



**9.6 CHILDRENS SERVICES POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

**EXECUTIVE MEMBER: TONY KEENAN, INTERIM GENERAL MANAGER, COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**PREPARED BY: DANIELLE FRASER, PROGRAM MANAGER SERVICE TRANSFORMATION**

**1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To update Council on the progress of the Children's Services Policy development, Stage 1.
- 1.2 To seek Councillor's endorsement of the critical success factors and parameters for each policy objective that will guide the preparation of the draft Early Years' Service Response. The critical success factors and parameters are a cascade from the policy objectives that will narrow and focus the options and recommendations that will be outlined in the draft Early Years' Service Response.
- 1.3 To note the next steps in the Children's Services Policy development, which are:
  - 1.3.1 To return with a draft Early Years' Service Response report in early February 2019, with the intention of going out to Stage 2 community consultation in February/March 2019.
  - 1.3.2 To return to Council with a new Children's Services Policy report in May 2019 which will be informed by the Stage 2 consultation as well as service and facility analysis.
  - 1.3.3 The new Children's Service Policy once endorsed will guide the development of the Implementation Plans, which will include an Early Years' Services Facility Strategy.

**2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 2.1 On 5 September 2018 Council endorsed the key policy objectives that will underpin the new Children's Services Policy. The policy objectives were developed in consultation with community and providers of children's services.
- 2.2 Since then, Council officers have continued to engage with stakeholders including the Children's Services Reference Group and the Independent Providers Focus Group to gain input directly from parents and service providers when considering solutions to address and respond to the challenges and opportunities for children's services in the municipality.
- 2.3 Extensive research has been undertaken to inform the development of a draft Early Years' Service Response that makes recommendations on the implementation of the endorsed policy objectives.
- 2.4 Additionally, two further pieces of research are underway.
- 2.5 The first will gain a more detailed understanding of the early years education and care services market within the municipality and how it is performing in relation to the



changing expectations of families, changing legislative landscape and population growth.

- 2.6 This will examine affordability of services for all families; specifically:
- 2.6.1 supply and demand in relation to the growing population (including Fishermans Bend) to enable Council to be future-ready;
  - 2.6.2 distribution and geographic location of services to enable access to childcare throughout the municipality, and support planning;
  - 2.6.3 participation rates (particularly in St Kilda and South Melbourne) to ensure children experiencing vulnerability are supported to meet developmental milestones, and;
  - 2.6.4 the impact of Council-run services and subsidies on the overall childcare market.
- 2.7 The second piece of research will provide an overview of the most significant research and evidence that should inform policy in relation to the provision of early education and care services.
- 2.8 The further information from 2.6 and 2.7, will be factored into and inform the Stage 2 development of the new Children's Services Policy.
- 2.9 Council officers have commenced drafting a service response to address the key policy objectives. Critical to progressing this work was the development of decision-making criteria to narrow and focus the options and recommendations.
- 2.10 **Decision Making Criterion One - Policy Objectives**
- 2.10.1 Council endorsed key policy objectives on 5 September (Attachment A).
- 2.11 **Decision Making Criterion Two – Critical Success Factors**
- 2.11.1 At a workshop held with Councillors on 7 November 2018, the following Critical Success Factors were defined and are included in this report for endorsement as one of the 3 Decision Making Criteria:
- Positive market impact
  - Access for all
  - Financial sustainability
  - Ability to implement
  - Future focused
  - Legislative compliance
  - Meeting National Quality Standards
- 2.11.2 Supporting evidence or measures available for the Critical Success Factors are summarised in Attachment C.



## 2.12 Decision Making Criterion Three - Parameters for Response

- 2.12.1 This report presents the parameters (summarised in Attachment A) which have been developed by Council officers as the proposed third set of decision making criteria from which to frame the draft Early Years' Service Response.

### 3. RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 3.1 Notes the progress report on the development of the Children's Service Policy.
- 3.2 Approves the critical success factors and parameters for decision making in relation to each policy objective, as detailed in Attachment A and Attachment C, to guide the development of the draft Early Years' Service Response report.
- 3.3 Notes the next steps in the Children's Services Policy Development project:
  - 3.3.1 To return with a draft Early Years' Service Response report in early February 2019, with the intention of going out to Stage 2 community consultation in February/March 2019.
  - 3.3.2 To return to Council with a new Children's Services Policy report in May 2019 which will be informed by the Stage 2 consultation as well as service and facility analysis.
  - 3.3.3 The new Children's Service Policy once endorsed will guide the development of the Implementation Plans, which will include an Early Years' Services Facility Strategy.

