

City of Port Phillip State of Children’s Services Annual Report



2022

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Introduction

This report is prepared to understand the state of children aged 0-11 years of age who live in the City Port Phillip and the impact of Council's commitments in the *Every Child, Our Future: Children's Services Policy*.

Every Child, Our Future: Children's Services Policy sets out Council's vision:

'A children's services environment that honours diversity, builds creativity and social connections and encourages all children and families to maximise their development outcomes now and in the future.'

Local government has a statutory and social responsibility to plan for its local community. It supports the learning, health and wellbeing of Victorian children and families through determining policy at a local level.

The Policy has seven objectives that describe Council's priorities for ensuring the vision for children's services is achieved.

Policy Objective 1 - Council will work with partners to ensure that every child, regardless of their abilities or background, will have access to affordable, safe, accessible, quality Early Years' services to support development to their full potential.

Policy Objective 2 - Council will understand current and future needs of families in the city and influence the provision of early years services to meet those needs.

Policy Objective 3 - Early years' services will be financially sustainable and consistently aligned with relevant policies and legislation at the local, state and federal level.

Policy Objective 4 - Council will encourage collaboration across all early years' services.

Policy Objective 5 - Families will have access to the services and information they need, at the times they need it, to make choices appropriate for their needs.

Policy Objective 6 - Early years services will be supported by safe, accessible, contemporary, fit-for-purpose, sustainable facilities and environments.

Policy Objective 7 - Children will have access to natural environments that allow them to learn about and experience play in nature. This includes natural environments within early years' services.



Reading this report

The report is structured as follows:

Section 1 – Children in Port Phillip

This section summarises demographic and developmental trends for children in Port Phillip.

Section 2 - Sector Snapshot

This section outlines the available information related to supply and demand for kindergarten, early education and care, playgroups and toy libraries.

Section 3 - Children's Services Performance

This section looks at the performance of Council-run and Council-funded early education and care services, centres, maternal and child health, toy libraries and playgroups.

Section 4 – Addressing the impacts of disadvantage

This section focusses on how on the service delivery to vulnerable children and families.



Children in Port Phillip

This section outlines trends regarding demographics and developmental outcomes for children residing in the City of Port Phillip.

Children living in the City of Port Phillip

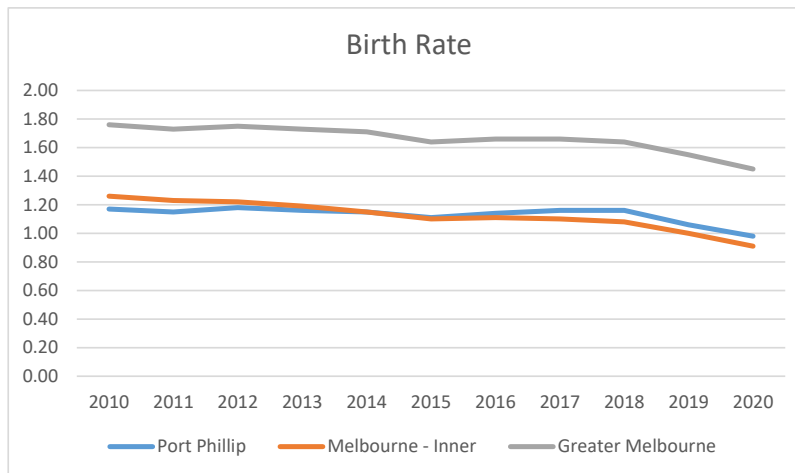
The 2016 Census data tells us that:

Children aged 0-11 years make up 10% (5% female and 5% male) of the resident population of the City of Port Phillip but are expected to decline as a proportion (to 8.5%) by 2041. This is due to declining birth rates which now sits at 1.07 babies per female (against the national average of 1.7, and Victoria average of 1.63)

There were an estimated 17 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children aged four and under.

Figure 1: Birth rate over time

Source: ABS Birth rates



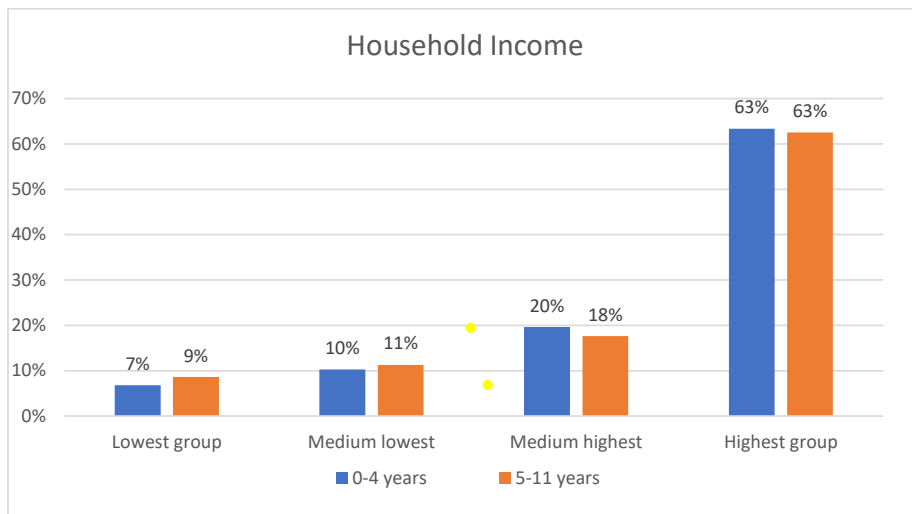
Almost 10 per cent of children residing in Port Phillip were born overseas (consistent with rates for Greater Melbourne) with the United Kingdom, India and the United States of America the most common overseas birthplaces. In contrast the most common overseas birthplaces of Greater Melbourne residents were India, New Zealand, United Kingdom and China.



Who do children live with and how do they live?

Almost two thirds of children aged 0 – 11 live in households with incomes in the highest quartile for Victoria, however eight per cent (659 children aged 0 to 11 years old) live in households with incomes in the lowest quartile.

Figure 2: Household Income
Source: ABS Census 2016



Generally, households in the City of Port Phillip track well on the SEIFA Index of Advantage and Disadvantages (which uses various ABS Census data, such as employment and income, to rank level of advantage and disadvantage by location).

