

Stage 2 engagement report - Appendices

Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey results

Appendix 2: Verbatim survey comments, online comments submitted and emailed submissions from individuals

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APPENDIX 1: SURVEY RESULTS

Note, not all survey respondents responded to each question.

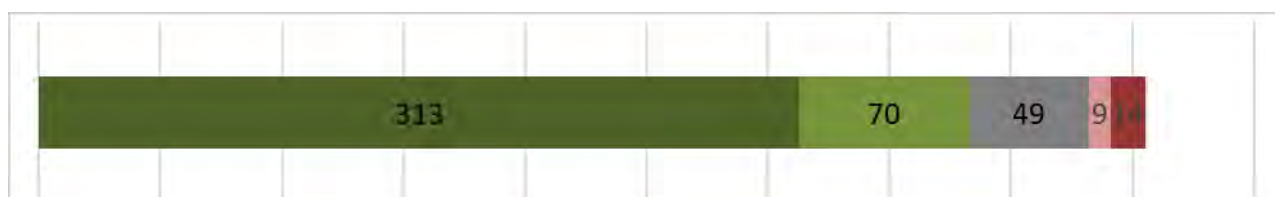
Policy recommendation 1.1 Create a new grant program to provide a financial subsidy for families experiencing ongoing and situational vulnerability and disadvantage. This subsidy will be available for all eligible City of Port Phillip community members accessing any Early Years' Service in the City.



88% of respondents somewhat or strongly support. 3% are somewhat or strongly against.

■ Strongly support ■ Somewhat support ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat against ■ Strongly against ■ Not applicable

Policy recommendation 1.2 Support Child Safe Standards implementation across all early years' services (especially toy libraries and playgroups) through an education and capacity-building program.



84% of respondents somewhat or strongly support. 5% are somewhat or strongly against.

■ Strongly support ■ Somewhat support ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat against ■ Strongly against ■ Not applicable

Policy recommendation 1.3 Fund an early intervention outreach role to work with relevant service providers in the City (child protection, homelessness, mental health, family violence) to increase participation of vulnerable children in early childhood education services, especially kindergarten services.

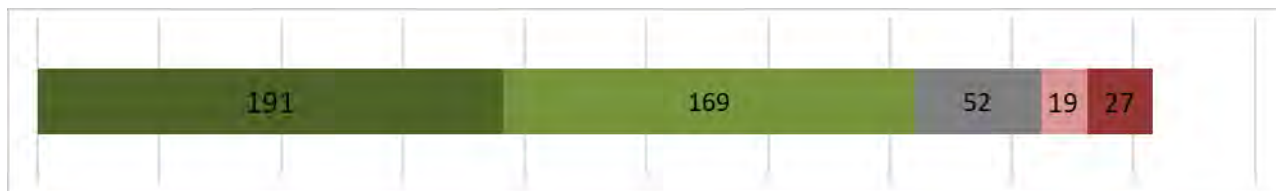


87% of respondents somewhat or strongly support. 7% are somewhat or strongly against.

■ Strongly support ■ Somewhat support ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat against ■ Strongly against ■ Not applicable

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Policy recommendation 1.4 Develop a Children's Services website that will provide information on all children's services in the City. This will include services provided, vacancies, specialist expertise, fee levels, educational approaches, target groups served and more. Participation in the website should be a condition for services to receive Council grants.

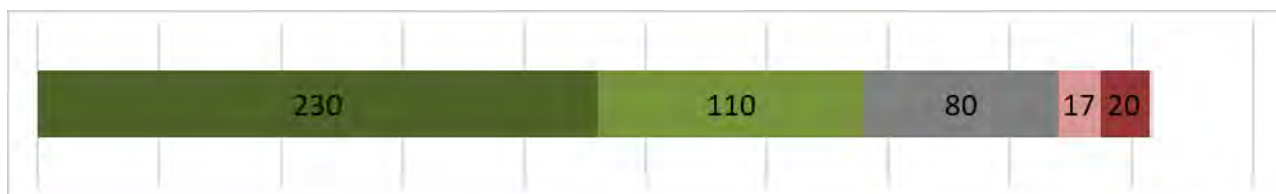


79% of respondents somewhat or strongly support. 10% are somewhat or strongly against.

■ Strongly support ■ Somewhat support ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat against ■ Strongly against ■ Not applicable

Policy recommendation 2.1 Review and update the service model for toy libraries to include:

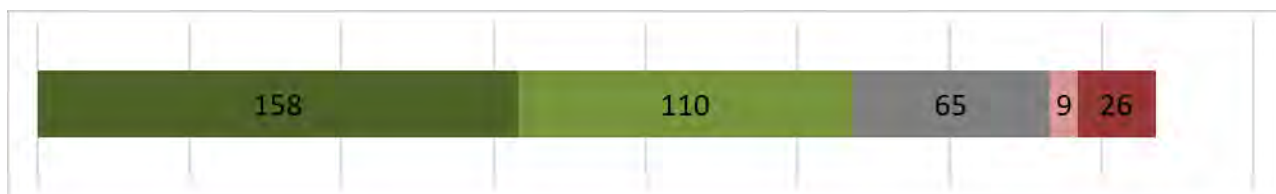
- Review funding model and operating subsidy to increase operating hours at current toy library sites to increase access and availability to services for residents now and into the future in existing Port Phillip areas.
- Develop one new toy library site in Fishermans Bend to service the growing population, as part of an integrated hub.



74% of respondents somewhat or strongly support. 8% are somewhat or strongly against.

■ Strongly support ■ Somewhat support ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat against ■ Strongly against ■ Not applicable

Policy recommendation 2.2 Monitor, track, encourage and report on the market response to childcare demand.



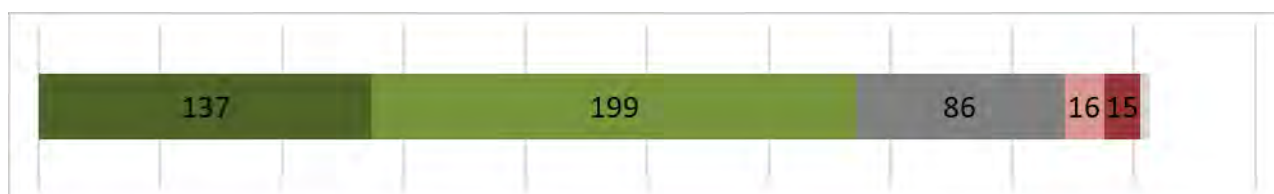
73% of respondents somewhat or strongly support. 10% are somewhat or strongly against.

■ Strongly support ■ Somewhat support ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat against ■ Strongly against ■ Not applicable

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Policy recommendation 2.3 Review and update the service model for playgroups to include:

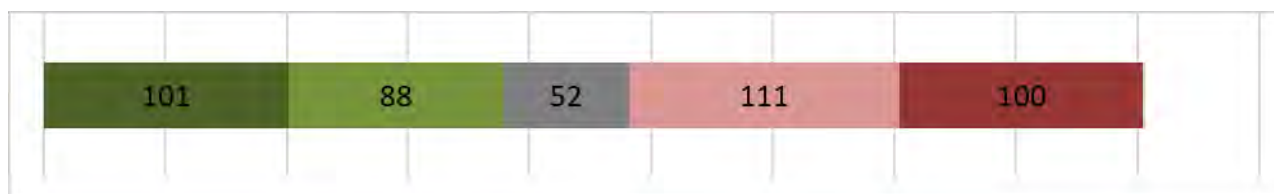
- A dedicated, or several functional multipurpose, playgroup space/s to be considered in Fishermans Bend, as part of an integrated hub.
- An additional playgroup or children's multipurpose space in the north end of Port Phillip to be considered (South Melbourne or Port Melbourne neighbourhoods).
- Make available the playgroup rooms in Bubup Nairn Family and Children's Centre across five days of the week and transition other programs into other Family Services Rooms in the building to increase availability and capacity.



74% of respondents somewhat or strongly support. 7% are somewhat or strongly against.

■ Strongly support ■ Somewhat support ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat against ■ Strongly against ■ Not applicable

Policy recommendation 2.4 With the addition of funded three-year-old Kindergarten, consider transitioning current Council assets into kindergarten facilities to meet future demand where relevant, especially where the private market is meeting the demand/need for childcare services in that area.



42% of respondents somewhat or strongly support. 47% are somewhat or strongly against

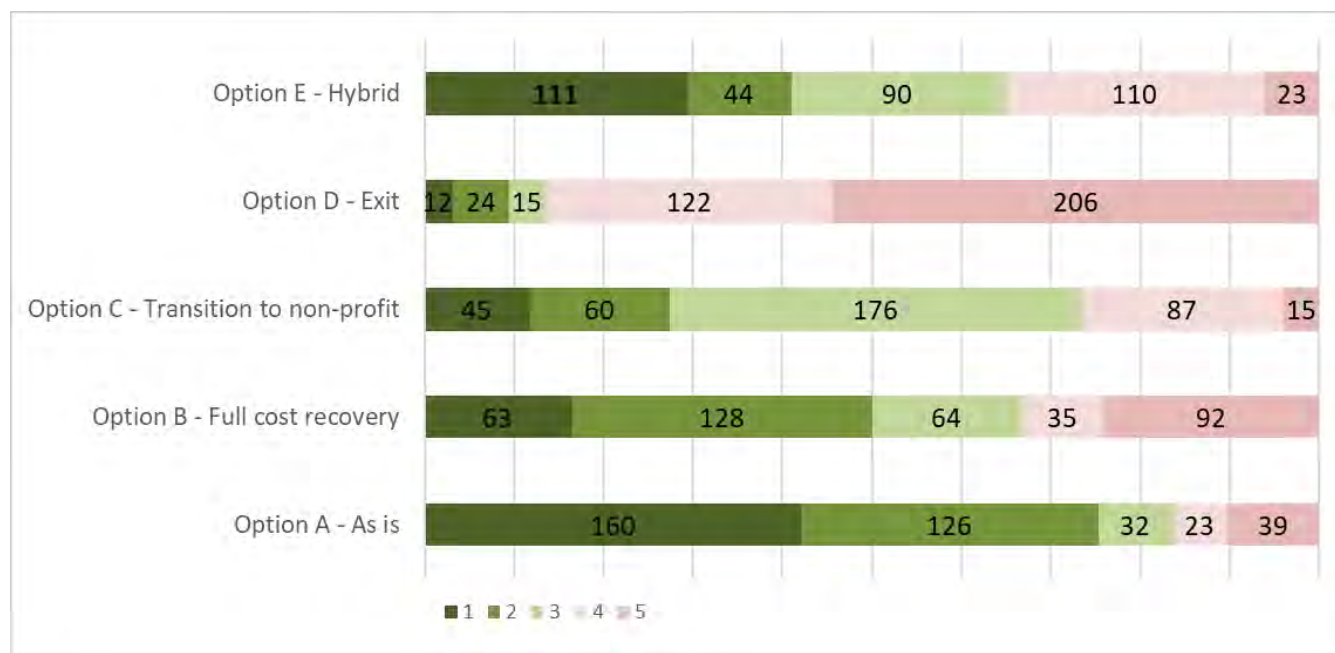
■ Strongly support ■ Somewhat support ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat against ■ Strongly against ■ Not applicable

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Policy recommendation 3.1 Council to decide the future service model for childcare services from five policy options:

- Option A - Council continues operating and subsidising childcare services as is.
- Option B - Council continues operating services, but at full cost recovery.
- Option C - Council ceases operating Council-run childcare services and transition services to not-for-profit providers.
- Option D - Council ceases operating Council-run services and sells or transitions assets for other Council purposes.
- Option E - Council chooses a hybrid model based on above options.

All respondents (n 391)



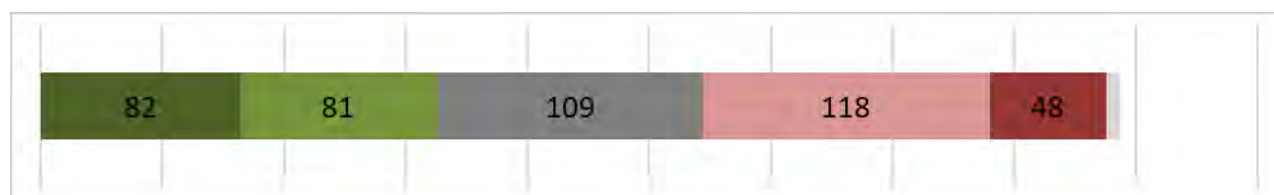
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Respondents that selected they were a user of a Council-run centre (n 164)



Policy recommendation 3.2

Review all funding, subsidy and levy arrangements to ensure return on investment and KPI deliverables for acquittal purposes



37% of respondents somewhat or strongly support. 38% are somewhat or strongly against

Strongly support Somewhat support Neutral Somewhat against Strongly against Not applicable

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Policy recommendation 4.1 Facilitate collaborative and collegiate relationships with early years' networks:

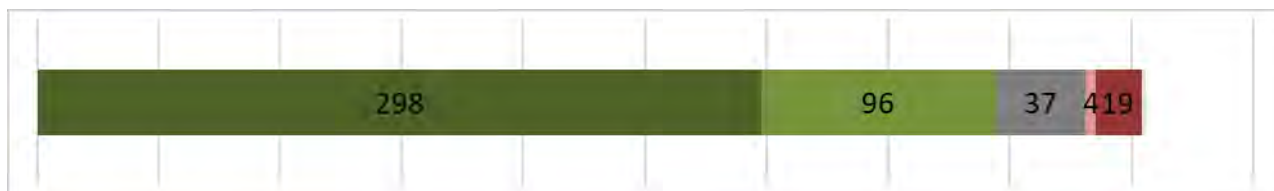
- Identify professional development needs for educators (including assistance in sourcing bulk discounts for training and providing free training room space).
- Childcare staff to visit and learn from centres in the municipality or within Melbourne that are consistently receiving an 'Exceeding' or 'Excellent' NQS rating, encouraging a 'community of practice'.
- These recommendations to apply to all providers, including independent and private providers.
- Support of Educational Leaders and networking across services.