### 4. KEY POINTS/ISSUES

#### Background

- 4.1 Council has had in place a Children's Services policy that was endorsed by Council on 22 February 2006.
- 4.2 Council commenced a review of early years education and care services in 2015.
- 4.3 Council provides significant investment in early education and care services.
- 4.4 Significant reforms to the way early education and care services are funded were introduced by both State and Commonwealth governments in 2018. These included a move to sector neutral, unit based funding and the promotion of a market based response to deliver early education and care services.
- 4.5 In response to these changes, Council adopted an Interim Childcare Policy 2018/19 on 7 February 2018 until a new policy is in place. The Interim Childcare Policy responded to changes in Australian Government's funding policy.
- 4.6 As part of this policy, Council introduced an Early Education Grant (EEG) for the 2018/19 year to establish a transition safety net to support retention to early years education and care for children in families who may be disadvantaged by the Australian Government's tightening of the Activity Test requirements for Child Care Subsidy (CCS) introduced from 1 July 2018.



- 4.6.1 Since 1 July 2018, two applications have been received and reviewed by the EEG Reference Group. Neither were eligible for the EEG at this time as the Grant process requires other avenues of funding for which the child may be eligible to be accessed first to avoid duplication.
- 4.6.2 Recent data collected from community based childcare services informs that families are, on the whole, being funded adequately via the new Australian Government Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and Additional Child Care Subsidy (child wellbeing - ACCS).
- 4.6.3 Council officers have invested resources into educative work to support Co-ordinators of Council and community based childcare services to understand the requirements of the funding and how to navigate the system.
- 4.6.4 There is a recognised lag in reviewing ACCS funding applications so to maintain continuity of care the State has a six-week safety net funding option in place as well. With the time lag there are still applications under review and it is expected that if rejected, Council will begin to receive applications for our EEG that meets the set Criterion.
- 4.6.5 The anticipated gap is likely to be children in families disadvantaged due to complex health, safety, social and/or housing issues that limit their capacity meet the Activity Test.
- 4.7 Formulation of Council's key policy objectives was based on the consolidated information Council officers collected from June to August 2018, from the community, the Children's Services Reference Group and the Independent Service Providers Focus Group. The policy objectives were endorsed by Council on 5 September 2018.
- 4.8 Council officers are developing a draft Service Response that will include service options and recommendations using the endorsed policy objectives and agreed critical success factors as the basis to assess the data and evidence. A further decision-making criteria of parameters has been developed to further narrow the frame for the service response.

#### **Parameters for Response**

- 4.9 There is significant policy, service, financial, equity and regulatory issues that need to be considered in developing a Children's Services Policy response that will be transparent, consistent, equitable, represents value for money and sound stewardship of Council assets and delivers on Council priorities.
- 4.10 Officers have developed these parameters for consideration by Council. They believe these will best deliver a Children's Services Policy that achieves these aims and meets the policy objectives set by Council.
- 4.11 Each parameter has been informed by the following:
  - 4.11.1 Policy objective
  - 4.11.2 The critical success factors



- 4.11.3 The major issues that will need to be addressed in meeting that policy objective
- 4.11.4 The levers available to Council to meet that objective.

**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.**

*4.12 Critical Success Factors addressed:*

- 4.12.1 Meeting National Quality Standards
- 4.12.2 Access for all
- 4.12.3 Positive impact on the market

*4.13 Issues*

- 4.13.1 The move towards a market system for early years education and care services has resulted in significant changes in how services are provided across the City. It has also meant that new providers have commenced to offer services across the City.
- 4.13.2 The City of Port Phillip directly operates five early year's education and care services across the City and provides Council owned properties for 11 community managed services.
- 4.13.3 In addition to the early year's education and care services detailed at 4.13.2, the City of Port Phillip provides premises and some subsidies for the operation of four community managed toy libraries. The City also provides network support and premises for approximately 90 community managed playgroups.
- 4.13.4 Early years education and care services in Australia are required to meet the National Quality Standards (NQS) and are re-assessed / rated approximately every three years thereafter.
- 4.13.5 Not all early years' education and care services in the City meet the National Quality Standards (NQS). Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) has identified that nearly 13 per cent of the service providers in Port Phillip are currently ranked as Working Towards NQS. This makes up approximately nine per cent of licenced spaces in the early years' education and care services in Port Phillip.
- 4.13.6 The *Access to Early Childhood Education in Australia: Insights from a qualitative study (2014)* report identifies the most significant barriers for early years' services are cost of services, lack of trust in formal care, distance to the services and lack of availability of places.
- 4.13.7 Overall, the market provides sufficient places to meet demand across the entire City, including specialist responses for children with special needs,



culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) families, indigenous families and families with complexity (homelessness, mental illness); however, there are some market failures evident. These are:

- a lack of capacity of some families to afford the gap payment between the government funding and fees
- a lack of knowledge and/or consistent information amongst providers as to how to access services for children and families from the CALD community
- a lack of assistance and outreach to enable children and families with highly complex needs to access additional funding and services
- a lack of information to the general community as to what services are available, in what location, with transparent information on fees

4.13.8 The City of Port Phillip provides a range of subsidies to some early years education and care services across the City. These are:

- direct funding of Council operated services above the income received from government and fees
- a quality subsidy provided to Council operated and some community managed services to assist them to meet NQS
- rent free premises to community managed services

4.13.9 Recently an Early Education Grant (see 4.6) was made available to families who meet eligibility criteria.

4.13.10 Port Phillip has a generally high-income population, with a median weekly household income of \$1,836. However there are pockets of disadvantage within the municipality (South Melbourne, St Kilda and Ripponlea). Despite the general higher income population, evidence shows that 11.4 per cent of this population segment are reporting a need for assistance and are experiencing episodes of financial stress.

4.13.11 Current Council subsidies are not targeted to overcome specific market failures. Except for EEG, all subsidies are provided to centres, not to individual families. This means that subsidies are equally provided to all families who access specific centres.

4.13.12 By way of example, Council operated services receive the largest operational subsidy from Council. 162 of the 370 families at Council operated services come from families with incomes greater than \$171,958. Nineteen of these families have incomes over and above the allocated Child Care Subsidy limit of \$350,000 (refer to Attachment B) and yet receive the benefit of the current Council subsidies provided to centres, as opposed to the families who need it most.



#### 4.14 Possible levers

- 4.14.1 Provide grants to families to overcome market failures.
- 4.14.2 Charge full cost recovery on fees for Council run services and provide subsidies to assist those who can't afford service access.
- 4.14.3 Council funds and/or provides information about early years' services for the City.
- 4.14.4 Council funds programs to enable families who can't access services because of capacity e.g. outreach support programs.

#### 4.15 Parameters for decision

- 4.15.1 Recognising that Council has limited financial resources, Council's ratepayer funded support for early years education and care services should be targeted at overcoming any market failures that exist, specifically:
  - barriers due to affordability
  - barriers due to lack of information or transparency
  - barriers due to capacity to access the system.
  - provision of specialist services that are needed and not provided by the market.
- 4.15.2 Council should use available levers to support all services across the municipality to meet or exceed the NQS.
- 4.15.3 Council subsidies will be available on a transparent basis to all eligible families in the City.

**Objective 2: Council will understand current and future needs of families in the City and influence the provision of Early Years services to meet the those needs.**

#### 4.16 Critical Success Factors addressed:

- 4.16.1 Positive market impact
- 4.16.2 Future focused
- 4.16.3 Ability to implement

#### 4.17 Issues

- 4.17.1 The Victorian Government is reforming the child and family services system and calling for the sector to respond by operating as a learning system – where services are backed by evidence, and are continually re-evaluated and refined to improve the outcomes for children and families.





- 4.17.2 There is a lack of publicly available quality, reliable and accessible data regarding participation of CALD, indigenous and families with complexities in Early Years Education and Care Services. We have had to undertake primary research to access this data, as full data is only available via Council-run services.
- 4.17.3 The Early Years Education and Care Services market provides sufficient spaces to meet current demand across the entire City; however, there is some market failure within sub-markets (refer to Attachment B - Early Years' Service Access Analysis):
- potential future lack of supply in St Kilda, Elwood and Ripponlea, and East St Kilda Neighbourhoods
  - potential lack of places for 0 to 3 years of age across the entire City
  - possible lack of supply of places on some days and timeslots
- 4.17.4 While not all services provide specialist responses, there are a range of service responses available across the City. For example, providing programs for specific groups (for example, children with disabilities, children from families experiencing homelessness) or services operated using a certain philosophy ( Reggio Emilia approach).
- 4.17.5 Early years education and care services places that do exist in the municipality are primarily available on Mondays and Fridays and within the 3-5 year old age group.
- 4.17.6 Given the market has responded to demand to date, it is likely that it will continue to support demand for places as the population increases.