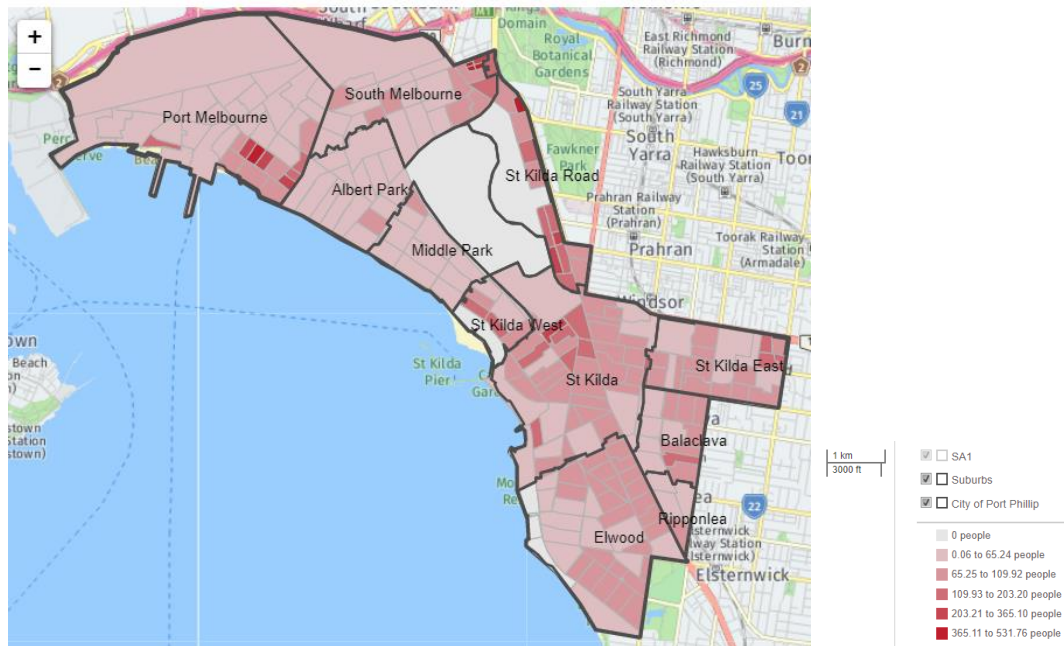
The City of Port Phillip SEIFA score is 1,101 which is above the National average (1,003), the Greater Melbourne average (1,026) and the Victorian average (1,009).

However, locations across the City of Port Phillip range from a SEIFA score of 1,148 (Middle Park) to 1,062 (South Melbourne) indicating a range of household disadvantage across the municipality as shown in Figure3 (noting that the areas with the lowest SEIFA scores align with the areas with the highest density of social housing):



Figure 3: SEIFA index of Advantage and Disadvantage, SA1 level
Source: ABS Census 2016

City of Port Phillip, Population density, 2016, Usual residence, Persons, Persons per hectare



Approximately 10 per cent of children aged 0 to 11 live in one-parent households (a similar proportion to Greater Melbourne).

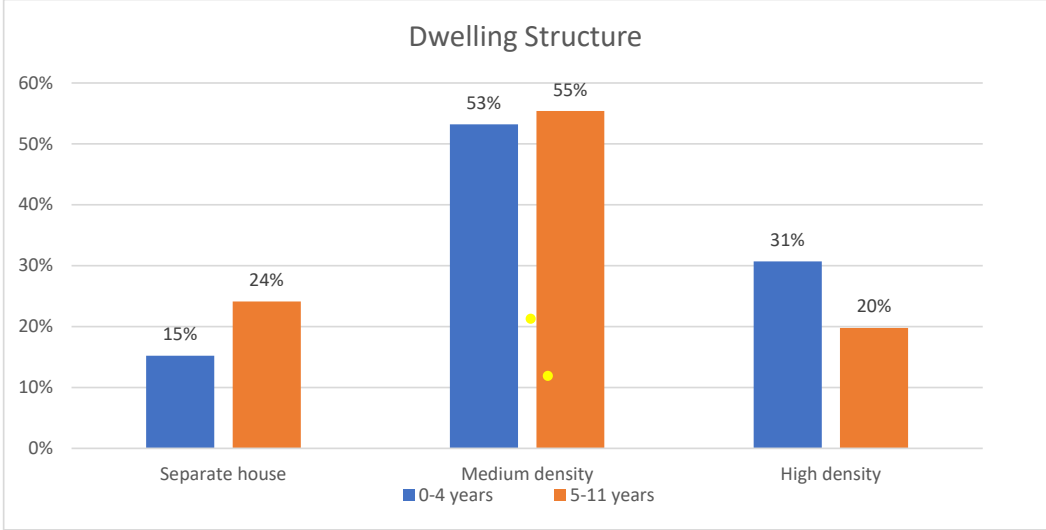
Children living in Port Phillip are more likely to live in apartments than are those in Greater Melbourne: around half of children aged 0-11 years reside in medium density (defined as semi-detached, row or terrace house or townhouse) and a quarter in high density (defined as flat, unit or apartment) (vs. 17% and 3% respectively in Greater Melbourne).

Only one in five children in CoPP reside in a separate house, compared to four in five in Greater Melbourne.

Around a third of CoPP 0-11-year olds reside in dwellings with two or fewer bedrooms (vs around 10% in Greater Melbourne).



Figure 4: Household dwelling type
Source: ABS Census 2016



What services are children using?

The Department of Education and Training 2018 Early Learning Profile reports kindergarten participation in CoPP as 82.6%. This is lower than the Victorian average of 92.1% (Department of Education and Training, 2019), however prep teacher reports (reported in the 2018 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)) suggest teachers believe almost all new-starters attending school in the City of Port Phillip have attended a preschool or kindergarten program in preparation for school.

The same report indicates that three in ten have attended playgroup and/or day care (60% and 62% respectively in 2018) and a quarter sought education or care from a grandparent. The prevalence of nannies as carers or educators has shown an upward trend since 2012 (from 7% in 2012, to 11% in 2015 and 12% in 2018) as reported in the AEDC 2018.

Outcomes for children when they enter school

When reporting against children's success in transitioning to school, the 2018 AEDC reports that teachers suggest the majority of Port Phillip children have transitioned well in terms of adapting to the structure and learning environment and parents are engaged with the school and encouraging reading at home.

In 2018, teachers identified 4% of new starters with special needs status and 10% as requiring further assessment (demonstrating an upward trend from 5% in 2012 and 8% in 2015).

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Over time the proportion of children developmentally vulnerable has remained reasonably stable with 13.4 per cent of children recorded as developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains in the first year of school in 2018 (Department of Education and Training, 2018). This is lower than the Victorian average of 19.9 per cent. Similarly, 5.9 per cent were recorded as particularly developmentally vulnerable children (children vulnerable on two or more domains), lower than the Victorian average of 10.1 per cent (Department of Education and Training, 2018).

There have been some changes over time at the suburb level. Specifically, the proportion reported as developmentally vulnerable increased between 2009 and 2018 in Albert Park, Elwood and South Melbourne and decreased in St Kilda, Middle Park and Port Melbourne. However, caution should be taken when reviewing results at a suburb level due to small base sizes.