87% of respondents somewhat or strongly support. 4% are somewhat or strongly against.

■ Strongly support ■ Somewhat support ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat against ■ Strongly against ■ Not applicable

Policy recommendation 4.2 Support the development of a kindergarten network to provide collaborative practice and integrated services that inform pedagogy and practice, for example approved provider responsibilities, professional development, quality referrals and transition to school programs.



87% of respondents somewhat or strongly support. 5% are somewhat or strongly against.

■ Strongly support ■ Somewhat support ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat against ■ Strongly against ■ Not applicable

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Policy recommendation 5.1 Proactively create and promote opportunities for families with children to meet other families and develop social connections through such things as community events and parents' workshops.



83% of respondents somewhat or strongly support. 3% are somewhat or strongly against.

■ Strongly support ■ Somewhat support ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat against ■ Strongly against ■ Not applicable

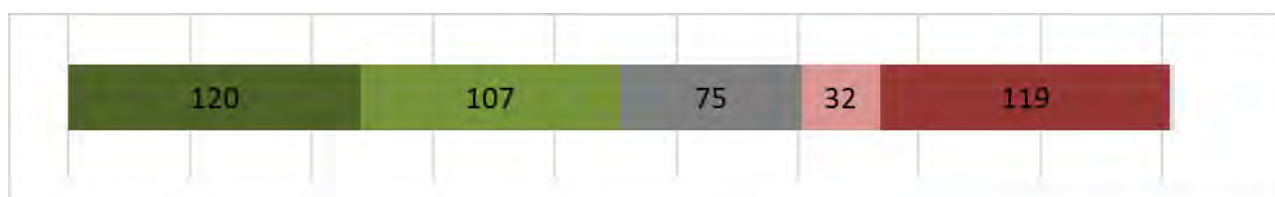
Policy recommendation 5.2 Improve communications about the availability of, and access to, all early years' services, especially kindergarten to culturally and linguistically diverse communities.



84% of respondents somewhat or strongly support. 5% are somewhat or strongly against.

■ Strongly support ■ Somewhat support ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat against ■ Strongly against ■ Not applicable

Policy recommendation 5.3 Utilise approved state funding to scope the creation of an effective and centralised municipal-wide enrolment system for community-run and independent kindergartens in Port Phillip. This will require significant consultation with service providers.



50% of respondents somewhat or strongly support. 33% are somewhat or strongly against.

■ Strongly support ■ Somewhat support ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat against ■ Strongly against ■ Not applicable

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Policy recommendation 5.4 Develop a Memorandum of Understanding for playgroups with guidelines regarding Size and inclusion; Available support for volunteers, committees and parents; Sustainability, including sharing of resources between groups and recycling



70% of respondents somewhat or strongly support. 7% are somewhat or strongly against.

■ Strongly support ■ Somewhat support ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat against ■ Strongly against ■ Not applicable

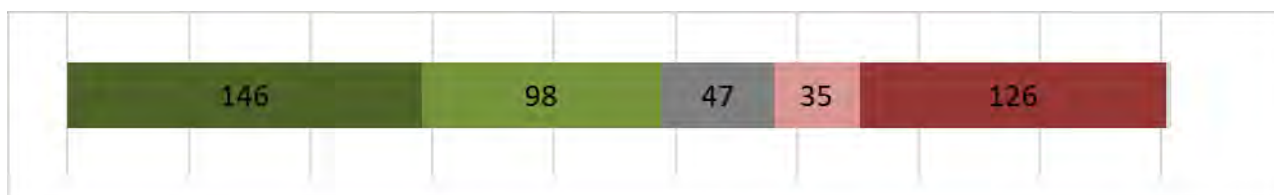
Policy recommendation 5.5 Develop a centralised portal and communication strategy as part of the Customer Experience and Technology Transformation project, and work with children's service providers and families to establish the best way for families to receive the information they need, in the way they need it, when they need it.



51% of respondents somewhat or strongly support. 10% are somewhat or strongly against.

■ Strongly support ■ Somewhat support ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat against ■ Strongly against ■ Not applicable

Policy recommendation 5.6 Improve the current childcare waitlist and investigate expanding it to include private and independent centres in order to provide families with better information about places for children under the age of three, as well as to inform short- and medium-term planning for childcare



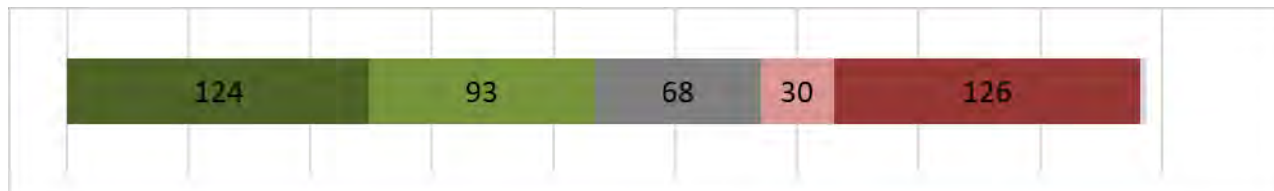
54% of respondents somewhat or strongly support. 36% are somewhat or strongly against.

■ Strongly support ■ Somewhat support ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat against ■ Strongly against ■ Not applicable

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Policy recommendation 6.1 Develop an Early Year's Services Facility Framework that will deliver the following outcomes:

- All assets to meet legislative and building compliance over the life of the strategy.
- All assets able to receive co-contribution funding from state government. This will require all assets to meet a minimum of 66 places.



49% of respondents somewhat or strongly support. 35% are somewhat or strongly against.

■ Strongly support ■ Somewhat support ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat against ■ Strongly against ■ Not applicable

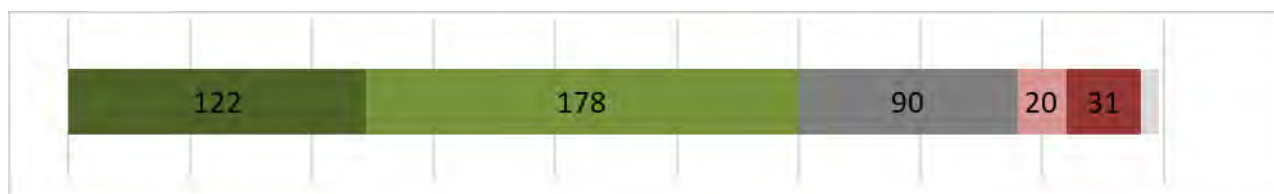
Policy recommendation 6.2 Work with all community-managed services over time to implement the framework outlined above.



50% of respondents somewhat or strongly support. 13% are somewhat or strongly against

■ Strongly support ■ Somewhat support ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat against ■ Strongly against ■ Not applicable

Policy recommendation 6.3 Ensure additional facilities for services and consolidate existing services if required to meet functionality and compliance are incorporated into integrated facility hubs to address multiple service demands. Council will optimise opportunities for Major Capital Works grant applications available from Department of Education and Training for the building of integrated service hubs, especially on any new school sites, such as in Fishermans Bend.



68% of respondents somewhat or strongly support. 12% are somewhat or strongly against

■ Strongly support ■ Somewhat support ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat against ■ Strongly against ■ Not applicable

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Policy recommendation 7.1 Develop model for optimising access to existing assets in the city such as parks, beaches, and adventure playgrounds.



90% of respondents somewhat or strongly support. 5% are somewhat or strongly against

■ Strongly support ■ Somewhat support ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat against ■ Strongly against ■ Not applicable

Policy recommendation 7.2 Advocate for the promotion of outdoor learning environments and programs that promote children's connection to nature and environmental sustainability practices, for example Clean up Port Phillip Day, Be Out There, Let's G.O (Get outside), and Indigenous nature-based cultural programs.



89% of respondents somewhat or strongly support. 5% are somewhat or strongly against.

■ Strongly support ■ Somewhat support ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat against ■ Strongly against ■ Not applicable

Policy recommendation 7.3 Develop a minimum design guideline for future playground works/upgrades at childcare centres that can be tailored for each site and implemented in stages, including investigating the development or suitability of nature and sensory play environments within open space settings for excursion purposes, for example developing bush kindergarten setting/s in the municipality.



88% of respondents somewhat or strongly support. 6% are somewhat or strongly against.

■ Strongly support ■ Somewhat support ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat against ■ Strongly against ■ Not applicable

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Policy recommendation 7.4 Work with early years' networks to consult and promote the range of opportunities to incorporate nature and sensory play into their service settings with supported funding opportunities.



86% of respondents somewhat or strongly support. 4% are somewhat or strongly against.

■ Strongly support ■ Somewhat support ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat against ■ Strongly against ■ Not applicable

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Appendix 2: Verbatim comments

The following provides the verbatim comments provided by survey respondents. Personal or information deemed offensive has been redacted.

| Contribution ID | Comment |
|-----------------|---|
| 14215 | Let parents look after the children or have fewer of them. Why should I fund other people children? |
| 14216 | I don't know why we are paying rates when City of Port Phillip constantly wants to stop funding human services. This is why we pay rates so that human services are provided in our community. So disappointed by the City of Phillip. Values do not a line with the community. |
| 14219 | Early childhood professionals should be remunerated for the work they do and their qualifications paid in equivalent to those of male dominated industries and professions. |
| 14232 | As a parent in The Avenue Child care centre, my connection with the community has deepened and my interaction with council matters has increased. For a financially viable organisation, the facilities are fantastic It would be a shame for centres such a these to endangered - for the children and parents but also for the council and city. |
| 14237 | <p>Since there are more kindergartens than spots for 0-3 age group, an idea would be that council operates more places/council managed centres for 0-3 yrs than kinder spots. le turn more rooms into 0-3 places</p> <p>This could alleviate pressure and assist those parents looking to return to work. Conduct an analysis of all the centres(council managed, community run and private centres) to indicate the percentage that each of them have of vulnerable or disadvantaged families. Are these equal or do council managed centres have a higher percentage? Why? Can this assist in hence meeting the guidelines for the national competition policy for council operated centres?</p> <p>Breaking the barriers of social classes through early childhood education is important. How can it be ensured that the vulnerable families can be supported to attend and stay.in council and community and private centres?</p> <p>For the waitlist: Make each of the centres vacancies who are on the waitlist known to the external community on a weekly basis, might be a good way to generate awareness and info for prospective families looking for care.</p> |
| 14242 | <p>My son recently had his 3.5 year check up at the Maternal and Child Health service at Poets Grove. I would like to provide some feedback on this experience which may inform your service model for the future.</p> <p>I do not feel the current model of conducting the Brigance assessment supports children socially and emotionally, and does not maximize the potential for them to demonstrate their full understanding. My son is very shy and apprehensive in new situations. While the new nurse we had was lovely, patient and very accommodating, it took a long while for my son to warm up. As he has articulation and pronunciation difficulties, he shut down very quickly and wanted me to answer for him when he realised the nurse didn't understand him. She was not able to complete the assessment or get an accurate picture of his abilities. The accuracy of the assessment was totally reliant on his social and emotional confidence with new situations.</p> <p>Two years ago my daughter was offered the option of having the Brigance assessment in her childcare setting at Treehouse Early Learning Centre in St Kilda as part of an outreach program. The fact that this was in her familiar surroundings, with the support of her kindergarten teacher/myself meant that she was able to overcome her shyness quickly and engage in the tasks with confidence.</p> <p>I was not informed nor made aware that the nurse conducting this assessment was</p> |

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| | <p>someone neither of us had met before; I would have been willing to reschedule the assessment for a time when our previous nurse was still available.</p> <p>I understand this would have made little difference to my son, who has a very vague memory of his last visit 18 months ago, but the relationship the nurse has with families is also an integral part of giving feedback and advice which can, at times, be of a sensitive nature. My own certainty with the situation and familiarity with the nurse would also have had a more positive impact on my son's experience.</p> <p>I hope this feedback is constructive and helps inform your future direction.</p> |
| 14243 | As a NFP organisation whose clientele are low-income, CALD and otherwise disadvantaged residents of the City of Port Phillip, we see a demonstrable need for appropriate, inclusive and financially accessible children's services. |
| 14245 | I'm strongly against changing the relationship between the council and community run not for profit childcare centres. They are doing a fabulous job and provide a fabulous service. I would hate to see the market being dominated by private centres. The families and the children would miss out in this scenario. The value of these sites should not be relevant in the decision making process, more the benefit to the families and children accessing these sites. |
| 14247 | When you run the information sessions they are always outside of daycare hours. How can I attend, as a single parent? I can't afford babysitting. You need to run sessions during daycare hours also or else offer child minding for single parents so we can get the info we need. Otherwise develop info packs that you can email to excluded single parents |
| 14248 | Council owned and/or run long day care centres are a vital part of life for many families in the municipality. The connection to Council provides many of these services with their highly regarded reputations and this is something that should continue, albeit with a high standard of facilities at affordable costs both for centres to run and for families to afford. |
| 14258 | <p>♥ 1. Get the Survey RIGHT!!!</p> <p>♠ 2. Quit the focus on cash</p> <p>♦ 3. Ask The Kids with Parental Consent</p> <p>♣ 4. (Redacted) ACTIVELY LISTEN TO KIDS!!! or Create Monsters Like Me</p> |
| 14276 | State supported initiatives are imperative. This is about offering as many options as possible to a growing population (which govt encourages) |
| 14289 | This is a confusing survey design and contains a 'wish list' of things to support. I am very happy with the childcare and educators at North St Kilda Childcare. |
| 14312 | <p>The Council should consider charging a fairer fee. Centrelink pays the centres the fee for a full day (in most cases 10-11 hrs/day) however most of the families have their children in childcare for 6-7hrs. This is a waste of financial resources. There should be a system that allows families to pay for the number of hours they spend in the centre or a threshold system with a minimum of 4hrs/day for example. This way we don't end up paying for no reason for the hours the children are not there.</p> <p>A similar system should be in place for the days when children are sick. It is outrageous to be prevented to come in the centre because of illnesses and yet pay full fee; in the cold season we end up paying up to two/three weeks' fee without attending. This is a good business for the centres but not for the parents. Not only that we have to pay full fees, we cannot go to work either because we have to stay with the children. Nobody pays us for those days. A fairer system needs to keep a balance between the costs for the families and the childcare centres.</p> |
| 14326 | it is hard to rank the questions especially question 26 as the statements do not fully reflect what this actually means. without the detail of the whole document to refer to and understanding what this will actually look like for kinders, centres and families I think the questions are actually misleading. |