#### *4.18 Possible levers*

- 4.18.1 Implement market facilitation grants.
- 4.18.2 Fund or directly operate programs to meet a lack of supply.
- 4.18.3 Use planning levers to encourage development in areas where there is unmet demand.
- 4.18.4 Provide information about early years education and care services across the City including vacancies, services provided, specialist offers and so on.

#### *4.19 Parameters for decision*

- 4.19.1 Council should establish settings that assist in the provision of, and access to, specialist services and responses, including services that provide programs for children from indigenous families, children from CALD backgrounds, children with disabilities and children from families with complex needs.





- 4.19.2 Council should consider policy and planning settings that will continue to enable the early years education and care services market to respond to and to adapt to changes in demand.
- 4.19.3 Council should consider ways that information can be provided to parents and the market regarding demand, service need and future capacity issues across the city.

**Objective 3: Early Years services will be financially sustainable and consistently aligned with relevant policies and legalisation at the local, state and federal level.**

*4.20 Critical Success Factors addressed:*

- 4.20.1 Legislative compliance
- 4.20.2 Financially Sustainable

*4.21 Issues*

- 4.21.1 Council now operates early years education and care services in a competitive and diverse market. These Council operated services are a significant business activity and are therefore subject to National Competition Policy (NCP). This requires Council to demonstrate how it complies with the policy.
- 4.21.2 Council-run services have a much greater unit cost in comparison to community-managed centres. There is no publicly available data of unit costs for private/independent providers.
- 4.21.3 Community-managed centres pay “peppercorn” rent. However, they do pay maintenance and infrastructure levies to Council. Advice on current subsidies provided by Council to community-managed centres (both rental and operating) is that we are compliant with NCP as they are not-for-profit organisations.
- 4.21.4 Many Council owned premises were built or acquired when different legislative and regulatory requirements were in place. Over time new building standards have been introduced. All Council owned premises currently comply with Building Codes. However, once a decision is taken to undertake significant building works at these premises, Council will be required to comply with the current Building Codes and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. This may be difficult and costly to achieve in some premises.

*4.22 Possible levers*

- 4.22.1 Find efficiencies and savings to bring costs of Council-managed early years education and care services on par with other providers.
- 4.22.2 Cease operating subsidies to Council-operated early years education and care services and charge full cost recovery to families.
- 4.22.3 Provide targeted subsidies to families to overcome any market failures.



- 4.22.4 Build in cost recovery to fund full cost of building upgrades and maintenance to Council-run services.
- 4.22.5 Cease operating Council-run services.
- 4.22.6 Invite tenders to operate services currently operated by Council.
- 4.22.7 Charge full cost recovery to cover building upgrades and maintenance to community managed services operating in Council facilities.
- 4.22.8 Council funds upgrade and maintenance from Council reserves.

*4.23 Parameters for decision*

- 4.23.1 The policy will ensure that City of Port Phillip (Council) complies with its legislative obligations.
- 4.23.2 The policy will aim to ensure that, over time, Council operated services will operate at a “break even” service with full cost recovery, including cost of upgrading and maintaining buildings.
- 4.23.3 The policy will ensure that, over time, the full cost of upgrading and maintaining Council owned premises will be funded.
- 4.23.4 Any Council subsidies will be available to overcome any market failures and these will be provided on an equitable and transparent basis for families and services.

**Objective 4: Council will encourage collaboration across all Early Years’ services.**

*4.24 Critical Success Factors addressed:*

- 4.24.1 Meeting National Quality Standards
- 4.24.2 Positive market impact
- 4.24.3 Future focused
- 4.24.4 Access for all
- 4.24.5 Ability to implement

*4.25 Issues*

- 4.25.1 Not all services across the City collaborate with other early years education and care services or allied support programs. This means some children are not accessing available services.
- 4.25.2 Evidence suggests that integrated services deliver better outcomes, particularly for vulnerable families.



*4.26 Possible levers*

- 4.26.1 Use planning and coordination to encourage integrated services across the sector.
- 4.26.2 Fund or co-invest to develop more Hubs with integrated design.
- 4.26.3 Support “virtual” hubs through stronger service collaboration.
- 4.26.4 Repurpose existing buildings, where possible, to become Integrated Early Years Hubs.
- 4.26.5 Provide information / knowledge brokering.
- 4.26.6 Facilitate networking events or professional development services where sector synergies can occur.

*4.27 Parameters for decisions*

- 4.27.1 The policy will facilitate avenues for providers across the City to collaborate, particularly with other relevant family and children services.
- 4.27.2 The policy will explore what available levers that Council could use to encourage the development of further integrated hubs in the right locations across the City.