Figure 5: Percentage of children developmentally vulnerable, by year

Source: AEDC Teacher Assessment 2012, 2015, 2018

Geography	Developmentally vulnerable							
	2009		2012		2015		2018	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Australia	59692	23.6	59933	22.0	62960	22.0	63448	21.7
Victoria	11832	20.3	12407	19.5	13465	19.9	14232	19.9
Port Phillip	80	13.5	86	11.9	100	13.9	106	13.4
<u>Local Communities</u>								
Albert Park	5	9.1	6	7.3	10	11.8	14	12.3
Balaclava/Ripponlea	3	11.1	4	8.5	8	13.1	6	11.3
Elwood	8	7.8	14	8.8	13	8.4	17	12.6
Middle Park	6	12.5	6	12.8	6	14.6	3	6.5
Port Melbourne	15	13.0	19	14.3	20	14.8	16	10.6
South Melbourne	11	16.4	16	19.5	15	20.8	18	22.8
St Kilda	15	21.4	5	6.7	22	25.0	14	12.6
St Kilda East	17	15.5	16	16.2	6	7.1	18	17.3

Emotional maturity as a developmental vulnerability is more likely to manifest in children living in the City of Port Phillip than children overall (where the proportion experiencing vulnerability on this domain is slightly higher in the City of Port Phillip than in Victoria and Australia).



Sector Snapshot

This section outlines the available information related to supply and demand for kindergarten, early education and care, playgroups and toy libraries.

External factors impacting children's services

COVID-19 Pandemic – Lockdowns and government support

Throughout 2020 and 2021, the Victorian Government imposed a number of restrictions on local communities to slow the spread of COVID-19. Lockdowns and general uncertainty regarding the severity and impact of COVID-19 meant that many Victorian childcare centres closed and enrolled children were kept home to keep them and the community safe. At this time the Federal Government provided support payments to childcare centres on the condition the services pass on gap fee waivers to families ensuring families did not pay for days missed and services were able to retain staff and remain open. 2,586 Victorian services received \$99 million over this time.

These restrictions impacted the way childcare was delivered during this time. Many centres adapted their service delivery to navigate changed circumstances, making a significant and essential contribution to Australia's COVID-19 response. Some centres offered online sessions and learning, assisting to upskill the digital literacy in the community. Service users were impacted in a variety of ways (suffering increased financial hardships, difficulties in parenting with limited access to extended family and isolation as well as rising levels of anxiety and depression) and centres were often required to help families navigate restrictions and the changing environment¹.

The indirect impacts of COVID-19 and related policy responses will likely have broad, long-lasting implications for children. Specifically, the pandemic has resulted in:

- Poorer mental health with an increase in demand for Kids Helpline, the Australian national youth helpline, the common reasons for contact including mental health and suicidal ideation or self-harm.
- Poorer child health with increased rates of improper nutrition and dramatic changes in children's play. The risks for children with additional health care needs (e.g. developmental and behavioural issues) are even greater, with limited access to health care, school and support services, including early intervention.
- Potential learning delays due to COVID-19-related to school closures.

¹ SURVEY: IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SERVICE DEMAND FOR FAMILY AND RELATIONSHIP SERVICE Dec 2021 (Family and Relationship Services Australia).



There is Increasing global concern about the likely disproportionate impact of the current pandemic on children experiencing adversity, widening existing disparities in child health and developmental outcome².

Federal Government changes to childcare subsidy

In 2018, the childcare rebate and childcare benefit were replaced with the childcare subsidy which was paid directly to the service provider (rather than being reimbursed to families). The new policy sought to encourage workforce participation and help families where childcare is a necessity to allow them to work. This change also set hourly caps on how much the Government will pay to a centre with the families paying the additional cost.

What changes are about to happen?

The 2021/22 financial year has seen a number of changes to the childcare subsidy aimed at reducing the out of pocket cost for families. Specifically, the annual cap was removed for all families who get a childcare subsidy on 10 December 2021 and backdated to the start of the 2021/22 financial year. From 7 March 2022, the childcare subsidy was increased for families with more than one child in childcare aged 5 or younger.

Introduction of funded three year old kinder

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.

² Potential indirect impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on children: a narrative review using a community child health lens - Sharon Goldfeld, Elodie O'Connor, Valerie Sung, Gehan Roberts, Melissa Wake, Sue West and Harriet Hiscock Medical Journal - 24 January 2022 (notes referencing Australia only)



Kindergarten and Early Education and Care

The kindergarten and early education and care offering in CoPP provides families with a choice of early childhood education and care settings. Provision of kindergarten in childcare settings is the same quality program as is provided in stand-alone kindergartens. The bulk of offering is in childcare centres (33 centres vs. 9 stand-alone kindergartens):

Figure 6: Number of services by service type³

Source: NQAITS, 2020

Type	#
Stand-alone kindergartens (sessional or extended)	9
Childcare centres	33

However, the range of provider types is more varied with 12% of centres operated by the CoPP, 43% private not for profits and 38% private for profits:

Figure 7: Percentage of services by management type, LGA level

Source: NQAITS, 2020

Type	%
Local Government	12%
Private not for profit	43%
Private for profit	38%
Other	7%

Figure 8: Current kindergarten offering

Source: Outlined below

Type	% or #
Four-Year-Old Kindergarten participation rate (VCAMS, 2020)	82.3%
Number of services that offer a funded kindergarten program (DET, 2019)	38
Number of services that offer an unfunded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program (DET, 2019)	27

Council run centres account for 9% of all places offered within the CoPP (362 of the 3991 approved places within the municipality):

³ The National Quality Agenda IT System (NQAITS), as at April 2020

**Figure 9: Ownership of approved places**

Source: DET

LGA	Council	Community / NFP	Private	Grand Total
City of Port Phillip	362	1,378	2,251	3,991

Council run facilities account for 7% of all approved places across Victoria. Compared with other LGA's, CoPPs 9% Council owned market share is below the City of Casey and City of Yarra (at 18% and 13% respectively) but above City of Melbourne, City of Stonnington and City of Bayside (at 3%, 3% and 0% respectively):

Figure 10: Number of Council owned approved places by LGA

Source: Outlined below

LGA	# of children aged 0-5	Number of council provided approved places	% of market share
City of Casey	13,690	2,520	18%
City of Yarra	3390	548	13%
City of Port Phillip	3130	362	9%
City of Melbourne	4540	204	3%
City of Stonnington	2410	143	3%
City of Bayside	3490	0	0%
LGA Vic Average		19,133	7%

Changes to services

In April 2021, a new 100 place private early education and care centre opened in Elwood.

Several permits for new builds and expansion of private childcare services have been granted by Council. It is unclear whether all will go ahead as planned.

- A small childcare service targeting the Jewish community in Balaclava is increasing its capacity (from 16 places potentially to 32 places TBC).
- A childcare centre in Buckhurst Street, South Melbourne operated by Little Lane Early Learning (not yet opened).
- A multi-level 3 towers construction with space for childcare is planned for Munro Street, South Melbourne; however construction is not likely to commence before 2030.



Supply and demand

A recent analysis conducted in partnership with the Department of Education and Training, demonstrated that there is likely to be adequate supply of childcare and kindergarten places in the City of Port Phillip through to 2026. While at the LGA level, we know there is adequate supply of long day care, at the suburb level the supply and demand challenges are more nuanced.