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| 14339 | What is being done to address the fact that the actual owners and ratepayers in Port Phillip Council are unable to secure council subsidised places within the council-run centres for their children? |
| 14344 | As a married mum who couldn't afford to stay at home, I never received a place at council childcare for my children. I found it unfair that some single mums I knew received priority access for their children at three days a week and they stayed at home ie chose not return to work until their kid went to school. I would have loved that option. Additionally I have no family support and had my kids 24/7 where one single mum in particular had her child with his dad 35 percent of the time and had her family around to help, making her very well supported. While I don't begrudge her or my experience, I begrudged the council policy that didn't look at situations on a case by case basis and give priority access where it was definitely needed. |
| 14345 | My children attend The Avenue Childcare Centre. This centre has provided me with a strong sense of community and the size of the Centre was a key reason I put my children in there, not to mention the excellent staff. The offer of Bush Kinder was also a key reason to send my children there. The centre is not the most 'up to date', however this again adds to its appeal for parents who are not looking for the 'shiny and new' type of equipment, but the good old fashioned sandpit, nature and blocks. It would be very disappointing to see this Centre impacted in a negative way by any of the proposed policy changes. Happy to come in and chat more about this and how we can avoid negative impacts to our Centre. |
| 14374 | I have two children in daycare 4 days per week. One of them splits his time between 3 year old kinder (at bubup womindjeka) and a privately run Nido. When the new CCS came into effect, the private company (Nido) increased their fees accordingly and also removed the half-price holiday entitlement, flagrantly citing "because of the new CCS" leaving me with a whopping additional \$600ish dollars per child while they took the remaining \$2k p/c that the CCS would have afforded me. I have a professional job in IT and a masters degree, but once I run out of rebate, after approximately 6 months into the year, I will make only \$87 per week after tax. We are of course on the centralised waiting list to move to a council daycare, but no luck thus far. My experience is that we need to keep the costs as low as possible for parents. Your council-run facilities are absolutely fantastic. Having a NFP/council funded option is essential, to compete against private institutions with a captive audience who up their fees with little or no notice. We have no power in this matter, I have no family here to help me with the kids and a mortgage to pay. In this sense, I am against collaboration with privately-funded entities. Local NFP and council competition is the only thing left to stop the fees skyrocketing further. Our daycare fees next year will be more than our mortgage. It's a scary thought. |
| 14390 | Portals that show childcare centres or kindergartens that have vacancies already exist. They are notoriously useless as they are never up to date and/or centres in demand can cherry-pick who they want in their centre e.g. when you call to enquire about a vacancy you've seen on a portal, the vacancy has disappeared! It is not the council's role to subsidise families directly, that's what State and Federal governments are here for. Councils should look at services accessible to all. A subsidy to resident families who attend a centre within the city looks nice on paper but in reality it will cost a lot of money in administration for a minimal benefit as it will be hard to get when you really need it. Say for example if you've just moved to the city or if you're a resident but your child attends a centre outside of the city (because you couldn't find a vacancy within city or because centre is close to work for convenience, etc.). So it will be one of those things that councillors can add to their list of things they've done for residents, but in effect is useless. |

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| | Council should focus on ensure that all children have access to quality opportunities. For a lot of families who are "average", they earn too much to qualify for support but not enough to be able to actually pay for those quality opportunities. So their kids miss out. |
| 14416 | Subsidised high quality council run childcare is something that the community strongly values and the City of Port Philip does very well. We've recently moved houses to be near Ada Beckett which is an asset to our community and highly valued by local families. Along with many other local families, we would be extremely disappointed if Ada Beckett could no longer operate as is. Settling into childcare is a difficult experience for many children and families. It takes time for children to build up trusting relationships with their educators. Making changes to existing service provision would break these relationships that children have built and which are an integral foundation to them feeling safe and being able to learn. As a rate payer our council run childcare centre is the most important council run service to us and many others. |
| 14437 | <p>We feel strongly that the council should maintain a stake in and funding of early years services and not seek to privatise, sell off or demand full cost recovery from these services. Early years centres like Ada Mary and Bubup are leading the way in providing quality education for a wide demographic of residents, including excellent outdoor learning and qualified educators. The private offerings often do not offer this outdoor space or qualified educators that are important to families. The council should not cut off funding to excellent community run options to benefit for profit providers as this will just drive standards down.</p> <p>There does not seem to be a shortage of kindergarten places so it would be stupid to change EYCs over to full kindergartens, when most already offer kindergarten services. For working families early years care is also important and centres offering early years and kindergarten provide important stability for their children.</p> <p>A centralised waitlist does not respect parent choice and is difficult to navigate if you have preferred centres. The council should focus on best practice sharing between centres, not stripping away assets and funding.</p> <p>Safeguarding and proper training for toy libraries and playgroups would be good, but needs to be put together in recognition of volunteer staff.</p> <p>It is equally important to consider the needs of current residents and their children as new developments like Fisherman's Bend. Funding for new facilities there should not take away from existing facilities.</p> |
| 14441 | I am pleased with the objectives of this review but I am concerned that the current diversity of early years services that are available to families not be reduced. Small community based services I believe provide the highest quality and progressive care and education as well as best conditions for their employees. I would be concerned if all council maintained properties are forced to become larger services to meet financial obligations. I believe highly in a mix of larger, smaller, community based and not for profit services and not too many privately owned or large corporate providers for early years and quality and employee retention are not consistently high. I also note that there is not mention of family day care or occasional care provision and I would be interested to know what impact if any or how these providers could fit into an early years policy. |
| 14444 | Do not privatise or outsource public services, I'd rather pay more tax to support their improvement not for profit. |
| 14447 | I have been very impressed with both the Council run child care centres I have used - much more so that the private ones. My child is currently at Ada Mary A'Beckett, and is building strong relationships with the staff there. |

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| | <p>I'd be very disappointed with any changes that reduced or removed the services offered by Ada Mary A'Beckett.</p> <p>While expanding spaces like Toy Libraries and play group areas is well intentioned, I think that the provision of affordable and accessible child care and kindergarten is a significantly better avenue for Council funds.</p> <p>I strongly support current Council run childcare staying in Council hands, and if this is not possible under current funding arrangements, then if additional fees (\$5 - 15) are what is required for this to happen, I think this is the best option on the table.</p> |
| 14452 | <p>I have lived in the City of Port Phillip for twenty years and was a single parent. I was unable to use the services of early childhood education in this area for various reasons, for one of those reasons I strongly support enrolment transparency in Policy recommendation 5.3. The option considered 'Council ceases operating Council-run services' is extremely concerning particularly the impact privatisation would have on the poorest families in this area. Privatising council children's services is a shocking prospect and one that would see the poorest suffer most, driving them (like I had to) to seek alternative services elsewhere. The poorest will suffer simply so KPIs and balance sheets are met. Why any council would consider promoting inequality in children's service rather than working to narrow that gap is beyond belief.</p> |
| 14453 | <p>I do not support early childhood childcare services being run as 'for profit' enterprises, so as such, I find council's endeavour to transfer assets to commercial operators abhorrent.</p> <p>As a way of background, I am an entrepreneur and have repeatedly investigated buying / founding a childcare business and have come to the conclusion, the way achieve desirable returns is to consistently turn over staff for younger/less experienced/less educated staff (reduce labour cost) and to 'sweat' assets - not something I can ethically support in the context of early childhood services</p> <p>If Council is looking for additional revenue streams, please consider a commercial renegotiation of other asset contracts, e.g. St Kilda Marina.</p> |
| 14459 | <p>I am very concerned about the prospect of closing centres with less than 66 places (policy recommendation 6.1). Should this become likely, expect a coordinated and highly-publicised backlash from parents who see these centres as an extension of their families and the bedrock of our community.</p> |
| 14462 | <p>I am strongly against the requirement that all centres have at least 66 children. That would see the closure of exceptional centres that are the heart and soul of the local community. It seems that consultation on these recommendations has been absent and that is unacceptable. We, and so many families, rely on these exceptional centres. I can't imagine how you would contemplate spending money on waitlists (these established centres can manage their own, and investment in an outreach centre would be much better) and web services and 'contemporary' buildings (older buildings can be just as fit for purpose). Refurbishment and I don't want a new hub for Fisherman's Bend to come out of funds for existing centres and programs. My life (and that of my kids) revolves around these local services. I am devastated by these proposals.</p> |
| 14463 | <p>This isn't good. Why on earth would you talk of 'contemporary' kinder centres rather than investing in the great, older centres established in the zone. You mustn't consider closing established centres with fewer than 66 kids - it would be heartbreaking. You seem focussed on shiny 'new' things like web content and 'transitioning current Council assets into kindergarten facilities'. This is distressing reading. Also, please</p> |

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| | don't trick people into funding services in Fisherman's bend at the expense of existing services when the funding should be in addition. |
| 14465 | Policy recommendation 6.1 would see the closure of South Melbourne Childcare who are one of two centres operating at 100% capacity and is 'exceeding' the National Quality Standards. This is ludicrous. Council must build/alter assets to meet community demand. Build what is needed, not what attracts state funding. I am opposed in the most strong terms to putting a minimum number for centres to operate as attracting state funding should not be the driving factor. This is about meeting community needs not operating only large centres to attract funding and corporatising of the service. |
| 14467 | Objective 6 is most important to us as my children attend carter street kinder/daycare centre and establishments that are only deemed 'contemporary' may mean establishments such as Carter Street May be at risk of closing down. |
| 14477 | <p>There is no mention/provisions for community daycare centres that are under 66 places!?. Thus you are taking away a choice for families who want to send their children to a smaller center.</p> <p>All options should be supported by the council, just because the state says they wont grant funding is not an excuse. There should be a policy to deal with the smaller centres, and there isnt in this proposal.</p> <p>We should be embracing and proud that there are community run day care centers in the city of port phillip.</p> |
| 14479 | Focus and financial precedence should be placed on providing support and funding to services and to the people working directly with the children of the City of Port Phillip, rather than on developing guidelines or producing copious reports that take large amounts of time and money to create. |
| 14484 | As a parent of a child attending an excellent, affordable, and highly regarded long day care centre in the City of Port Phillip I am disappointed that council would choose to seriously consider closing or selling the "community's" childcare centres. There is a limited amount of affordable and high standard care options for families in Port Melbourne and major changes to council run facilities would be to the detriment of children and hardworking parents of this municipality. We as a community are seeking more clarity, honesty and sensibility from the City of Port Phillip when considering the options needed to continue offering the best standard of care. Parents will not allow these services to be downgraded. |
| 14485 | As a grandparent and a resident and ratepayer in Port Philip, I am very concerned about possible policy changes that could be detrimental to the early childhood services that my grandchildren are enrolled in. My grandchildren moved in to the area last July. They were put on waiting lists the previous February at several places but had to be driven to North Melbourne to their original childcare facility for some months until places became available locally. The first facility that they were enrolled in was not a good fit for the family but they were very fortunate to find places at the Neighbourhood House in Carter Street. To learn that this excellent facility is in danger of closing because of the numbers it can accommodate is alarming as they are extremely happy there and the family is delighted with all aspects of the facility. |
| 14486 | This year our son has started at Bubup Womendjeka although our daughter went to a private centre 3 years ago. We found Bubup to be of higher staff ratios and better priced which is not information currently easily available online. Since starting we have found the many benefits of the higher (than legislated) ratio including child safety, child's engagement and staff happiness. This is a great benefit of Bubup that should be communicated more broadly |
| 14489 | We absolutely love the service to Ada Mary A'Beckett Childcare. It is a centre which as such an amazing reputation and it would be devastating to see it go. I cannot |

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| | believe that the private childcare centres would be able to service the families in need of care to the standard we have come to know at Ada Mary. This whole proposal makes me anxious about our council run childcare centre being closed and not being able to find enough days of care for my son so I can continue working. I hope that the families will be considered in the final decision. |
| 14491 | More outdoor play areas and council supported childcare facilities are required to match the significant increase in people moving to the area. |
| 14499 | Particularly against recommendation 6.1 which seems to place co-contribution and funding ahead of quality and need. Build or upgrade to be fit for purpose and prioritise supporting the high performing and well subscribed centres ahead of meeting minimum (and arbitrary) numbers requirements. |
| 14506 | Community centres are the backbone of quality early learning, and some of these proposed changes will have a detrimental effect on the quality of services around the local area. |
| 14508 | <p>The focus of the many of the proposed policy recommendations is compliance with the National Competition Policy, which is economic based, rather than focusing on social benefits, public good and developing communities We believe strongly that Council should privilege social benefits over economic benefits when looking for a return on assets and when reviewing current subsidies and levies. While supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged families is identified as a high priority, CoPP seems happy that the needs of other families be left to market forces.</p> <p>The Proposed policy recommendations seem to reflect limited recognition/understanding of kindergarten programs provided in long day care centers. No evidence or discussion of family preferences or cost differences to families between kindergarten provided in stand-alone settings (per capita funded), in long day care settings (CCS & Kindergarten per capita funded) or integrated long day care and kindergarten settings (CCS & Kindergarten per capita funded and per capita only funded groups).</p> <p>Council should have a role in guiding the market – making sure that applications to build new private services include social impact statements and detailed business case planning; are built in areas that need more places; are built to meet age related need and flexible enough to meet future need; and meet playground minimum design guideline (Policy recommendation 7.3)</p> <p>Policy Recommendation 1.1 - The current Early Education Grant's criteria makes the grant unattainable for families. Any subsidy provided needs to be available only to children's services that, at a minimum, meet National Quality Standards. Subsidies must be meaningful to, and attainable by, families. There should be no hidden incentive in an affordability subsidy for fee increases The new grant could be designed in consultation with center coordinators who are at the coal face of the vulnerability issues in the community to ensure the eligibility criteria are realistic and relevant.</p> <p>Policy Recommendation 1.4 - Council must ensure that any children's services website implemented is monitored and supported and will need to look carefully at the compliance requirements to ensure it's not too onerous for services to be up-to-date.</p> <p>In relation to policy recommendation 2.2 - the policy itself refers to influencing the provision of high quality early years services to meet the demands of families, not just monitoring and tracking demand. Therefore the council should be active in, and proactive in the provision of early years services.</p> |