**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.**

*4.28 Critical Success Factors addressed:*

- 4.28.1 Positive market impact
- 4.28.2 Access for all
- 4.28.3 Ability to implement

*4.29 Issues*

- 4.29.1 Data needed for service planning is patchy and out of date.
- 4.29.2 There is a lack of easily accessed information for parents regarding early years education and care services in the City, including fee levels.
- 4.29.3 There is a wait list service available for Council run and community managed early years education and care services places (via the centralised childcare waitlist), but this does not include private providers or Kindergarten.

*4.30 Possible levers*

- 4.30.1 Operate/fund a centralised point of quality information for parents.



- 4.30.2 Generate awareness and promote or support the promotion of all early years' services across the municipality.
- 4.30.3 Provide funding for initiatives that support the provision and sharing of information for all early year's services.
- 4.30.4 Council funds programs to enable families who can't access services because of barriers other than cost alone (for example Mental Illness, Homelessness or Family Violence).

*4.31 Parameters for decisions*

- 4.31.1 The policy will ensure transparent and accessible information about early years education and care services is available. Test the feasibility of including available places and fee levels charged.
- 4.31.2 The policy will ensure assistance for those who are not able to access this information.

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

*4.32 Critical Success Factors addressed:*

- 4.32.1 Legislative compliance
- 4.32.2 Access for all
- 4.32.3 Future focused
- 4.32.4 Financial sustainability

*4.33 Issues*

- 4.33.1 As detailed at 4.21.4, renovations or upgrade to some buildings will trigger compliance requirements for building codes and DDA compliance.
- 4.33.2 While Council owned premises are currently compliant with codes and legislation, some buildings are not at standard expected of a contemporary early year's education and care service. A number of services are not accessible for parents and children with disabilities.
- 4.33.3 The costs to upgrade all buildings is significant and not fully funded.
- 4.33.4 A few buildings that require significant work only have a small capacity for places, meaning they may be unable to deliver sufficient places to operate a financially viable service. Upgrading these buildings to meet building codes and DDA standards would further reduce useable space at some services.
- 4.33.5 Our assets are struggling to meet current demand and functionality, this issue will only increase with population growth.



- 4.33.6 If integrated hubs are best practice, many existing buildings could not allow for this as sites are too small to enable an integrated building onsite.

*4.34 Possible levers*

- 4.34.1 Invest in upgrades using Council reserves.
- 4.34.2 Commence charging a building levy at council owned services to establish a refurbishment fund.
- 4.34.3 Sell Council properties to Community-managed services.
- 4.34.4 Gift Council properties to Community-managed services.
- 4.34.5 Sell Council assets on the open market where relevant and appropriate.
- 4.34.6 Assist with finding new premises.
- 4.34.7 Co-invest with partners to develop new hubs.
- 4.34.8 Explore using planning incentives to encourage development of integrated hubs.
- 4.34.9 Charge commercial rents to community-managed centres.

*4.35 Parameters for decision*

- 4.35.1 The policy will aim to ensure that, over time, all Council owned premises will be at standard expected of a contemporary children's service and a standard consistent with Council policies.
- 4.35.2 Any council owned premises should be carbon neutral.

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

*4.36 Critical Success Factors addressed:*

- 4.36.1 Ability to implement

*4.37 Issues*

- 4.37.1 Many of Council owned and operated services are unable to provide increased access to natural environments onsite, but they do have access to natural elements in the surrounding community space.
- 4.37.2 Access to natural spaces was a common theme from parents and children in consultations.

*4.38 Possible levers*

- 4.38.1 Adventure playground upgrades.



4.38.2 Foreshore programs that educate children in nature.

4.38.3 Open spaces, parks and playgrounds.

4.38.4 When early years education and care service facilities are upgraded, natural environment play areas can be incorporated into the design process.

*4.39 Parameters for decisions*

4.39.1 The policy will aim to ensure natural environments for all children accessing early years education and care services in the City of Port Phillip.

4.39.2 The policy will ensure Council uses its levers to improve access to natural environment in the municipality, especially for parents with prams.