Development and population increase as a result of the Fishermans Bend redevelopment are likely to create excess demand challenges.

Further information regarding supply and demand, the [2021 Kindergarten Infrastructure and Service Plan](#) and subsequent [2022 Modelling Demand for Early Education and Care in the City of Port Phillip](#) is also available.

Average fees at early education and care providers

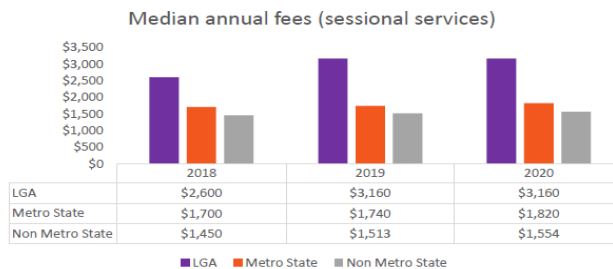
Department of Education, Skills and Employment administrative data indicate mean fees in Port Phillip increased by 1.7% in 2021 (up from \$12.46 per hour in March 2021 to \$12.67 in March 2020). Port Phillip has the second highest mean fee per hour in Victoria (behind Stonnington West at \$12.98), now higher than Bayside, Glen Eira and Boroondara (which saw lower 2020 growth at -0.9%, -0.1% and 0.4% respectively).

Council run childcare centres saw no increase in fees in the 2020/21 financial year however the draft budget recommends a fee increase from \$137 per day to \$140.50 per day.

Given average Victorian wage growth of 1.8% in the same period, these fee increases may place additional financial pressure on families however the removal of the Federal Government annual cap will likely provide some families with relief.

Additionally, data provided by the Department of Education and Training as part of the Early Learning Profile 2020 suggests that median annual fees paid by those attending Port Phillip sessional services is significantly higher than the Metro State and Non Metro State medians:

Figure 11: Median annual fees
Source: DET Early Learning Profile 2020





Playgroups

Community playgroups make a unique contribution to community wellbeing and community capacity building. They cater for needs that are not met elsewhere, providing essential social supports in cases where child-rearing is occurring without a peer support network. They can overcome the experience of social isolation. They foster a 'sense of place', or affiliation with a local community, particularly for families who are newly arrived to an area.

Children from disadvantaged families benefit from attendance at playgroup, but they are the least likely to access these services. Disadvantaged families typically under-enrol in mainstream programs and drop out earlier and at higher rates than more advantaged families. Playgroups promotes social capital (Playgroup Victoria), and persistent playgroup participation may act as a protective factor against poor social support outcomes. Socially isolated parents may find playgroups a useful resource to build their social support networks.

Although less well researched, supported playgroups can provide the same benefits as community playgroups for families experiencing situational vulnerabilities. Supported playgroups are distinct from the traditional community playgroup model (parent-run groups) because they are funded to have a paid facilitator who is employed to coordinate and deliver weekly sessions. They seek to provide and model stimulating early childhood environments for children along with support for their parents.

Supported playgroups have largely been implemented in the absence of strong theoretical or empirical evidence about their effectiveness to promote positive outcomes for parents and children from vulnerable families. Nevertheless, they have been shown to provide valuable social support for parents, decreasing parents' social isolation, increasing their confidence and their use of formal support services. Supported playgroups with the strongest evidence are those that include specific interventions – e.g., to increase physical activity, or to increase learning and cognitive development⁴.

City of Port Phillip has a long-standing commitment to supporting playgroups to start up and become sustainable. This commitment to community capacity building is delivered via venues available free of charge and a dedicated member of staff to advise and support playgroups. There are a number of playgroups operating in the City of Port Phillip. Playgroups operate in many of Council's community venues or one of three purpose-built facilities: St Kilda Playgroup has a licence agreement with Council to support about 38 playgroup sessions at Bubup Nairn Family and Children's Centre and Elwood Community Playgroup has a licence agreement with Council to provide multiple playgroups at the former Burnett Grey Maternal and Child Health centre in Elwood. There is also a purpose-built space, funded by Council, at Bubup Wominjeka Family and

⁴ Tim Moore research



Children's Centre in Port Melbourne. Council also operates supported playgroup programs which are funded by the state government.

Toy Libraries

Toy libraries have long been recognised internationally as a valuable service for children aged 0-8 years. Although available research data is minimal, toy libraries, as local hubs, are credited with having many benefits for children, families and local communities. Families have informal opportunities to connect, socialise, network and learn from each other and knowledgeable toy library volunteers. Children benefit from access to a wide variety of developmentally and culturally diverse, age-appropriate toys, materials and equipment and from the informal play opportunities. Local communities benefit from volunteerism and social connectedness.

In some cases toy libraries also provide access to additional family support services via Council's Lead Family Worker program.

Toy libraries are primarily run by volunteers, membership-based and let members borrow toys for children zero to 8 years of age, in exchange for an affordable yearly fee and helping with the operation of the library.

There are four toy libraries operating within the City of Port Phillip:

- Elwood Toy Library
- Middle Park Toy Library
- South Melbourne Toy Library
- Port Melbourne Toy Library

Toy libraries received \$18k in Council funding in 2019/20 FY, \$10K in 2020/21 FY and \$17K in 2021/22 FY.

Maternal Child Health

Council's Maternal and Child Health service is free and available to all families with children from birth to six years of age. Research shows that greater investments in prevention and early intervention initiatives in the early years is the most effective way to improve the early lives of all children but particularly disadvantaged children. This means focusing much more on improving the conditions under which families are raising young children.

Investing in early years services is also important, as they are cost effective, reduce demand on later services, and promote health and wellbeing in adulthood. Getting it right in the early years reduces downstream expenditure on remedial education, school failure, poor health, mental illness, welfare reciprocity, substance misuse and criminal justice.

Maternal and child health services offer a vital support in assisting parents in dealing with all aspects of child and family health and wellbeing such as:

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- child health and development
- breastfeeding
- nutrition
- play and learning
- maternal or paternal health and wellbeing
- accident and injury prevention including safe sleeping
- home safety
- immunisation
- local support services and resources.

Every family is contacted by a nurse, usually within one week of returning home after a baby's birth, to organise the first home visit.

Additional support for parents offered include:

- new parent groups and transition into playgroups
- breastfeeding support clinics
- sleep and settling support
- information sessions on a range of topics
- enhanced maternal and child health nurse services

Additionally, MCH nurses are all trained to screen and identify families who are experiencing family violence and are equipped to complete safety planning and referral to a Family Violence service.

The MCH program is delivered in partnership with the State Government. Funding for MCH is delivered in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Education and Training and the Municipal Association of Victoria as detailed in:

[Universal MCH Program funding 2018-19 Fact Sheet.pdf \(education.vic.gov.au\)](#)



Other services

Adventure Playgrounds (Middle Years Services)

The Middle Years and Youth Services Team host some programs at the City of Port Phillip's Adventure Playgrounds. The St Kilda Adventure Playground was established in 1981 and South Melbourne (Skinners) Adventure Playground in 1978. Due to the close proximity of Skinners Adventure Playground to local public housing and dense urban living - Skinners serves as a popular local playground for families in this area of South Melbourne.