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| | <p>In relation to policy recommendation 2.4 - This seems like code for 'close down problem buildings and replace them with kindergartens.' Council has an important role in providing Early Years service infrastructure; the nett CoPP owned/managed Early Years buildings must increase and be multi-functional. The recommendation as it stands indicates council has a poor understanding of the way its own children's services operate, given 3 year kinder is currently being provided in many of its existing services.</p> <p>Policy recommendation 3.1 - Option B - What does 'full costs recovery' mean?? Will it be implemented with immediate effect of introduced over a number of years. This could lead to child care costs going up and a reduction in quality.</p> <p>Option C - Does this mean that Council may sell some of their early childhood assets???</p> <p>Policy recommendation 3.2 - What principles will guide reviews of funding, subsidy and levy arrangements? How will the needs of COPP community's vulnerable and disadvantaged families be supported and how ill excellence in ECEC be supported?</p> <p>In relation to Policy recommendation 6.1 - Council must build/alter assets so that they meet community demand – build what is needed not what will attract state funding. Eligibility for co-contribution funding from the state government varies from year to year. So requiring all assets to meet the minimum of 66 places, will not necessarily meet that objective. Therefore this requirement should be removed. Could the word 'contemporary' be removed as it does not recognise that older buildings can also be fit-for-purpose.</p> |
| 14514 | <p>An extract summary from Swedish childcare system; by offering affordable, holistic childcare education, well-educated staff, thoughtfully designed and well-resourced centres, and in valuing children highly as individuals, Educare has created many benefits for children, families and society at large, including: improved school success, better work-life balance, greater economic independence for women, more stable long-term employment, reduced poverty, less substance abuse, and reduced crime rates.</p> <p>Overall, many argue that universal, integrated childcare and education plays an important role in terms of social cohesion and national advancement. It has positive flow-on effects in the areas of health, productivity, tax revenue and in addressing the gender pay gap, thus providing compelling reasons to emulate the Swedish model.</p> |
| 14519 | <p>Leave existing child care services as they are the centers under 66 place offer safe community based child care in environments where children can learn and flourish and children's needs are met , over crowded spaces don't allow for the individual specialized care that we have experienced over the years, please councils don't break what's not broken look at what is working and build on that don't be driven by financial cost cutting , our children will be impacted while someone else's KPI's are being checked off! It's time to change the way councils have operated and really engage with your community and support it so that we can continue to deliver specialized services is nurturing environments.</p> |
| 14520 | <p>Found this survey very difficult to undertake effectively as there were no qualitative boxes following the questions to provide feedback as to why each option was selected. (eg: some of the options disagreed with are on the basis of questioning (a) whether Council is in a position to best provide & deliver the recommendation and (b) whether the option itself is sound / accurately worded). Would strongly recommend the options be revisited to eliminate assumptions / being open to being misinterpreted by both Councillors and the public.)</p> |

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| 14521 | <p>Existing centers need to be assessed on the quality of services and outcomes they deliver. Blanket rules, such as the 'minimum 66 children' requirement could have severe unwanted consequences (eg closure, failure to upgrade) for centers that may be doing an outstanding job. As a current user and with experiences across multiple jurisdictions (including interstate) and both large and small centers, private and publicly funded, I can honestly say that there is no 'set and forget' formula.</p> <p>I am particularly concerned with the Policy Recommendation 6.1 that mandates 66 places minimum and a 'contemporary' building - this requirement needs to be removed as it would result on unwanted unnecessary closures. The size of the center is no reflection of the quality of the service, and centers should be assessed on merit. Some children perform better and are more comfortable in smaller centers.</p> <p>The use of the term 'contemporary' is interesting as Port Phillip is known for its fierce protection of heritage buildings so I would think that there would be some merit protecting and investing in the older centers - some of which are over 80 years old. There is no reason that buildings cannot be invested in to be brought up the relevant standards. Again centers need to be assessed on a case by case basis, with the outcomes they achieve for their children being most important - not how well the center photographs for a council pamphlet.</p> |
| 14522 | <p>relying on the market has no place in early childhood. this will always disadvatage the most vulnerable children. selling assets is crazy havent we learnt this in this municipality at a state level?</p> |
| 14523 | <p>Out youngest is at a smaller centre (Neighborhood house) We love the community feel if this place Our eldest is at Albert park pre kinder (Again a smaller community based centre) These kind if centres are my preference They were previously at Nido whixh was too large for us Both our boys have had a traumatic 15 months and these smaller type centres have allowed the Staff to get to know the boys on a personal level These kind of centres are a big part of our community and should be looked after at all costs</p> |
| 14531 | <p>Q7 A new hub for fishermans bend will be using funds that will be taken from current services - as a current full fee paying parent, current families needs are just as important as future residents.</p> <p>Q8 In principle this recommendation looks ok, but this could be code for 'close down problem buildings and replace them with kindergartens.' Council has an important role in providing Early Years (EY) service infrastructure; the nett CoPP owned/managed EY buildings must increase and be multi-functional.</p> <p>The recommendation as it stands indicates council has a poor understanding of the way its own children's services operate, given 3 year kinder is currently being provided in many of its existing services. This implies that the current services are not sufficient to support 3 year old kinder, which in most cases they are.</p> <p>Q9 E. The hybrid model is the only real alterative as each model as is has great implications for children's services generally, a lot of children and centres will close if these options go ahead.</p> <p>A.Operating in non-compliance with the national competetion policy is a problem, but is may be able to be addressed in another way. Council has known about this policy for over 20 years, but only now seeks to do something which is curious.</p> <p>C.While this option looks OK we have no information about what co funding or lease to own means for services, are they going to sell out to big providers. It also clearly</p> |

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| | <p>states selling some services.</p> <p>D. this effectively closes council center's</p> <p>B. this will have huge ramifications for the service. Costs will soar. If we have to meet significantly higher council costs, this will mean restructuring of the centre and losing our qualified staff and returning to ratio of one qualified and two assistant staff per room, where we currently have all qualified staff. This will greatly affect the quality of care for children. We would also have to reduce the number of Bachelor staff we employ. We currently have one per age group, which significantly supports us to operate at a high quality level. We simply could not afford the quality educators we now employ.</p> <p>There is also now information about what continued support for community managed centres looks like, does this mean financially? We need more information.</p> <p>Q10 Whilst a review is good, they are going to act on the review and this will mean more costs to the centres. . Some form of KPI deliverables for acquittal purposes may be reasonable. What principles would guide the review? How will the needs of the Port Phillip community's vulnerable and disadvantaged families be supported? How will services have the capacity to support community building? How will excellence in ECEC be supported?</p> <p>Note that, currently, the levies paid by services to COPP exceed the subsidies provided to those services by COPP.</p> <p>Q15 A kindergarten waitlist could be detrimental to the financial viability of services. The services we have consulted with would prefer not to have a central waitlist. The council should focus on ensuring there is an outreach worker whose role is to ensure that all children from families experiencing vulnerability and/or disadvantage are prioritized for access to kindergarten.</p> <p>Q18 The central waitlist for EC services was created at a time when there was an undersupply of services and few available vacancies in education and care facilities. There is no longer a shortage of places to offer families in most centres, therefore the central waitlist is no longer required.</p> <p>The current central waitlist for EC services limits centres from increasing their occupancy as centres are committed, via funding agreements, to only take families from the waitlist. To have to share the pool with private and independent service would raise additional concerns for existing users trying to fill vacancies.</p> <p>We were the last to move over to the Central waitlist as we were more than able and very willing to successfully manage our own waitlist in accordance of our philosophy of building bonds and partnerships with families from the very first point of contact. Rather than expand the waiting list, Council should fund the provision of an outreach worker whose role is to ensure that all children from families experiencing vulnerability and/or disadvantage are prioritized for access to early education and care.</p> <p>Q19</p> <p>This would see the closure of Neighborhood House who is currently one of 2 centre's operating at 100% capacity and a level of quality that is 'Exceeding' the National Quality Standards...This is ludicrous!!!</p> <p>Council must build/alter assets so that they meet community demand – build what is needed not what will attract state funding.</p> <p>Eligibility for co-contribution funding from the state government varies from year to year. So requiring all assets to meet the minimum of 66 places, will not necessarily meet that objective. Therefore this requirement should be removed.</p> <p>Could the word 'contemporary' be removed as it does not recognise that older buildings can also be fit-for-purpose.</p> |
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| 14532 | <p>I have particular concerns about Policy recommendation 6.1. This would mean the closure of high quality childcare centres that are at capacity. It would also likely mean that only larger providers would be able to operate in the area. This is likely to favour large, commercial operations, that are driven by profit than educational needs or the needs of children. The recommendation seems to be geared to securing State funding, rather than the needs of children or the needs of the community. It also assumes that the co-contribution will remain at 66. However, what if this changes?</p> <p>I'm also slightly concerned that many of these proposals focus on funding websites and creating new portals. This money would be better spent improving services. Creating yet more portals and information hubs works for a time, until the information architecture get so unwieldy that it's difficult to find things again. Rather than trying to centralise everything into yet another information hub, a better approach is to utilise multiple channels to communicate -- some online, some in person where parents with young children are likely to go.</p> |
| 14538 | <p>I strongly believe that Council should privilege social benefits over economic benefits when looking for a return on assets and when reviewing current subsidies and levies. I am concerned that if we eventually move to a model where council fully ceases to operate childcare services, that the focus of providers will be purely profit, and that the quality of services will be eroded.</p> <p>Supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged families must be a high priority. Please don't make it onerous or difficult for these families to be able to access Early Years Services.</p> |
| 14542 | <p>Having used both private and community run childcare. I have found the community run childcare superior. The employees are more experienced and of mixed age groups which is a more of a true reflection on society. The facilities provide good natural outdoor space for children especially as so many of us live in apartments and do not have outdoor space at home. I would hate to these type off centres replaced or being priced out of the market through extra charges. Council facilitating collaboration across the services is a good idea.</p> |
| 14544 | <p>Upon reading the COPP Children's Services Policy, it has become blatantly obvious that the council, in particular, the attitude of Dick Gross, is to place the financial viability of such programs ahead of the social impact on children and families. As a parent of a child with Special Needs, my daughter has hugely benefitted from the service provided at Ada Mary A'Beckett and the potential consequences of ANY changes would have drastic implications on her to the extent where we would move to a centre outside the City of Port Phillip. I strongly urge the Mayor and his Councillors to reconsider their position.</p> |
| 14552 | <p>The council owned and operated child care centres, in particular, Poets Grove are absolutely essential to the fair and equitable provision of child care in this area. If there are any moves to privatise either the premises on which this operates or to seek cost-recovery of rent, thereby jeopardising the 'not for profit' service model, this will be met with an absolute outcry from many current and alumni parents. It is a renowned service in our area and I am absolutely sick and tired of this council obliterating basic services under the guise of 'cost effectiveness'. There are many ways to promote greater efficiency - do not privatise these council assets or seek to sell them. It is actually one of the few things this council does well - manage and operate these assets. The return to the community is much broader than any 'rental' cost recovery could ever quantify.</p> |
| 14555 | <p>It is very clear from your policy that will be financially sustainable that council is simply trying to get out of supporting council or community kinder. I can tell you from having</p> |

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| | multiple children who have experienced both community run and private childcare that the level of care is far superior in the community run. Keeps people before profits! |
| 14556 | We are a family at Poet's Grove and are very satisfied with how our centre is run, the facility and what it offers for the children, the community spirit and the amazing dedicated educators. We are concerned that any change to policy objective 3 will impact this service, and consequently the care of our children and the care of other children in our community. Please ensure you take community consultation very seriously when making decisions that have the potential to significantly affect the lives of many families within this council. |
| 14559 | This is so worrying. Families in this area still need funding. Underprivileged families require funding too - but this should be additional and from a separate pool - don't disadvantage everyone! Devastated to learn that these measures could result in the closure of high performing local centers. |
| 14564 | I think limiting funding to those centres with more than 66 kids is prohibitive. There's so much benefit to be had in smaller centres where children receive great care and feels part of a community. |
| 14565 | Yes, a lot of what is proposed in this will entail additional Council expenditure, which it at the expense of ratepayers. Much of this is unnecessary. Perhaps resources are better devoted to understand why Council services are not meeting full cost recovery compared with the not for profit or for profit based services based in the area. Let's not penalise services that are doing well and look at what we can learn from them. |
| 14566 | Don't close any of the smaller child care centres! |
| 14568 | Families don't always disclose vulnerability or financial pressures - please make it invisible (available, and not a big deal) and non judgemental. Make it clear what is available to families so they don't need to ask. Information on Port phillip family youth and children website needs to be improved - it's so hard to find information. |
| 14570 | I am very strongly feeling a need for daycare's to have a anti-bullying, anti-harrassment policy that blankets all daycares to protect small children from being attacked. |
| 14571 | it seems that as a resident of South Melbourne there are obvious gaps in services for new parents and beyond. I need to travel to Port Melbourne or Albert park in order to attend services that are appropriate. South Melbourne is a growing family area and this needs to be reviewed. |
| 14574 | My child have attended both private and community run (Council owned) child care centres. The VAST difference in quality of staffing and programs at the Community centre was miles ahead of any private Centre. Staff who loved their jobs, staff that were there for YEARS and we had the same teacher for our three kids. Engagement with community. Support for families in need. We would never go back to a private Centre. The community does NOT need more childcare centres. What they need is more high quality ones like community services. |
| 14577 | Policy objective 3 concerns me as it seems to suggest that council plans to withdraw support for council and community run childcare and kindergarten options. These services provide vital services for the community and seeing them transition to private or increase costs significantly will affect their quality. One of the primary benefits of these services from my perspective is the longevity and experience of staff, and I don't see any strategies to continue this and support staff in the proposed changes. |
| 14578 | Please keep the current Council Childcare system alive, as a single income working mother I can not afford to pay additional fees for childcare, especially within a private childcare system that asks for finciabale unsustainable fees. A change in the current |