**There are a range of issues to be considered in delivering the policy objectives.**

4.40 To address these issues, Council officers have been working to understand:

- The role of each level of government as it relates to children's services.
- The history of early years services, buildings and funding in the municipality.
- The changing legislative landscape and compliance with relevant legislation.
- The municipal early years education and care services market and how Council subsidies may impact on the independent, not for profit and private providers of childcare and kindergarten.
- The performance of all Port Phillip childcare centres and kindergartens against the National Quality Standards and options for Council to support all centres to 'meet' or 'exceed' expectations.
- The demographic profile of families in the municipality to understand the prevalence of disadvantage and develop options to support low-income families and families and children involved with Child Protection and Orange Door.
- Population growth and understanding how quickly and where additional places will be required to match population growth.
- Why kindergarten participation is the lowest in the state and what options are available to improve this.
- What level of investment is required to ensure children's services buildings are safe, compliant and fit for purpose.
- The current service model, its strengths and limitations, and what alternative service models and levels have the potential to ensure value for money for ratepayers.



## 5. CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDERS

- 5.1 Council promoted Stage 1 engagement to approximately 10,000 Port Phillip residents, including children, through various channels. Face-to-face engagement occurred through a combination of drop-in sessions and targeted workshops (12 in total) in Stage 1 engagement and has continued with service providers.
- 5.2 Council officers have continued to engage with community, families and service providers to develop the draft service response. All stakeholders are encouraged to provide feedback throughout the policy development process via the [Children@portphillip.vic.gov.au](mailto:Children@portphillip.vic.gov.au) email account or through the HaveYourSay portal.

## 6. LEGAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The new Children's Services Policy will aim to ensure compliance with a range of legislative and regulatory requirements, including:
  - 6.1.1 Building Code of Australia
  - 6.1.2 Occupational Health and Safety Legislation
  - 6.1.3 Disability Discrimination Act 1992
  - 6.1.4 Education and Care Services National Regulations and Education and Care Services National Law Act
  - 6.1.5 National Education and Care Quality Standards; and
  - 6.1.6 National Competition Policy.

## 7. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 7.1 The Children's Services Policy Development project is being delivered within the allocated budget.

## 8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 8.1 N/A.

## 9. COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 9.1 Council has always maintained its commitment to social justice and continued support for vulnerable members of the community who are impacted by:
  - higher levels of drug and alcohol dependency, and mental illness
  - increase in transitional housing
  - issues with support in childcare centres
  - difficulty for families experiencing vulnerability accessing children's services despite research saying they gain the most benefit





- difficulties associated with attending school without adequate English
- difficulties with access and support for children with special needs

9.2 There is a strong and passionate connection between the community and the children's services provided and supported by Council, with many of these services being delivered through a community managed model. Council is committed to genuine community engagement to ensure the impact of any decision on community is fully understood.

9.3 Council will continue to support vulnerable families and will seek the views of diverse sectors of the community to inform any decisions made in relation to the development of a new policy.

## **10. ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICY**

10.1 This report aligns with Strategic Direction 1 in the Council Plan: "We embrace difference, and people belong", particularly aligned with Council's commitment to "providing access to services that support the health and wellbeing of our growing community".

10.2 One of Council's priorities is to "Complete the review of children's services to determine Council's role in early childhood education and care." Council officers are reviewing all children's services and have developed an evidence based service response for Stage 2 community engagement and analysis.

10.3 The Interim Childcare Policy 2018 was adopted by Council in July 2018. The new Children's Services Policy will replace the interim policy.

## **11. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**

### **11.1 TIMELINE**

11.1.1 5 December – Council endorses the draft parameters to progress the development of the draft Early Years' Service Response paper.

11.1.2 December 2018 to April 2019 – Stage 2 service analysis.

11.1.3 February 2019 – Audit and Risk Committee Review.

11.1.4 February 2019 – Report to Council with draft Early Years' Service Response paper to go to community consultation and engagement.

11.1.5 February and March 2019 – Stage 2 community consultation and engagement.

11.1.6 May 2019 – new Children's Services Policy to Council.

11.1.7 2019 – Following endorsement of the new policy an implementation plan and facility strategy will be presented to Council.



## ORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL 5 DECEMBER 2018

### 11.2 COMMUNICATION

11.2.1 A strategic communications plan is in place to ensure the community and all relevant stakeholders are kept informed throughout the process.

11.2.2 A Stage 2 community engagement plan is currently being developed.

### 12. OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT INTEREST

12.1 The Program Manager involved in the preparation of this report has a direct interest in the matter with a child attending one of the Council-run services.

**TRIM FILE NO:** 16/17/13

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Attachment A - Key Policy Objectives and Identified Parameters
2. Attachment B - Early Years' Services Access Analysis
3. Attachment C - Methodology for Critical Success Factor Assessment