The two Adventure Playgrounds are open as follows:

- Skinners: 3.30 pm – 5.30 pm Monday – Friday
- St Kilda: 3.30 pm – 5.30 pm Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday (soon also to be open on Fridays pending staff availability)

Both Adventure Playgrounds are open on weekends Saturday and Sunday from 12.00 midday to 4.30 pm and are closed on public holidays.

Programs are also provided at both sites in addition to these hours for members to attend (membership is free).

Programs include: Homework Club (St Kilda), evening meals (both sites), breakfast and school drop off (Skinners).

Adventure Playgrounds and focus on delivering three key service delivery priorities to children enrolled in the Middle Years (Adventure Playground) Services:

- Outdoor Play Opportunities (providing play space for young people to engage in play-based activities, creatively explore green spaces, participate in fun activities)
- Support System Linkages: The Middle Years and Youth Services Team create soft entry pathways to support opportunities as needed and make referrals for vulnerable or difficult to engage community members (who may struggle to connect with mainstream services). Some of this work occurs via engagement in play activities as part of the Middle Years-Adventure Playground sessions.
- Participation Activities: The Middle Years and Youth Services staff act as friendly, positive adult role models to the youth engaged at our services. This includes positive role modelling by Middle Years staff at the Adventure Playground sites. We encourage initiatives around Youth Leadership as part of these participation offerings.

The Adventure Playgrounds have recently conducted an extended opening hours trial. A full evaluation of the trial will be undertaken, and recommendations made regarding any identified service improvements.

The Adventure Playground program is fully funded by Council, receiving \$809K in the 2021/22 budget for operations and an allocation of \$3.445 M for upgrades in the 10-year financial plan.



Children's Playgrounds

In addition to the Adventure Playgrounds, there are 51 existing playgrounds in the City of Port Phillip, distributed across the municipality as follows:

- 10 in Albert Park/ Middle Park
- 5 in Balaclava/ St Kilda East
- 7 in Elwood/Ripponlea
- 14 in Port Melbourne
- 4 in South Melbourne
- 11 in St Kilda/St Kilda West

Construction is underway on a new playground at Rotary Park on the St Kilda Foreshore, and to upgrade the existing playground at Point Ormond Reserve on the Elwood Foreshore.

While we do not collect any data on occupancy or usage rates, there has been an observed increase in access to playgrounds, particularly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Story time

The libraries offer a number of programs, clubs and activities to engage children in books and reading. Baby rhyme time, tiny tots storytime, bedtime storytime, preschool storytime, Russian storytime and the lightning readers book club are targeted at age groups from babies to 12 year olds and are held across the various Port Phillip libraries (or online during COVID-19 restrictions).



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Children’s Services Performance

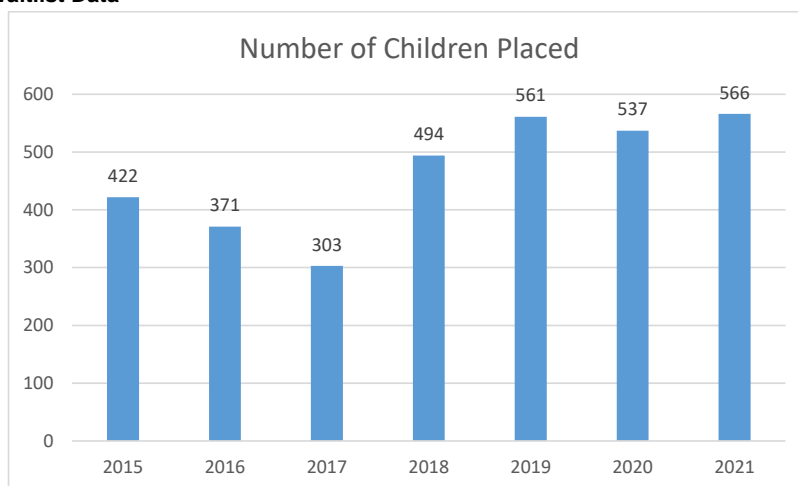
This section looks at the performance of Council-run and Council funded centres, and services (maternal and child health, toy libraries and playgroups) in regard to quality and service delivery.

Access to early education and care

Council provides a waitlist service for families to access early education and care at both Council-operated and community-managed early education and care services.

Over the past three years, the number of children placed via the waitlist has remained consistent at over 500 per year, a substantial increase from five years earlier:

Figure 12: Number of children places in Children’s Services
Source: Waitlist Data



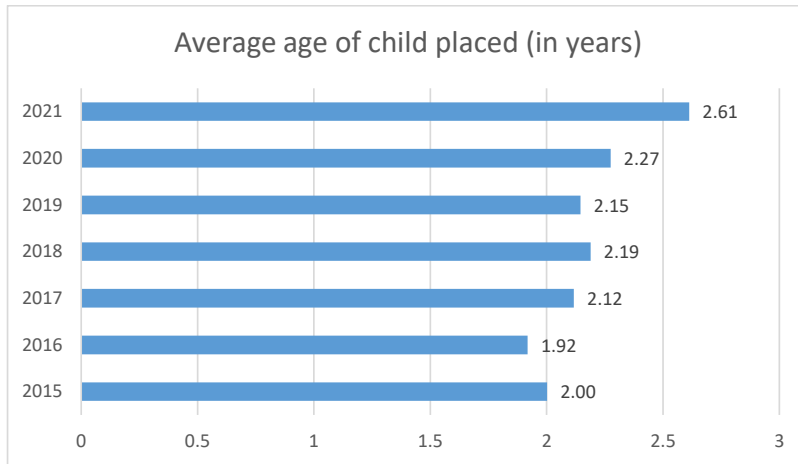
This suggests that utilisation of services has increased over time.

The average number of days required has remained consistent over time at 2.9 days per child.