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| | system will continue to push more working mothers out of the workforce, broaden the gender pay gap and increase depression, anxiety and overall financial impact on the community. The system is already againsts working mothers, please work with us! |
| 14581 | Would be good to have a comments section to justify answers that are not strongly support or disagree |
| 14585 | Community and council run childcare and kindergarten are beautiful institutions, providing a high level of quality early childhood education. Unfortunately there are not enough of them! It is my understanding that all Centres are compliant with Government legislation as early childhood education is heavily regulated in any case. Believing that selling off assets to private providers will achieve the same quality in care and education as we have in community and council run services today is not only ridiculous but also irresponsible. Let's distinguish between 'nice to have' features like in Objective 5 and bare necessities like affordable, quality early childhood education within our amazing communities. |
| 14591 | As someone who moved to Port Philip when my child was too old for mothers group and I was already back at work it would be great if there was a more straightforward way to meet parents with similar aged children that isn't a playgroup on a weekday morning |
| 14594 | There are very few opportunities provided by the council for families with young children which are affordable or no cost. Story time seems to be the only option for wet winter days that's free yet doesn't run during school holidays. Why? How about a community place where there is arts and crafts, book time, play are with trains blocks etc. I know Bubup in PM runs playgroups but these run at certain times and don't appeal to everyone. I take my children to the PM library on wet and cold days when the parks are wet or damp but it's not designed to have too many children there at once. The toys are tired and not exciting. A provision could be build In the library to accommodate a play area or the council could find another council asset for this type of space. |
| 14640 | Some of these proposals scare me. I do not want to see excellent centres being closed because the building isn't flashy or modern. |
| 14648 | The third point under Policy recommendation 6.1 requiring all assets to meet a minimum of 66 places is outrageous. This would see the closure of Neighborhood House who is currently one of 2 centre's operating at 100% capacity and has a level of quality that is 'Exceeding' the National Quality Standards. I curtly have two of my children at this centre with the third starting shortly and cannot speak more highly of it. Of the centres I have been too and know of this is by far the best and it would be such a loss to force closure of it. I also believe the word 'contemporary' should be removed from the policy objective as it does not recognise that older buildings can also be fit-for-purpose and the older buildings are some of the remarkable ones in the CoPP. |
| 14651 | Policy recommendation 6.1 (if supported) would appear to target existing, smaller, not for profit community-run childcare services (i.e. Neighborhood Houses) in Port Phillip that are consistently excelling in the quality of care they provide. Any change in Council's policy that would impact the ability of these centres to operate as they are now would be short sighted and irresponsible. These centres are consistently in such high demand and are operating near or at full capacity BECAUSE the quality of care they provide is so fantastic. Rather than targeting these smaller centres, Council should be supporting these centres as examples of excellence, and advocating for this level of care to be achieved in every centre that operates. |
| 14652 | To close centres with less than the minimum 66 places described would be completely inappropriate. In fact, examples exist in this category where the standard of care far |

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| | exceeds that at larger centres. Those centres which fail to meet inclusion requirements should be closed if there is a need for amalgamation. |
| 14653 | <p>The idea that any child care centre with less of 66 places will be closed under policy 6.1 does not work in line with the rest of what the council is trying to do. My children attend Neighbourhood House in Albert Park and this centre is one of the most inclusive and excellent centres in the area. As a family we were looking for a centre that would provide excellent care for our children but also provide a sense of a family. Every teacher at the centre knows every child and parent's name and the director Kate Hall provides an environment for the children that is unique in Melbourne and even in Australia. We come from a Scandinavian background and we were shocked when we started visiting larger daycare centres in Melbourne understanding that Australia does not provide the same kind of caring, inclusive, educational and warm environment that we are used to in Sweden. Then we found Neighbourhood House and realised that this place ticked all the boxes for us. Both our daughters love their time at daycare and we would all be devastated should the centre close down and it would be a great disservice to the community.</p> |
| 14654 | <p>Council and community run centres should be protected. They are an important part of ensuring that all children can access quality early education services. Should you choose to sell or charge rents to these wonderful not for profit centres you will be sacrificing the quality of our children's education to put money in someone else's pocket. What exactly are your priorities if you do not believe early education is worth investing in?</p> <p>I work in one of your community run centres and my son is enrolled there. If the fees were to go up due to this policy, we would both need to leave and I can assure you we would not be the only ones.</p> <p>Invest in childcare. Invest in early education that meets the needs of the community.</p> |
| 14659 | <p>In principal, the objectives are sound and its good to see forward thinking and consultation however we would not support any recommendations that would risk the closure of smaller, high quality, multi age centres nor anything that would drive up costs significantly for council or families.</p> |
| 14667 | <p>Over-reach.</p> <p>The City of Port Phillip consistently over-reaches into areas where it has no remit to do so. This survey is flawed in that it assumes that these services should be provided. They should not. If CoPP conducted all of the policy objectives, it would cost millions per year, and require many additional staff. All paid for by ratepayers. No thanks! Please transition away from providing childcare and kindergarten services. Not for profit entities that are specialists will do a better job. The CoPP should maintain its role as collator of the list of available childcare and kindergarten providers, as there is no-one else who can properly do this. Anything more than that is just empire building on the part of CoPP council officers in order to expand the size of the current staff. Re your surveys, anyone can submit them. Who knows who has submitted the surveys. Have workers of the existing facilities submitted 100 responses each? Who knows? You cannot say for certain. Therefore the responses are statistically invalid and should be discarded in their entirety. Don't waste our money preparing surveys that are not statistically relevant.</p> |
| 14676 | <p>I'm a parent of 2 young children one of which is attending council operated day-care. I'm very upset to hear that the Council is considering selling the centres to privately operated companies who's number priority is making a profit not the children who attend! I would much rather spend more and send my child to a not for profit and would be deeply saddened in Port Philip Council if they can not see the benefit of these centres.</p> <p>Toy Libraries and Playgroups are a great way for the community to feel involved but I think the facilities already in place could be better utilised as opposed to added more. I also don't see the benefit or adding extended hours to the toy library.</p> |

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| 14679 | Regarding Policy recommendation 6.1: I strongly oppose implementing a framework that would see small community run places like Neighborhood House put out of the framework because they fall short of 66 places. Neighbourhood House is the best kinda/childcare in the area - the staff are committed, the environment is nurturing, both my children have thrived there. I urge you not to focus on the numbers but the care and outcome for our children. As a resident, a mother and a lawyer I have a well considered opinion that I hope you give much weight to. Thank you. |
| 14680 | Strongly opposed to policy recommendation 6.1. I fail to see why a 'big is better' approach is the best outcome for supporting kids and parents. Quality of the center should be the key driver, not size. |
| 14698 | I was astonished and appalled to see the suggestion that small centres be closed. My children suffered at a large corporate centre, and have thrived in the family environment of a small centre. It is incomprehensible to me that a progressive council would contemplate this drastic, ill-considered and backward step, which would cause enormous suffering to many families, who have selected small, family-friendly centres. Reading this recommendation was profoundly distressing for me, and has surprised and upset every parent I have raised it with. |
| 14708 | I have no understanding around the threshold or information of the number 66 that has been set as a the minimum placements within the co-contribution funding scheme... Can this be elaborated on and more clarity provided please? There is not enough information on this figure, nor have we been referenced any studies to suggest this is the correct direction for our children or modelled to the key requirements by student ratio.? Please explain further. Why is community run childcare being focused, targeted and narrowed to beheld within new policy constraints? Neighbourhood House should be nothing but commended and in fact modelled for the state benchmark of how children should be educated from early learning years. This is coming from experiencing all ends of the spectrum from both private and public facilities for services within our family over the course of the last 4 years. We are aiming to be local Albert Park community members for generations ahead, and hope you will table our opinion with serious consideration and voice. Thank you. |
| 14716 | I think all efforts should be made to make CoPP's childrens services extra special, and should argue strongly for this wherever exemption to national competition legislation is required. I think we should resist the automatic assumption that small groups in old / non-purpose-built houses must be phased. Adaption to 'non-ideal' conditions can produce excellent child care outcomes. |
| 14718 | Please don't close down our childcare centres or farm them out to non-profit providers. Please. This is our kids and their futures. |
| 14719 | Please do not privatise childcare services in the City of Port Philip. Childcare needs to be accessible, affordable and safe for our children. |
| 14720 | Do not privatise child care. Do not support private child care centres. Invest in making child care as affordable as possible for all families. |
| 14725 | Neighbourhood house should not be closed under any circumstances. It is providing consistently 'exceptional care' under national standards and operates at 100% capacity. It is a huge part of our community and my family would feel its closure to be a momental loss. |
| 14736 | This is not a council responsibility and far too much of ratepayers money is going into these projects. Sell the assets and reduce rates. You are not the state government. |
| 14740 | Survey questions repeat themselves or are written by an overzealous academic, no need for all the white paper jargon such as "Develop a Memorandum of Understanding", this is childcare for children! Come on people keep it simple, you are over engineering ideas that can be put forward without the need for overarching |

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| | <p>acronyms and definitions that only the 6 people in the council can understand. Policies such as "Develop a centralised portal and communication strategy as part of the Customer Experience and Technology". What a waste of time and money when you now only 100 people will review it, most of the policies I see are a river of rate payer money just going out the door with no valid return of investment. How about simple things like employing more childcare workers, improving the remuneration of child care workers or reducing the cost of childcare for the community. These are pretty obvious and not a blatant waste of ratepayers money for fanciful and unimplementable practices and policies.</p> |
| 14742 | <p>I don't understand why Council is funding childcare services with ratepayers money when it is the obligation of state and federal government - fair enough to provide council buildings for community services such as childcare, which is a huge contribution in itself of community buildings/venues, BUT not using ratepayers money to further subsidise childcare and childcare services (including employment of specific Council staff to manage that process) that result in rebates for families and subsidies. It is the roll of Federal and State Govt.</p> |
| 14745 | <p>This survey was prepared with language that is not inclusive of all members of the community - particularly those people with lower levels of literacy.</p> <p>Please craft surveys with less bureaucratic speak and make it easy to understand for all users.</p> |
| 14746 | <p>This survey was long and wording complicated and difficult to understand.</p> |
| 14748 | <p>Do not sell off the childcare centers it would be an absolute disgrace. You are a large local council and I'm sure if you look across wher money is actually spent, like catering or taking events offsite for example the council meeting that has all equipment set up at St Kilda instead of wasting money to take to South Melbourne or Port Melbourne town hall especially because it is now live streamed you don't need to worry about the actual location. Put all the little 1% savings into your childcare and other council run facilities.</p> |
| 14750 | <p>I love working for the COPP. It would be amazing to see a future where Policy 1 and 7 have been implemented throughout the services.</p> |
| 14752 | <p>Cut back services to what is required of councils, to give the ratepayers lower rates</p> |
| 14754 | <p>Council has no statutory requirement to fund childcare - this is a state and federal government responsibility and should not be funded/subsidised by local ratepayers.</p> |
| 14756 | <p>This area is not primarily a Council issue. State Govt should fund. Council should back off from this area, especially funding. To the extent that Council offers services, user to pay!</p> |
| 14757 | <p>Council should work to minimize its involvement n this sector and maximise pass through of State and private information</p> |
| 14758 | <p>I feel like the Council is wasting too much money and should be trying to run the council more efficiently and reduce over cost but improving services. I think the council needs to get in some efficiency engineers to review all council operations in the view of efficiency improvements. Council just can't spend and spend to fixed problem. Need to have a balance between rates and services. Thks</p> |
| 14760 | <p>Council should use state and federal funds for childcare rather than use ratepayer funds to provide services; council should rely on other government funded services and NFP providers to provide child care services; council should not operate services or subsidise any services but for the most needy families who are not already assisted by the state government: ; council should cease indulging in middle class welfare.</p> |
| 14767 | <p>In order for all municipalities to provide equal opportunity, this should be a state and federally funded/managed issue. I am opposed to my rates being used to subsidise a lack of state and federal funding and management.</p> |

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| 14768 | I believe a strong early years program is essential in the area and I would like for my child to share his classroom with children of all abckgrounds. If other children require additional support, they should receive it. |
| 14772 | I am strongly against the closing down of council-owned centres and feel this service is integral to the purpose of the council as representing the local community. It is outrageous that the council is behaving like a short-sighted, profit-driven private company whose sole intention is making an obscene profit at the expense of everything else. The provision of community services is why councils exist and family services such as affordable, quality childcare is a corner stone of this. The one positive coming out of this even being considered is that it has angered me enough to find out what other 'improvements' are being considered in other areas by this council and its CEO. |
| 14778 | I strongly encourage the council to not close childcare facilities in the City of Port Phillip and, if possible, only implement minimal price rises. Childcare places are already incredibly expensive, and hard to secure in the area. My son currently attends Bubup Womindjeka three days a week. Having facilities run by the council gives me peace of mind that they will be of high quality with good staff ratios and strong educational values. If this is changed, there is no guarantee that the quality and accessibility will remain. And private operators are more likely to charge higher amounts, which would make care options too expensive for many families. I urge the council to please talk to families who will be directly affected, and heed our concerns. |
| 14779 | I strongly believe in council run childcare and would be extremely disappointed if Port Phillip council allowed childcare in the area to be fully provided by independent, private operators. |
| 14780 | I object to the options offered- I do not want to see any assets that service children sold or transitioned or alienated in any way. Doesn't the council understand that the public now loathes the selling off of public assets to business. Nobody is fooled any more about this kind of creeping privatisation/ theft. The city can afford all the necessary facilities for kids if it just stops handing out contracts for the gold-plating of endless and pointless street and footpath landscaping- this is where all the ratepayers money is being swallowed up. These projects seem to be mostly of benefit to the same old, same old contractors, etc., but do not really advantage rate payers and residents. Time for a proper formal investigation of how much has been spent and why over the last 10 years???? Spend the money on kids and the future instead !!!! |
| 14783 | Survey is way to hard and not easy to complete which may affect the responses. Private companies should not be allowed to work in childcare. Policy 6: well I hope that this would be done anyway! |
| 14784 | The current council run childcare centres are great, great staff, environment, culture, Have experienced private childcare centres and now bubup Nairm, no comparison in the service being provided. Bubup is far superior, providing a service for the area. |
| 14785 | What is this really about? Frameworks, optimise, guideline - why so much business lingo? Main theme, council to sell off creche facilities, to outsource 'non-profit' enterprise, with expensive leadership boards. Please reflect upon the public service council was create to provide to the community. I'd like to understand if the new CEO, will bring his for profit background to the community. Where making money ratheer than public service becomes the objective. |
| 14786 | Please keep our child care centres open! |
| 14790 | I've moved from Brimbank council and it was alot easier to get my kids into kinder. I tried to get my two 5 year old boys into 4 year old kinder for term 4 last year and had |

