Principles outlined below:

Service Principle	Acquittal
Efficient	<p>Delivery models and resourcing will provide value for money, with services and infrastructure delivered at a level of subsidy that is acceptable to Council.</p> <p>Council will seek to create efficiencies through partnering with other specialist and generalist providers.</p> <p>Future infrastructure redevelopments of existing Council facilities will have a focus on providing integrated models that will reduce duplication across allied services.</p>
Effective	<p>Council will seek to ensure access to quality early childhood services for the local community. The delivery of Council</p>

	standalone sessional kindergarten services will align with the Best Start, Best Life Kindergarten Reform.
Accessible	The diversity of our communities is a source of pride, not an access barrier. Families will not be disadvantaged to access Council services as a result of personal characteristics. In our role as leader, planner and our facilitating and leadership role as service provider, we will be cognisant of the cultural and personal needs of our community members and support the local Early Years sector to provide accessibility.
Affordable	Affordability should not be a barrier to receiving quality services. Council will deliver universal access standalone sessional kindergarten as part of the Best Start, Best Life Kindergarten program to provide cost savings to families.
Equitable	Council recognises that greater effort may be required for some children to achieve equality of opportunity.
Responsive to community needs	In our EYM service system planning and development role, we will facilitate a whole-of-community approach to meeting the needs of children and their families. We will ensure we base our services on the best information available in a timely manner. As an example of our responsiveness, provision of temporary sites may be established to meet an unplanned community need and where possible be cost neutral to Council.
Responsive to community expectations and values	Our services will be delivered through a model and level of subsidy that is acceptable to community members. We will ensure community voice is heard and responded to in our service operations planning, and reflected in our continuous improvement approach.
Promote local employment growth or retention	We will support local employment. Many of our educators are from the local community. We support the further education and training of our staff for their own improvement as well as to create greater benefit for our community. Benefits for families who may be better able to enter or re-enter employment as a result of child care are also recognised.

Furthermore, services will be operated in manner that is responsive to the local needs of families and;

- Where possible, supports the integrated delivery of early childhood and related family services;
- Improves access to high quality early childhood services for the local community, particularly for disadvantaged and vulnerable families;
- Supports the establishment of connections with local schools;
- Facilitates access for children of all abilities;
- Enables a positive learning and caring culture in the local area;
- Transforms the physical and social environments that impact on child development;
- Enables uninterrupted support for children's healthy growth, from prenatal to young people accessing education, training and employment;
- Supports families to raise their children as well as pursue educational and employment opportunities; and
- Build community across residents, institutions and other stakeholders.

Council Delivered Services

Council will retain its Early Years Manager (EYM) status and will continue to manage its cluster of six kindergarten services from its existing facilities. Council will support private providers to meet Surf Coast Shire's population growth demand on kindergarten services. Council will continue to deliver a centralised registration and timetabling service for its own cluster of kindergarten services and offer fee for service enrolment management to private providers.

Partner Delivered Services (Future)

As Council-owned integrated early years and community facilities are redeveloped, Council will consider partnering with Early Years Partners to deliver services as partner providers. Council will ensure that services delivered meet community needs including continued provision of standalone sessional kindergarten.

On occasion, Council may consider the delivery of Early Years services at newly developed facilities. Council may make an operational decision to deliver kindergarten programs where there are no available partners and significant service demand exists. This may include the delivery of services at temporary facilities established to meet an unplanned community need. Council's delivery of services in new facilities will adhere to the overarching service principles, and where possible will be cost neutral to Council.

Associated Policies & Documents

- Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan
- Municipal Early Years Plan 2021- 2025
- Early Years Management Improvement Framework
- Council Plan