Additionally, the age of children placed has increased from an average age of 2 years in 2015 to over two and a half years (2.6 years or 31 months) in 2021:

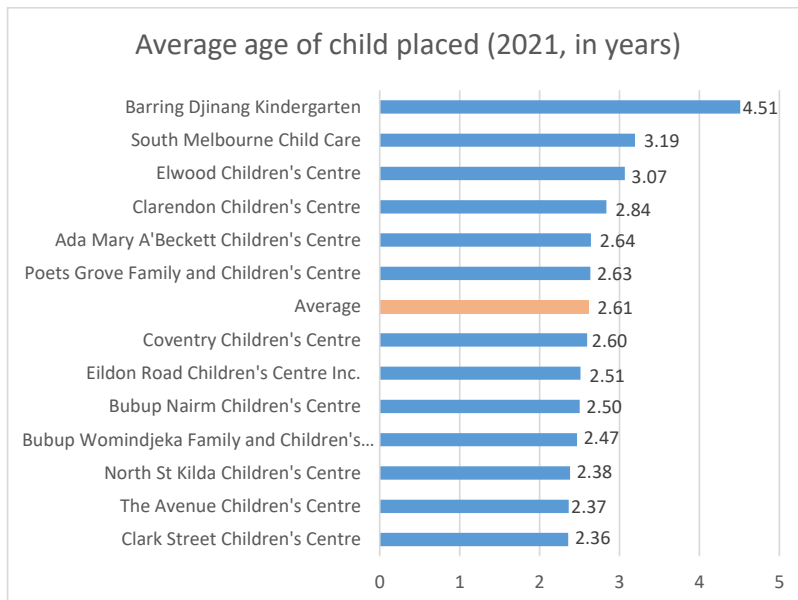


Figure 13: Average Age of Children Placed, 2015 to 2021
Source: Waitlist Data



The youngest children placed are at Clark Street Children’s Centre (averaging 2.36 years or 28.3 months), The Avenue Children’s Centre (2.37 years or 28.4 months) and North St Kilda Children’s Centre (2.38 years or 28.6 months) while the oldest children are placed at Barring Djinang Kindergarten (4.51 years or 54 months).

Figure 14: Average Age of Children Placed, 2021
Source: Waitlist Data





Early childhood education and care services

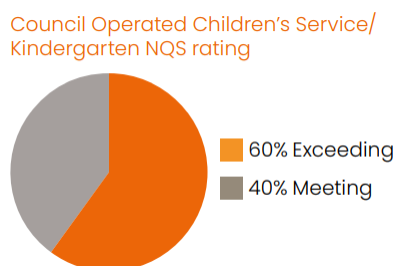
All early childhood education and care (including family day care) and outside school hours care services are assessed and rated every three to five years, in accordance with the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) National Quality Framework (NQF). This helps regulate, assess, and aid in their quality improvement.

Council-operated services

Quality

All Council-operated services are meeting the national quality standards, with three services rated as Exceeding and two services rated as Meeting.

Figure 15: Council Operated Children’s Centres NSQ Ratings, 2021
 Source: Children’s Services KPIs and ACECQA



Efficiency and effectiveness

Council-operated services monitor key performance metrics on a monthly basis to ensure the service is operating effectively.

Key Performance Measure	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
Child to Staff Ratio	3.09	2.91	2.58
Utilisation	75.8%	85%	87.1%
Operating result	\$868,482	\$(402,148)	\$(371,029)

Supporting vulnerable children

Council has recently introduced new performance measures to monitor how effectively its services are supporting vulnerable children and families.

This reporting indicates that each month during 2020/21, Council operated services supported:

- between 4 and 6 children access inclusion support funding
- up to 4 children per month to access the Preschool Field Officer Program



Each month during 2020/21, Council operated services provided early and education and care for:

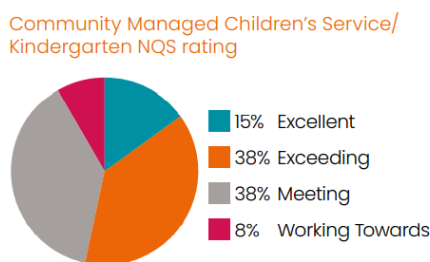
- between 27 and 76 children who were accessing the maximum Federal Government additional childcare subsidy (ACCS) of 85%
- between 3 and 7 children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds
- one or two children in out of home care across most months of the year

Community-managed childcare and kindergartens

Quality

All community-managed services except for Lilian Cannam (which is working towards) are meeting the national quality standards, with two services rated as Excellent and five services rated as Exceeding.

Figure 16: Community Managed Children’s Centres NSQ Ratings, 2021
 Source: Children’s Services KPIs and ACECQA



Supporting vulnerable children

Recently, Council has introduced new quarterly reporting to better understand how effectively services it supports and funds are supporting vulnerable children and families.

During 2020/21, community-managed kindergartens and early education and care services supported:

- up to 5 children access inclusion support funding

Each quarter, community-managed kindergartens and early education and care services provided early and education and care for:

- up to 21 children who were accessing the Federal Government additional childcare subsidy (ACCS)
- between 1 and 3 children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds
- up to four children in out of home care at various times throughout the year



Playgroups

Council runs two supported playgroups each school term with groups held weekly. To be eligible to attend, a referral needs to be received from the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) nurse or another family support worker. In 2020/21 the enrolment numbers were as follows:

- Term 3 2020: 11 parents 12 children
- Term 4 2020: 14 parents 15 children
- Term 1 2021: 24 parents 23 children of whom 14 new families and 10 returning
- Term 2 2021: 19 parents 23 children of whom 6 new families and 13 returning

The playgroups are delivered with two facilitators thus the capacity is 20 parents and their children however the preference in these groups is to restrict numbers to no more than 15 parents.

Currently the groups are reforming after the extended COVID-19 lockdowns. Some families continue to have high levels of anxiety limiting their interactions outside their homes. Individual online sessions are being offered to these families encouraging play ideas in the home. The supported playgroups are averaging at 6 families per group per week.

Toy libraries

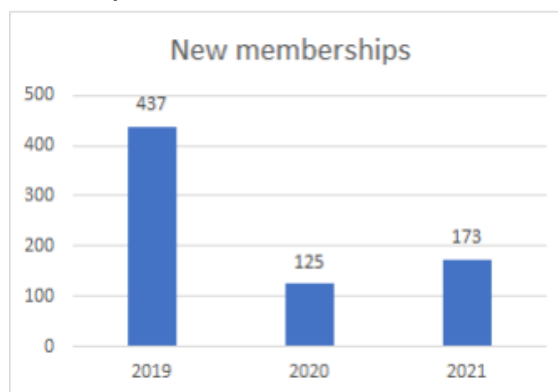
There are four toy libraries operating within the City of Port Phillip with varied membership bases for the 2020/21 FY including:

- Elwood Toy Library (177 regular memberships and 20 subsidised memberships for Health Care Card Holders).
- Middle Park Toy Library (39 regular memberships and 4 subsidised memberships for Health Care Card Holders).
- South Melbourne Toy Library (84 regular memberships and 10 subsidised memberships for Health Care Card Holders) They also have 6 Outreach Members. Outreach Memberships are provided at no cost (all costs are covered by the toy library).
- Port Melbourne Toy Library (58 regular memberships and 16 subsidised memberships for Health Care Card Holders).

COVID-19 restrictions impacted Toy Library membership wherein the first half of 2020/21 saw a decline in membership by 37%. However, the libraries responded to an existing community demand, and remained open for four out of six lockdowns for click and collect services. A recovery was seen in the second half of 2020/21 with 173 new members joining. The below chart indicates membership trend in the last three years:



Figure 17: Number of new memberships at Toy Libraries
Source: Toy Library Memberships



Maternal Child Health Service

In 2020/21, the MCH service received 1216 birth notifications and the service enrolled 1147 infants into the program. New enrolments from overseas and interstate also declined in this period due to international and boarder restrictions put in place due to COCID-19.