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| | to call many different centres separately and none of them had any spots available. It was a time consuming task. I had to drive from port Melbourne to Sunshine to keep them in kinder. I was told people put their kids on waiting lists years before they are due to start. So I've put my daughter on waiting lists and hopefully she gets a spot. I can't even remember which centres I called and got her on the waiting list for. One centre wanted me to pay with no guarantee just to get her on a waitlist. It's just such a difficult process to have to go through for such a crucial service. 4 year old kinder is incredibly important in my opinion and people shouldn't have to travel to different councils due to lack of availability or be having to call and record all the different centres in a council to put their child on a waitlist years before. |
| 14801 | Children's services are important especially for the disadvantaged. It seems that there are inefficiencies with both the State and Local government involvement. I would much prefer the City of Port Phillip minimize their involvement in running these facilities. The cost of rates are becoming excessive. |
| 14802 | Local is best and helps to create neighbourhood community bonding. Super hubs only benefit Council and discourages families to mingle |
| 14805 | <p>Council has done very little to promote this. I had not heard about it and have a 2 year old child and attend the maternal and child health services. your website is horrid. Child care is highly inadequate and too expensive. I am a single parent and I need greater access to childcare that is flexible. I want flexibility to have an additional day a fortnight rather than having a day every week. I am a single gay male parent and in this municipality I would have thought there would be offering specific to gay and lesbian families in the area facilitated by council.</p> <p>Council run facilities are extremely important and are a core part of what is required in this community. The private child care centre I access is likely to close in the next 12 months and I will be forced to move child care centres.</p> <p>Story time at libraries is key here and not included. More access to this in city port Phillip. once a week at each library is not sufficient.</p> <p>All this focus in the priorities on 'networks' and policy is a lot of rubbish typical port Phillip council of having a group get together. Tangible outcomes. Action is what is needed.</p> |
| 14811 | I strongly believe education starts from birth. In fact we know children under the age of 3 learn at a more accelerated rate than they will do for the rest of their life. We aren't considering selling off public schools because affordable education is the right of all children regardless of their background. Education is the great equaliser. Don't let's make the mistake of selling off or integrating council run childcare facilities to the profit market of private childcare facilities that are already over priced and that would get worse. Future proof the provision of council run childcare for the future economy of this area. Well educated children become productive and contributing residents |
| 14812 | <p>The mere thought of even closing down the existing council childcare facilities in Port Phillip and pushing parents to use facilities within the private sector would force many parents to be unable to work and would be financially unsustainable for many.</p> <p>Councils should have an obligation to help assist the community by providing childcare that is affordable to parents within the local community. Aside from the fact that the childcare centres are often hubs of the community. Bubup Womindjecka is a marvellous centre and my son absolutely loves it there. It seems as though council is looking at the childcare facility from a monetary point of view and not taking into account how fabulous they are for the families that use them. Families don't give two hoots if they meet the 'national competition guidelines' as most people won't know what that means and also won't care whether or not they meet a level playing field with private facilities! I myself looked at many private facilities when looking at a childcare centre for my son and not one of them offered a community feel like Bubup</p> |

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| | did! I urge you to completely forget the idea of closing down Port Phillip Childcare centres!!! |
| 14814 | <p>Council run Childcare Centres are doing an excellent job with our children! Their services excel when compared to private centres! Especially Ada MaryBeckett! They see you as a person and not as money! And for us, parents who leave our kids to their protection is the most important thing to feel reassured that your child is taken good care at all times!</p> <p>Having the experience also of the services a private centre offers and being able to compare both I strongly disagree of Policy Objective 3 to close down Council Centres! It would be devastating for us parents! Make the best you can to keep these centres OPEN as they are and utilise their services for the best advantage of our children and our local community!</p> |
| 14817 | Yes, council should get more feedback on specific council-led daycare. There are so many affordable and needed improvements that are specific to certain centers that the council should be aware of. |
| 14818 | Maintain ALL council childcare centres open! There services are greater than private and they are necessary for families in the Local Community! |
| 14820 | I highly regard the service provided by the council run childcare service at Clark Street in Port Melbourne. The proximity to our home, the care provided by staff, and the facility itself all meet our needs perfectly. It would be a real shame if the council was to discontinue this or similar council run services. |
| 14821 | Whilst I support childcare, the cost is not sustainable and it is not a proper responsibility of local government. And I am tired of the financial waste from the City of Port Philip. This is a further cost of ratepayers and residents. As far as I am aware Council has no statutory requirement to fund childcare and many other councils don't (page 15). Childcare is a State and National Government responsibility (to which we are highly taxed and Council want to tax me again by increasing my Council rates to fund childcare...out of the questions). |
| 14823 | This survey is too detailed and will be difficult for most to interpret. It also does not provide ramifications if a particular response is chosen for eg, if you support a policy but that policy means that existing services can't be provided as currently provided then this should be called out |
| 14827 | There is a strong community based around council run childcare centres in our area they foster varied socio economic and CALD backgrounds to work together. This promotion of equality can only enrich our children's future. The local councils are in the best position to promote this so please ensure that this continues to benefit future generations. |
| 14829 | Do everything you can to maintain access to child care services for locals |
| 14831 | <p>A higher proportion of private childcare is bad for parents as their fees are higher on average, which puts low income families at disadvantage. There is no way of controlling fees charged by private businesses into the future.</p> <p>Parents should also be able to choose small childcare centres with lower place numbers, as they are preferred by many parents.</p> |
| 14848 | Councils shouldn't run childcare. This is a private/state/federal and should not be charged to rate payers |
| 14851 | <p>Our son attends one of Childcare Centres supported by Port Phillip. Its standards of education and care are top rated, and the staff turnover is very low - the two being linked. He has also previously attended a for-profit centre with its slick marketing and new facilities, but sense of care and community was missing, the staff did not have a good relationship with management and the fees were much higher.</p> <p>Some of your questions relate to Return On Investment. Childcare is one of the things Port Phillip does really well. Some of its other activities are arguably an ineffective use</p> |

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| | <p>of tax payer dollars. This is not one of them.</p> <p>If you want to save money look at how PPC administers things such as the waitlist. The process was shockingly bad, and it made me angry each time I got a mailed letter asking me the same questions. It was also questionable about whether it promoted fair competition based on merit of each centre.</p> <p>Support the local management of the centres, help them with infrastructure (facilities maintenance, digital tools for administration, digital channels for marketing, payroll/finance) which it is unfair to expect them to be efficient and effective with. Then allow the educator to do a great job.</p> |
| 14852 | <p>I would like to take this opportunity to bring your attention of the road safety issue for kids. There are no traffic lights or round about at quite a few intersections, which can be very easily have accidents.</p> <p>Examples can be found in following roads crossing.</p> <p>Munro st crossing Boundary st; Boundary st crossing Normanby Rd ; Munro st crossing Johnson st</p> <p>thanks</p> |
| 14857 | <p>Council says it cannot sustainably continue funding Childcare and the cost of childcare is a burden for ratepayers. I support childcare that is funded by not for profits. The cost is not sustainable and it is not a proper responsibility of local government. I support "Option C Council ceases operating Council run childcare services and transition services to not-for-profit providers". We believe this option will maintain or improve the quality of service.</p> |
| 14859 | <p>Obj 7 - Natural environments are vital</p> <p>Obj 4 - We have collaborated but our feedback was not included. Council need to collaborate authentically.</p> <p>Obj 1 - We all agree every child need access to care and education</p> <p>Obj 2 - Council needs to understand the needs of families and then offer genuine supports, without requiring the families to be at rock bottom before being entitled to support.</p> <p>Obj 6 - Services need to be considered on a case by case basis. Some older services are in magnificent buildings and running profitably, these should not be bundled with condemned buildings and non profitable businesses.</p> <p>Obj 3 - The community managed NFP services ARE financially sustainable.</p> <p>Obj 5 - Yes families need access to information.</p> |
| 14864 | <p>Do not close council operated hold care centres.</p> |
| 14866 | <p>The Council-run childcare is the highest quality in our LGA. To transition away from this is a serious concern.</p> <p>With the new developments in Fishermans Bend, I hope there will continue to be focus on the rest of the LGA.</p> |
| 14870 | <p>Fundamentally I do not think that childcare provision should be a responsibility of local government. It should be (and I believe is) a state government responsibility. I am not happy that a large percentage of my very high rates are used for services that are not council related and often directly opposed to the interests of residents and ratepayers.</p> |
| 14874 | <p>Many would argue that these are the most important years in an individuals life, significant development is occurring and not for profit services are paramount to support this. Providing council and community services also connect the greater Port Phillip community, building active and connected citizens from birth. Removing this would be a huge detriment to children, particularly vulnerable children and families. I don't believe removing these services aligns with CoPP values and beliefs at all!</p> |

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| 14883 | <p>I see the daily benefit to my daughters early development by playing, learning and growing at Ada Mary A'Beckett.</p> <p>From the indoor/outdoor policy to the professional friendly staff to the welcoming sense of community, this centre is at the heart of what every community needs, more so today than ever before.</p> <p>This centre and its design, should be the blueprint for many other neighbourhoods to learn from.</p> |
| 14886 | <p>The council should have no role in the provision of services.</p> |
| 14890 | <p>These children are the next generation of Port Phillip.</p> <p>Childcare allows parents to be employed and the long term affect on many families is determined by this decision!</p> <p>Ps I've waited 10 months now on wait list for council childcare.</p> <p>Regards</p> <p>Single Working Mother</p> |
| 14906 | <p>I strongly disagree with the recommendation that all centres should have a minimum of 66 places. In our experience, smaller childcare centres provide enormous benefits in terms of a family, 'home-from-home' environment and the ability to provide individual attention to each child who is able to develop close personal relationships with staff members and other children. For both our children this has been hugely beneficial for their confidence, happiness and development. Our two children (now 6 and 4) were in childcare 5 days per week from the age of 1, in the Port Phillip Area for the last 3 years. We have tried a number of different childcare centres during this time and have found the smallest (Neighbourhood House) to be by far the best. We moved our children out of NIDO Albert Park and Childrens Garden Kindercare as we were unhappy with the care. At NIDO we found the atmosphere very impersonal and the staff turnover to be too high, meaning that our children were unable to develop strong relationships with the staff. At Children's Garden we found that the daily routines were extremely inflexible meaning that the centre were unwilling/unable to adapt to meet a child's individual needs e.g. enforcing a nap when the child no longer needed one creating a lot of distress for the child.</p> <p>Generally there is a great need for better childcare provision in the Port Phillip Area and greater availability. We had to wait two years to get a place at Neighbourhood House and experienced a lot of substandard care in the meantime.</p> |
| 14909 | <p>My child is very fortunate to attend a wonderful council managed kinder - Barring Djinang. The centre is a fantastic space and has the added benefit of being located within South Melbourne Primary School. Having these facilities together along with a MCH office and community spaces has been a coup for the local community especially as the area is part of the Fishermans Bend Urban Renewal Project. This is a prime example of how state govt and local council can work together to create facilities for the benefit of local families and the community. The staff and educators at Barring Djinang are of a high standard and are a credit to their profession. After initially having my child attend a private for profit centre, I can attest that there are clear differences in the level of care, expertise and professionalism between private and council managed centres. The council centres are far better run and resourced with educators being of a higher quality. It would be very sad to see a council run centres such as Barring Djinang be turned over to private enterprise as the quality would diminish significantly.</p> |
| 14910 | <p>Childcare is not a primary concern of councils. Stick to the basics (knitting) and leave other things to the experts. There is enough council bureaucracy and duplication of services as it is. Should not be involved in providing middle class welfare. Focus on only the people that need assistance and let the better off pay their way. Map your objectives to the demographic profile of the municipality. How many truly needy</p> |