The program completed 9165 key age and stage (KAS) visits (of which 6 are usually undertaken in the child's first year of life and an additional 3 in the following years) and 480 3.5 year-old KAS consults. COVID-19 restrictions led to some families of older children (2 years and 3.5 years) declining a telehealth appointment preferring to wait for a face to face appointment, which may have resulted in less overall participation.

In 2020/21, 1661 children and mothers transferred to another service outside of the LGA or state (likely higher during COVID-19). 638 children and mothers transferred into the program.

Participation in the Maternal and Child Health service is voluntary. Regular reminders for missed visits are sent and family participation can vary between years.

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**Figure 18: MCH Key metrics**

Source: CDIS MCH Data

Metric	# Number
Total Birth Notifications	1216
Total Enrolments	1147 (% participation)
Total Number of KAS consults (Key age and stage visits: funded from home visit through to 3.5 years)	9165
Total Number of 3.5 yr KAS consults	480
Additional consults (outlined below).	2103
Total Number of Family Violence consults (extra consult from the routine MARAM screening – 7 questions re safety)	101
DNAs (did not attend)	911
Referrals (GPs, social worker, supported playgroup, paediatricians, FV worker, breastfeeding clinics)	947
Transfers In (moving in from outside LGA)	638
Transfer out	1661

The service conducted 2103 additional consults of which 15% (312 consults) related to breastfeeding, 11% (238) to failure to thrive, 10% (218 consults) to feeding review and 10% (206 consults) to enhanced maternal and child:

Reason for additional consult	# Number
Breastfeeding Difficulties	312
Failure to Thrive/Faltering growth	238
Feeding review	218
Enhanced Maternal and Child Health	206
Parenting support	195
Sleep and settling outreach	119
Developmental concern	79
Parent - Mental Health issues	53
Child Behaviour	49
Prematurity	35
Multiple Birth	30
Child Disability(physical/cognitive/emotional)	22
Baby sleep issues	21
Brigance	21
Developmental Delay	19
MIST vision test	16

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KAS Completion	14
Paediatric follow up	14
Multiple risk factors	12
Family Crisis	10
Family Violence	8
Newborn sleep issues	7
Parental disability (physical/cognitive/emotional)	7
Acute Illness	3
Unsettled Behaviour	3
Child Protection	2
Post Natal Depression	2
Case Conference	1
Chronic illness	1
Material/financial aid	1
Toddler Sleep disturbance	1
Toddler sleep issues	1
Other	383

MCH reports a number of measures via the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework (LGPRF) showing the services consistently meet and exceed targets set for infant enrolments and participation in the 4 week key age and stage visits, the overall service the community and by Aboriginal children:

	2020/21			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Participation in 4-week Key Age and Stage visit	102.71%	98.84%	97%	95.87%
Infant enrolments in MCH service	100.34%	101.16%	101%	101.0%
Participation in the MCH service	51.75%	51.42%	48.35%	87.38%
Participation in MCH service by Aboriginal children	64.86%	68.66%	69.44%	95.00%



Addressing the impacts of disadvantage

This section focusses on the service delivery to vulnerable children and families.

- In 2021, 77 children (or 15%) of all children who were placed at a Council-run or community-managed early childhood education and care facility had a health care card. This represents an increase of 19 children from the previous year and is the highest number of children who were associated with a health care card in the past five years.
- There has been a similar growth in the number of children (from 85 in 2020 to 116 in 2021) placed at a Council-run or community-managed early education and care facility who were associated with one or more vulnerability factors.
- Children associated with either a health care card or vulnerability factors were most commonly placed at either Coventry Children's Centre or Bubup Nairn Children's Centre.

Children's health and development are not exclusively based on their genetic or biological disposition but are strongly shaped by the social, economic and environmental conditions into which they are born and grow. These social conditions, known as the social determinants of health, ultimately work through biological pathways to shape our health and wellbeing. Key social determinants include: socio-economic status, educational attainment, employment status, poverty, geographic location, disability, gender, and social connectivity. Social determinants play a critical role in the first 1000 days as it is during this period that a number of vital skills and abilities develop.

The conditions under which families are raising young children have altered dramatically in the last few generations. Over the last several decades we have experienced a series of social, economic, demographic and technological changes that are unprecedented in their rapidity and scale. Dubbed the 'Great Acceleration', these changes have dramatically altered the conditions under which we are living and the social and physical health problems we are experiencing.

The benefits of these changes have not been evenly distributed: while most families have benefited, those with fewer resources have not, and are struggling to cope with the demands of parenting in a rapidly changing world. As a result, there are significant inequities in children's health and wellbeing.



These inequities follow social gradients: the more disadvantaged one's circumstances, the worse one's long term health and wellbeing outcomes are likely to be. Social gradients represent more than just disparities between the poor and the wealthy, but are continuous: at any given point along the socioeconomic continuum, one is likely to experience inferior health outcomes to those above them. For children, it is the circumstances in which they live, learn and develop that drive differential health and developmental outcomes: the more disadvantaged their circumstances, the poorer their health and developmental outcomes⁵.

Council has two core programs to access quality services for children experiencing factors associated with vulnerability:

- Early Years Assertive Outreach – this program works alongside local children's service providers and Council's Maternal and Child Health program to ensure more vulnerable children have access to access early education for their children
- Early Education Grant – the City of Port Phillip Early Education Grant has been set up as an added safety net to support families experiencing vulnerability to access additional subsidised childcare if they meet the eligibility criteria. It was initially established to ensure families who do not meet the Activity Test requirements for the Department of Education and Training, Child Care Subsidy are still able to access early education.

Early Years Assertive Outreach

Formally established in November 2021, following a pilot program which commenced in January 2021, this program works with families and local organisations to increase participation in early education and care services. The program aim is to ensure every child in the City of Port Phillip has access to quality early education. The program offers a one to one consultation with parents and children to determine support needs, informal discussions and secondary consultations with childcare centre staff, and collaborative work with other services to provide the best outcomes for families. The early years outreach worker can also provide assistance and referrals relating to family violence, mental health, social participation and attachment.

Early Education Grant (EEG)

Established in 2020, this program provides vulnerable children with access to subsidised early education where they are not able to meet the Activity Test requirements for the Department of Education and Training, Child Care Subsidy.