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| | people live in Middle Park and Albert Park as opposed to the entitled over geared upwardly aspiring? |
| 14914 | Please do not make childcare any more expensive than it already is, we are already doing it tough even with the 85% rebate, childcare fees are too high and not sustainable for working mums, council facilities are their only lifeline. |
| 14919 | <p>I think council should look at existing buildings currently in use and refit to make them comply rather than closure or sell off.</p> <p>A central wait list is not really necessary as there is no longer an under supply of facilities.</p> <p>Council operated services should not be taken over by private operators as costs shall increase and this could lead to lack of quality care being offered. More information is required about what continued support for community managed centres will be.</p> <p>Council must continue to provide early years programs. Maybe council needs to have a good hard look at what it is providing. Kinder is currently being provided in many of its services.</p> |
| 14921 | Policy Objective 3 is concerning for me as my children have attended a council/community child care for the last 5 years. I have found the centre to be an immensely supportive one, particularly for my oldest son who has special needs. I believe the community structure of the centre has made it so wonderful and beneficial for my children (I did not experience that type of community behaviour and support at centres which were privately operated). I would be very disappointed if community childcare and kindergartens were to be closed down by the Council. |
| 14930 | I hope that you make the best decisions that suits the community. I am employee i will be upset if i loss my job but you have to go with what is best for the community and what is affordable too. I enjoy working for CoPP and supporting families in our community. Please make a good decision. |
| 14935 | Please don't privatise child care. So many social benefits come from Government run enterprises. The non-financial benefits won't fully be realised until 5 years into a private model where the service delivery gaps will show. The outsourced model is rarely cheaper than in-house run services. Speak to Yarra Council and ask them about their return to an in-sourcing model. |
| 14936 | I have been a user for many years (5+ years) of Ada Mary A'Beckett child care and I can't speak more highly of the service they provide to the community and to the young residence of Port Phillip. This centre has a highly skilled management team and constantly strive for excellence as shown in their previous accreditation results. This centre takes on initiatives such as beach kinder, smiles for miles program and other programs to enhance the learning oppourtunities and programs within this organisation. We were with the a for- profit company of child care services for one year prior to getting into Ada and this centre did not have as many incursions, excursions, crafts, outdoor space, equipment or highly qualified staff as the centre focused on the bottom line and not on the outcomes of childrens informative years. The council should also take note of the amount of new providers in the area and consider reducing this number to ensure that all servcies are fully operational. |
| 14940 | I have been fortunate to have had my children experience the wonderful center of Poet's Grove and I would be appalled and extremely vocal in a public environment if the City of Port Phillip moved to dis-continue or reduce its support of community-run centers in the way it currently does. These are critical assets in our community. |
| 14948 | Provision of childcare is not a responsibility of local government. You should leave this to state and federal authorities and reduce our council rates. |
| 14957 | The City of Port Phillip is at the forefront of early childhood services and many families and very lucky and blessed to enjoy the benefits and services. Financial sustainability is a huge factor for these services and we as a family strongly recommend for the council to increase costs and pass them onto the families. There are many families like ours who have deliberately chosen council and community run centres over the |

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| | private ones. The council will be leaving many families and staff stranded if they choose to shut down or sell. They should do whatever it takes to continue the work for early childhood services. |
| 14962 | My children have happily attended Neighbourhood House on Carter Street in South Melbourne for the past 3 years. Neighbourhood House is a community centre which provides our children with a home away from home and me with the support I need to raise my kids in a healthy happy environment, without Neighbourhood House we would be truly at a loss. I cannot imagine sending my young children anywhere else. Especially one of your council run centres, which are not a happy healthy environment in my opinion. When I was looking at childcare centres I toured your council run centres and found them to be well below par. If you intend to close our beloved centre or make it unaffordable you will be doing a great harm to the children in the area, we are a community and a family. |
| 14971 | It is important that we keep community run kindergartens within our local community. They play a vital role in children's develop, sense of belonging and community. Childcare is not suited to every child and family and it is important that we consider that factor. |
| 14973 | childcare is not a local government responsibility and places unnecessary costs on ratepayers and residents |
| 14976 | I am very concerned about the proposal to cease all Council-run childcare services. My child currently attends one of these in the area and it really is of outstanding quality. |
| 14977 | Please do not close Neighborhood House in Carter Street. My children used to attend Lady Gowrie which is a good but huge centre. Here at Neighborhood House the kids play, learn and grow in a safe and caring environment that meets exceptional standards. I would not be able to be a working mum without this amazing centre. |
| 14978 | As a parent of two children in Port Phillip, it is very disturbing to me that the council is looking to reduce funding or in the worst case, close council run childcare centres. The council childcare centres are far and away superior than the for profit private centres and this is reflected in the happiness and development of the children that attend them. The centre we attend in Albert Park, Neighbourhood House, has been rated as exceptional despite being a small centre. The children are so happy there and it is very important to their development to be in such a caring and encouraging environment. I would strongly advocate for this centre to remain open with the appropriate level of funding so that it continues. |
| 14983 | I hope all of these initiatives in section 7 will be offered for council and privately run centres in the area. As a Director of a for profit in the area I do feel quite shunned by council in regards to networks, communication and access to community centres. |
| 14984 | The recommendations in section 7 seem desirable, though I am unclear if suggestions such as 7.1 and 7.3 are for all children's services, or if council owned/managed services would have priority over other programs in the community. I mostly responded as neutral as I was unclear if all children's services would have equal access to facilities such as bush kindergarten |
| 14986 | The State Government already provides financial support for childcare and early learning experiences. While I support childcare, the cost is not sustainable. I do not consider funding childcare to be a responsibility of local government. |
| 14989 | Yes. I don't understand the requirement for a minimum of 66 places with respect to Q6.1. My children went to both a large and a small child care centre in their pre-school years and they far preferred the smaller centre due to the depth of relationships, consistency of carers and familiarity they were able to build over their 3 years there. I am also not convinced that all sites need to be contemporary. I appreciate it is more |

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| | <p>economic to have larger modern facilities but that ignores the individual needs for children who are shy, coping with aspergers or autism and who may struggle with the noise / volume of people etc at a larger centre. It also ignores the reality of the suburbs within CoPP - the issue as I see it should focus on accessibility for all abilities -not all-new buildings. Many of us live in houses over 100 years - we're not fussed remotely about a child care facility which is 30, 50 or 80 years old. I certainly would support new centres being larger and in newer buildings, but not at the expense of closing down great quality existing centres which are small and in older buildings.</p> |
| 14990 | <p>I am deeply concerned regarding Policy Objective 6.1. The facility my children attend has less than 66 children attending and this is one of the main reasons why we chose this facility. The smaller centre creates a nurturing environment and wonderful children, staff and parent involvement. To close smaller centres would be a HUGE loss to the City of Port Phillip.</p> |
| 14992 | <p>In regards to policy recommendation 6.1 - My children currently attend Neighborhood House - a centre with less than 66 places.</p> <p>Due to its smaller size this centre is able to provide an incredibly intimate and close knit community. This childcare centre is extremely well run and is so precious to the families it serves. We have attended other 3 other services across a 5 year period before this one and none even come close in terms of quality and care.</p> <p>I don't think that size in terms of numbers or 'contemporary' buildings are what make a quality service. These factors should not be used to make decisions regarding the future of any childcare centres.</p> |
| 14997 | <p>I think recommendations to Policy 3 and 6 need to be re-looked at.</p> <p>I feel that it is a responsibility of council to offer/support and ensure that all types and sizes of childcares are available to families in the area. A large cross section so families have a choice. Not everyone wants to go to a big private centre or a hub. Choice is very important.</p> <p>Policy 6 - referring to 'contemporary and fit-for-purpose' buildings - should not apply, when a lot of the buildings in the area are old/heritage buildings that may not have been specifically intended to be a playgroup, Kinder, Childcare or toy library but work for the community in many, many other ways.</p> |
| 14998 | <p>The potential impact of the new children's services policy has not been communicated well to parents of children at council-run childcare services. Parents I have spoken to had no idea the future of these services is at risk. Being encouraged to do a survey without being given any context as to why doesn't cut it.</p> |
| 14999 | <p>I am a widowed sole parent of a 3 year old child, who goes to a community run children's centre in Elwood four days a week. I am from a migrant background, with limited family support, and working full time. I am also studying in my second postgraduate degree, which I will complete this year. The centre has provided me, and my child, with a safe, stable and enriching environment that we needed, and it has been instrumental in providing support to us particularly when my child's father suddenly passed way. Integrated services - from maternal child health nurses, to a psychologist and all the childcare staff members have been positively supporting our personal and family transition. Although I have been working and studying, I have been finding the costs of living quite challenging. I receive a substantial childcare subsidy, and our childcare centre is one of the cheaper centres in the area. The staff has been wonderful, there has not been much turn-over and they have been very professional all through from the babies' to the kindergarten levels. I am afraid that this will not be able to be sustained if some of the recommendations are actualised. Whilst promoting more integration and more opportunities for nature play and other creative modalities is welcoming, I believe that the Council should remain involved in running of the community-run and council-run centres to the same degree as this has been happening until now. Childcare should remain public and the national</p> |

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| | <p>competition policy should not be running the development of childcare provision in our, or in any other area in this country. For-profit childcare should not become a norm, nor eventually the only available option. Transferring the responsibility of running childcare centres to private providers contradicts some of the international human rights and equal opportunities frameworks that Australia has adopted. It is unrealistic to expect that private owners of the facilities will provide the same level of care, and inclusion, to children and families, particularly to those that are disadvantaged. In all cases proposing a transition of ownership, the costs will increase, which will in turn increase the fees to the families. The fees for childcare in this country are already exorbitant and inaccessible to many, Driving the fees up will further marginalise and disadvantage families such as mine. It does not make sense to on the one hand continuously lower the welfare support to low income families (which includes many single parent families), pushing parents into often precarious employment when their children are still very young, and on the other hand make the childcare inaccessible. I am also afraid as to what this might mean to childcare workers. It is widely known that the staff turn-over in privately-owned childcare centres is much higher and that conditions of employment are not ensuring the quality of care that children deserve. I think that it is very disappointing for the Council of Port Phillip is supporting, or even initiating, such transitions. I find community-run childcare centres particularly valuable, as they are able to reflect the community values of families, and children that they work with and provide caring and supportive space to a diversity of families and communities. They should be further supported rather than set up to fail.</p> |
| 15000 | <p>Community run centres within the port phillip area are part of what make the area special and unique. They provide an opportunity for families to build a network in their local community and encourage them to get involved which i believe is of massive importance. Poets Grove, ECC and others are such special community focused places. They are the heart of the city. They services a wide cross section of the community, and are like a second homes to the beautiful children who attend. They don't discriminate on wealth or social standing, the offer affordable care and they give back to the communities in which they are based. The council should be looking for ways to support the current models and allow these centres no matter how small to continue to flourish. To make decisions based on financial viability alone would be a serious disservice to the Port Phillip area.</p> |
| 15005 | <p>There needs to be a greater focus on and advocacy for sustainable transportation to childcare centres and community facilities (good walking and protected bike lane routes). The entire family, including children, should feel comfortable and safe walking and biking to childcare, school, the park, playground, etc. Port Phillip should make this a rights issue - car dependent neighbourhoods are not equitable neighbourhoods. It's great to see so many families walking and biking, but Chapel, Carlisle and Inkerman streets are still not safe for families without separated bike lanes. There are also lots of places that need zebra crossings.</p> |
| 15007 | <p>Poor communication from our child's day care centre regarding this questionnaire and the proposed changes to day care and kindergarten services in the area.</p> |
| 15010 | <p>As a previous user of the Elwood Children's Centre I strongly believe there is a place for community based childcare in the CoPP as it offers a much higher quality of care than the larger for-profit centres in the area. Assuming these centres are self-sustainable and meeting legislative requirements they should continue to receive council support.</p> |
| 15016 | <p>It would be wonderful to have a section whereby you could comment after each question.</p> |

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| 15018 | firstly this survey is too long . I gave up after i hit the question that i was most interested in. Look - forget the IT Digital transformation projects . Spend that money on keeping current systems , procedures and council kinder services running. |
| 15021 | keep the council centres they provide excellent care private will never match the care provided to families they are only for profit. |
| 15031 | What about encouraging activities outside the usual childcare and kindy offering? For example, encourage children to participate in music, sports and language programs outside their usual centre as usually these services have great methodologies to learn that are not available at child cares . They are also relatively expensive but should be accessible to all and not to just privileged families |
| 15034 | We love our council run childcare!! |
| 15055 | <p>I don't understand why council can consider moving out of child care & leaving it to not-for-profit & for-profit child care providers to manage when the government would never consider doing the same for primary or secondary education.</p> <p>Why are early childhood services considered for profit?</p> <p>Why do early childhood services have to be cost-effective & justify their existence when all of the research shows us that it is the most important time in all of our lives?</p> <p>Why can't early childhood services be funded appropriately as a preventative measure rather than us having to pay the cost as a society with the consequences for all of the people who have fallen through the cracks?</p> <p>Since when did it suddenly matter that council has to comply with the National Competition policy? Why hasn't this been brought up earlier? This relates back to my earlier question as to why early childhood is run for-profit. Is there a National Competition Policy for primary or secondary education?</p> <p>I feel philosophically challenged by the idea of council moving out of early childhood for good.</p> |
| 15059 | A central waitlist for community run kindergarten would risk generic interest for some community services that only survive because of specific interest of the families in huge contributions of time and effort to support the specific ethos of the kindergarten community etc. |
| 15063 | Absolutely no need for Local Government to be creating a grant system for programs already funded by State or Comm Governments Policy 1 1.1 |
| 15074 | If CoPP consider building more HUBS, consider making it available to a larger age group and incorporating a more natural environment. |
| 15075 | <p>We love having access to council run childcare and feel it's so important for our child, who receives excellent educations and care at Bupup Nairn and the greater community.</p> <p>It would be a terrible shame for this centres to change or close.</p> <p>would also love to see more support in the community for natural play spaces for us to access.</p> |
| 15081 | <p>Employment of qualified staff who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander to work within the early childhood services and playgroups in the area. This is to ensure our culturally responsive practices are authentic and meaningful.</p> <p>I also believe that the Boonwurrung Foundation situated here in Port Phillip should have more funding and therefore expansion for outreaching early childhood services for the education, role modelling and experiences that brings authenticity to childhood services; music, story telling, Elders who are present/visit as important role models and sharing of culture. This is keeping with Policy recommendation 7.2 ...kindergarten Indigenous nature-based cultural programs'</p> <p>Song, stories, culturally significant ceremonies of the Boonwurrung peoples and the greater Kulin nation, should be made explicit in our services in Port Phillip so it</p> |