⁵ Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Early Childhood, Family Support and Health Care Services: An Evidence Review, 2019, Prepared for the City of Port Phillip



Through the grant, families may be eligible to access a second day per week of childcare and out of pocket costs if they can meet the following criteria. Families must:

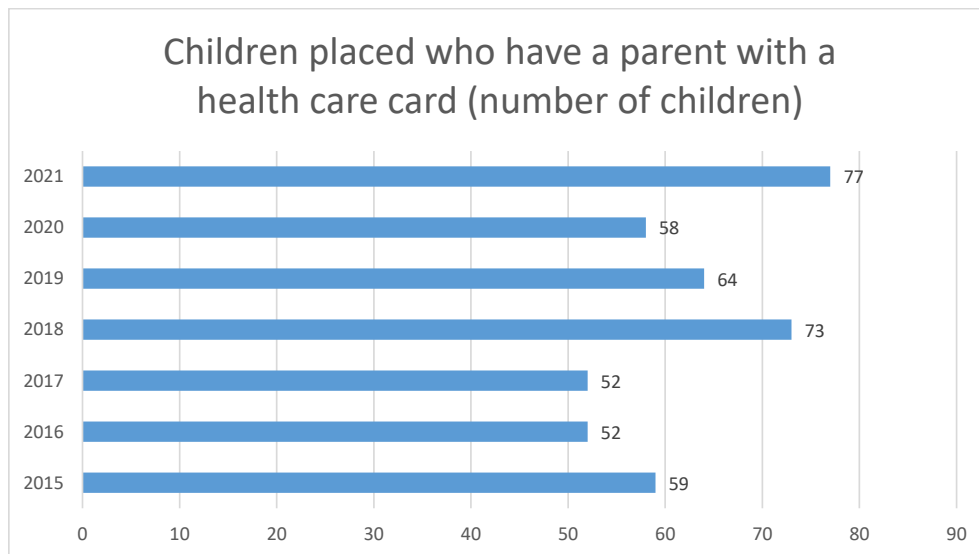
- Live in the City of Port Phillip
- Be experiencing a financial barrier to accessing an additional day
- Not be eligible for the Additional Child Care Subsidy or have tried and been unsuccessful
- Have exhausted all other funding options
- Family acknowledge and understand that the Early Education Grant will be funded for a maximum of one year and will be reviewed every 3 months (from the child’s start date).

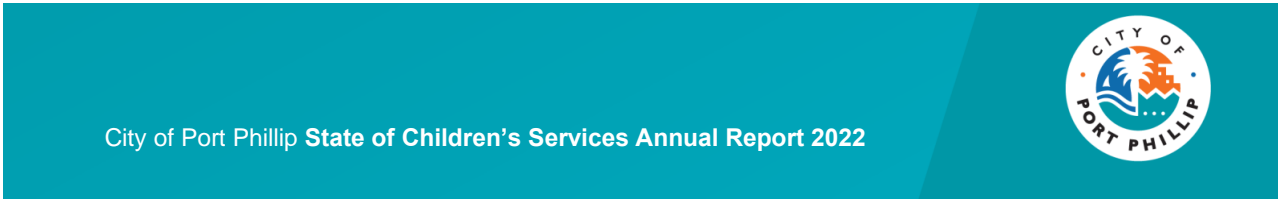
Established in 2020, the first year of the EEG was interrupted due to COVID-19 and associated restrictions. However, 2021 saw an increasing level of uptake with month-on-month increases of children receiving EEG, with the maximum at any one time being 10 children enrolled across 26 days in May 2021.

Access to early childhood education and care

In 2021, 77 children (or 15 %) of all children placed at a Council-run or community-managed early education and care facility had a health care card. This represents an increase of 19 children from the previous year and is the highest number of children who were associated with a health care card in the past five years. There are some indications that this is related to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemics whereby families lost jobs and income.

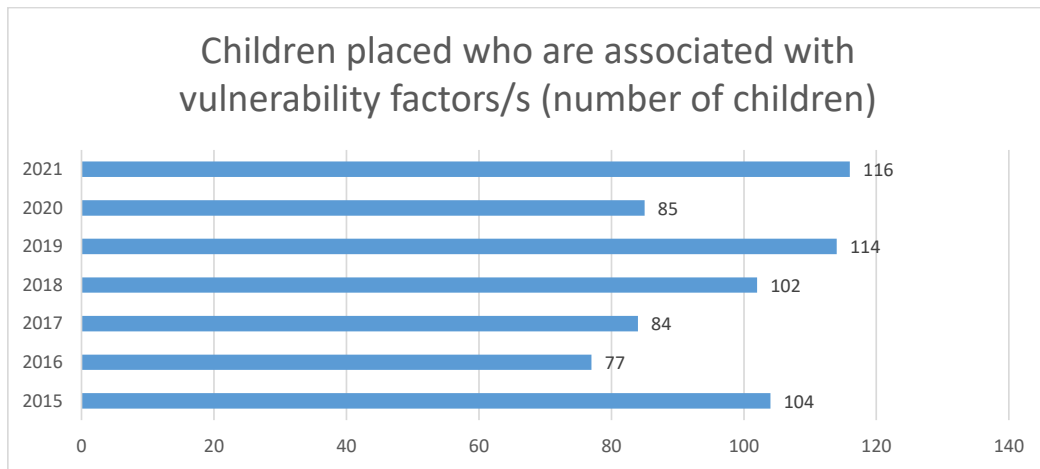
Figure 19: No of children placed who have a parent with a health care card
Source: Waitlist data





There has been a similar growth in the number of children (from 85 in 2020 to 116 in 2021) placed at a Council-run or community-managed early education and care facility who were associated with one or more vulnerability factors.

Figure 20: Number of children placed who are associated with vulnerability factors/s
Source: Waitlist data



Children associated with either a health care card or vulnerability factors were most commonly placed at either Coventry Children's Centre or Bubup Nairn Children's Centre.

Figure 21: Number of children placed who have a parent with a health care card, by Centre
Source: Waitlist data

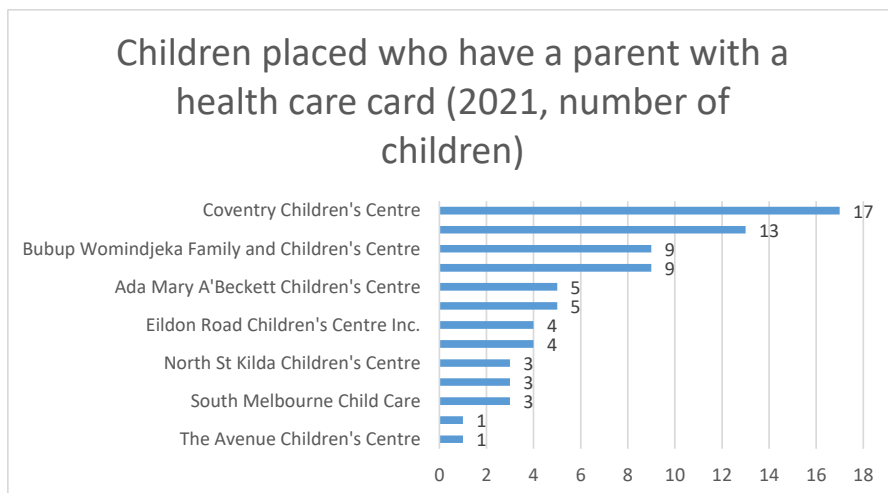




Figure 22: Number of children placed who are associated with a vulnerability factor, by Centre
Source: Waitlist data