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| | <p>imperative for the future understanding and education of children from very young at the most root level.</p> |
| 15083 | <p>Please don't privatise early education centres - this will only decrease access and standards.</p> <p>Council needs to make childcare a higher consideration in budgeting.</p> |
| 15092 | <p>Council has a duty to support the people of City of Port Phillip by providing quality childcare and kindergarten through coordinated centres, not by selling off assets for councils monetary gain.</p> <p>I also note that many of the recommendations focus on developing rather than implementing actions.</p> |
| 15093 | <p>Many of the policy recommendations are worded in such a way that the outcome will actually only support someone in an office job staying 'busy' with plenty of paperwork to complete and report to 'develop', rather than providing any sort of noticeable benefit for the children of the CoPP.</p> <p>It is also clear from the wording used that the people who have developed this document are greatly against Policy option A, however if the effort was made to complete the process, they could almost definitely prove that council maintaining its current approach to operating and subsidising childcare services is absolutely within public interest and is therefore compliant with the National Competition Policy.</p> <p>There should also be an investigation and report made scrutinising councils other departments and whether they are operating and how vital their 'services' are to the people of CoPP.</p> |
| 15099 | <p>Mel from Port Phillip Council- Children's Services Waiting List team was excellent. She was very patient to explain the system and help put our son on the waiting list and explain the process.</p> <p>Ada Mary A'Beckett is where we were lucky to get a place.</p> <p>An excellent centre which lives up to it's "exceeding" rating, and much more.</p> <p>The staff are highly experienced, caring and committed educators.</p> <p>The grounds are a wonderful expanse of outdoor play area that is adored by the children.</p> <p>The close proximity to the beach front is also wonderful for their learning.</p> |
| 15109 | <p>The community based, council run facilities are absolutely fantastic.</p> <p>While I understand that funding is an issue, i think it would a huge disservice to the local community to hand over child care operations to the private sector.</p> |
| 15110 | <p>North St Kilda Children's centre needs to remain the same or improved as per required by law & national standards. Please consider carefully that families made the choice to trust this centre and people who work there to look after our babies and children at certain conditions and changes might affect negatively lots of those families.</p> <p>Outside experiences are great if they are carefully monitored (eg. beach, as this will expose the children to more danger).</p> <p>Transparency and access to information via a website would be useful (especially council-run services or private childcare & kindergarten, for registration).</p> |
| 15111 | <p>Services should be up to date and compliant with the minimum standards.</p> <p>Before funding is directed towards improvement of Centres, focus should be placed on how the ongoing operation of these services can be achieved. As a parent I would rather pay \$10-\$15 extra a day to achieve this, rather than have the Centre sold to a private operator that runs a commercial operation rather than providing a community service.</p> |

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| 15113 | <p>Please do not close our existing public centres and do not increase fees, which are already crazy expensive. Otherwise we will not be able to put our kids in childcare anymore.</p> <p>Suggestion: It could be a good idea to offer a discount to families that have more than 1 kid in the same childcare.</p> |
| 15117 | <p>We don't support the closure of Neighborhood house, we would be lost without them. They are exceeding the national standard and running at 100% capacity ie. providing much valued quality care for the community. From an altruistic point of view we believe some council run kindergartens need to continue to provide support for low to middle income families, kids with special needs, etc.</p> |
| 15122 | <p>My family strongly opposes the recommendation in objective 6.1 which states eliminating all centres with less than 66 registered places. All three of our children have enjoyed their entire early learning (over ten years in total) at Neighborhood House, Carter street, Albert Park. This centre would have to shut as a result which is ridiculous. My children have all gone onto primary school at Port Melbourne and have started there as well rounded, confident and capable individuals. This is all a result of the care and education received at Neighborhood house and it would be a travesty if this establishment had to shut for no apparent sensible reason. Why change something that already works and is so successful? Baffling!</p> |
| 15126 | <p>Do not close the North St Kilda, Childcare facility.</p> <p>The carers and employees there do a tremendous job. The facilities are some of the best within the city and any closure, re-allotment or sale of these facilities would be a huge lose to the community that would be hard to get back.</p> |
| 15127 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rebate should also take into consideration number of children in Childcare/Kindergarten. Apply extra rebate from 2 children. - Please keep and save LOCAL small/community childcares. - Get inspired overseas. Childcare are modern, great services at almost NO cost for ALL families. Childcare in Australia are always more expensive !!! <p>Childcare fees increase EVERY YEAR... Family incomes do not increase every year ... This is already too expensive and should stop.</p> |
| 15132 | <p>Early learning educators should be role models for children with appropriate assessment on basics such as 'do they enjoy their job', can they spell (spelling is often atrocious with basic errors). Educators should be supported with ongoing training and development.</p> <p>Would expect council run facilities to have same national scores but this does not seem the case which causes a disproportionate waiting list for the better/ higher scoring centres.</p> |
| 15138 | <p>I am really impressed with the high quality of early years services currently provided by CoPP. So far we are using MCH services, council run childcare, and story time at St Kilda library. Council-run St Kilda adventure playground is also exemplary and a pleasure to visit.</p> <p>To add detail to my view on the policy recommendations, I want to highlight that the following are of great importance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensuring children from disadvantaged backgrounds can access the services available to them, including childcare. - Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children. - Ensuring high quality childcare provision, be it Council run or otherwise. - Providing nature play opportunities. <p>Regarding the childcare provision options. It is difficult to pick an ideal outcome. Existing Council-run childcare (at North St Kilda) is excellent. I hope that all children in future have the opportunity to access such great care, so I am reluctant to support Council ceasing childcare provision, although it seems an unviable option due to legislative requirements regards competition and facilities standards. The policy</p> |

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| | <p>issues and options paper lists cost as one access barrier to some of the more vulnerable children, who stand to benefit the most from participation. This makes it difficult to support an option that would increase childcare cost, although in collaboration with a new grant program it could be acceptable. If a grant program is put in place to assist vulnerable children into childcare, it must be broadly communicated and application assistance provided to help eligible participants navigate the bureaucratic element of the grant application process. Transition to not-for-profit service provision also sounds more appealing than giving it over completely to market forces and the for-profit sector. I do not support full reliance on private provision of childcare. The objectives of Council-provided childcare are quite different from those of a for profit business model and while all childcare is regulated I feel more comfortable that councils and not for profit providers would ultimately have the children's well being as the highest priority.</p> <p>In addition to the above, I support all the recommendations regarding Fishermans Bend. This will be a highly dense urban precinct with a brand new population. Every effort should be made to provide quality play spaces including nature play and to provide the opportunity for families to create networks to foster community cohesion.</p> |
| 15142 | <p>I am unable to answer/ respond to some of the above questions as they are rather ambiguous. I am unsure of the councils motives.</p> <p>I live and work within the City of Port Phillip. For the last 16 years I have been an active part of the community and will continue to be. The City of Port Phillip has, on the whole, supported a range of community facilities. I think it is important for them to do so. We as a community should fund kindergartens, some child care centres, occasional care, play groups and other learning and supportive groups/ centres. It is so important to offer a range of options to families in our area. Our families require a diverse range options to fit in with their needs and philosophy's. Families needs also change and the area needs to be able to offer options to best cater for it.</p> <p>Within our community there should be funded long day child care, sessional kindergartens, occasional care, play groups and so on. This gives choice and option to people's ever changing circumstances and the individual needs of the developing children in our wonderful community.</p> <p>As a community it is our duty to support our growing up next generation. We can only do this by have variety. Children are our future they are a great gift to us all within our community. It is our communities responsibly to prove for them. Children are not in our community to make money off.</p> <p>Children, like family and all of our community members, all have different ideas, needs and philosophy about how our children experience growing up. The is National Regulations to support this and it is important the City of Port Phillip continue to fund and provide land and buildings for our wonderful community.</p> <p>Kindergarten offer a very strong child focus approach this is very important. Children needs are number one. Large,all the same type facilities, only driven by profit is not what the children of our community need.</p> |
| 15152 | <p>It would be devastating to the community if childcare centers and playgroups were to become financially sustainable. These are currently providing a wonderful service to the community and should not be changed.</p> |
| 15156 | <p>Extremely dissapointed Port Phillip council. My family have been active users and contributors to this community for over 60 years. We all live in Middle Park and Albert Park and have used many council provided community services. And we pay our rates every year. Policy recommendation 6.1 would see the closure of my current daughters childcare who my cousins and other family members also attend/attended. What a wonderful centre it is! Run professionally but like we are all family, my daughter is very happy. No private provider in the area I visited was at this standard. It runs at 100%</p> |

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| | capacity and a level of quality that is 'Exceeding' the National Quality Standards...This is ludicrous!!! It is also worth noting that my husband and I receive no government funding to put my daughter through child care. Council must build/alter assets so that they meet community demand – build what is needed not what will attract state funding. |
| 15158 | <p>As a resident and rate payer of Port Philip with young children it is crazy to me that as a council you would consider the closure of your own community run child care centres. The private ones are not as good! Importantly the centre my daughter attends is at capacity and exceeds the National Quality Standard. Why?! Every child needs access to care and education, why leave early learning to the private sector?</p> <p>In response to section 6.1 - Strongly against!</p> <p>Eligibility for co-contribution funding from the state government varies from year to year. So requiring all assets to meet the minimum of 66 places, will not necessarily meet that objective. Therefore this requirement should be removed. This would mean my daughters childcare would close!</p> <p>Could the word 'contemporary' be removed as it does not recognise that older buildings can also be fit-for-purpose.</p> |
| 15166 | Inclusive childcare to include children with disabilities. |
| 15170 | I strongly support council investing in early childhood education. A council managed service is wonderful- pedagogical decisions require consultation with the professionals- the teachers and should not to be council decisions alone. |
| 15172 | <p>I can't stress enough how important our local Play Group in Elwood is. I went there as a child, and now take my toddler there. Please ensure the use of this space continues as a play group. I also want to add that nature play in Port Phillip is very difficult due to most areas being off-leash for dogs for most of the year. E.g. every single Port Phillip beach is off-leash from April to November, and most playgrounds in Elwood are situated in off-leash dog parks. Where restrictions occur (leash only), they are frequently ignored. I've had many off-leash dogs rush up to me and my baby in parks and on beaches. Please review this in conjunction to ensure there are safe and accessible year-round opportunities for small children to engage with the natural environment.</p> |

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Comments submitted via the Have Your Say website - separately to comments from the survey

| Contribution ID | Comment |
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| 14254 | <p>Parents and grandparents should look after their children as nature intended and as has been practiced for 100's of years. The council should have no role in the rearing of other peoples children. This is just more civil servant empire building and promoting vested interest groups (lazy patents) agenda, which we ratepayers subsidises.</p> <p>In the tick boxes below you should separate residents from ratepayers and not group them together. Ratepayers pay the rates while renting residents pay little or nothing to council but often want more from the council and we ratepayers pay for it all.</p> |
| 14340 | <p>We run a small French kindergarten but would be interesting in accessing a bigger room or run more program in the language as families are asking for this. Our room is small and we can only access it 4 days a week. Accessing a room for 5 days would qualify us to offer ccs to families and give more opportunities to the children in the community. We would be happy to rent an existing childcare or kindergarten and transition it to bilingual childcare/kindergarten.</p> |
| 14478 | <p>I am very disappointed re Policy recommendation 6.1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *All assets to meet legislative and building compliance over the life of the strategy. *All assets able to receive co-contribution funding from state government. This will require all assets to meet a minimum of 66 places. <p>There is no mention regarding community run centers that have less than 66 places. I have attended a lot of the community consultations and it seems that the City of Port Philip is denying smaller centers exists under the new proposal. What if families want to and seek out smaller centers? Why do we have to have larger centers? All centers should be supported not squeezed out.</p> |
| 14579 | <p>Please keep the current Council Childcare system alive, as a single income working mother I can not afford to pay additional fees for childcare, especially within a private childcare system that asks for finciabale unsustainable fees. A change in the current system will continue to push more working mothers out of the workforce, broaden the gender pay gap and increase depression, anxiety and overall financial impact on the community. The system is already againts working mothers, please work with us!</p> |
| 14672 | <p>I strongly disagree to point 6.1 regarding closure of centre with less than 60 children.</p> <p>My child attends carter street and it is the most fantastic centre with quality educators. I am absolutely against it's closure</p> |

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| 14847 | <p>Can the City of Port Phillip please restrict its activities to those that it has a reasonable remit to do so?</p> <p>I am pleased that it has realised that providing childcare in a competitive market is unsustainable, as it cannot do so as cost-effectively as not for profit centres. However a lot of the remainder of this survey is about increasing the range of activities undertaken by the Council. This will result in more staff, more policy papers, more consultations, etc etc. All this does is increase costs to be borne by ratepayers and residents. It smacks of empire building by council officers: creating more jobs and busy work.</p> <p>Shouldn't the starting point be: what is appropriate for local government to be doing? Especially in the context of the large roles that state and commonwealth governments play in this space.</p> <p>I wish I had a job where I could go to my customers and ask would they like me to do some extra things, earning me more money, where someone else foots the bill (who has no choice): the ratepayers.</p> |
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| 14860 | <p>This whole process has been flawed. The collaboration via the CSRG did not get used to inform the options paper. It appears this was a waste of our time. It is apparent that council had a clear agenda prior to the process starting. The options paper is not clear. Even the council officers have struggled to explain certain aspects, coming back later with different responses and more clarity. How on earth are families and staff supposed to be able to respond to this document? If Council need to sell off their council owned and run services, I can understand this decision. They are bleeding money and need a completely different business model in order to run with a surplus. I am pleading with council to please give the community run NFP services the opportunity to run these on your behalf. If they go out to the private or independent sector, the fees will increase, the quality will decrease and the children and families will suffer.</p> <p>I do not understand what the benefits of the options paper are for the toy libraries. There is no clarity provided around this. Playgroups are the same, not a lot on offer in the options paper for them. there are better ways to run these services, I am surprised this has not been addressed.</p> <p>The older and smaller early childhood services in COPP need to be considered on a case by case basis. Many of these are profitable and run in magnificent buildings. I understand these may not meet requirements for access for disability, however, each service should be consulted regarding options for resolving this or if there are other services nearby with disability access.</p> <p>I encourage Council to consult with some of the Directors of the NFP community run services to utilise our knowledge, skill and expertise in making some of these decisions. We work at the coal face of these issues so our understanding is indepth.</p> |
| 14963 | <p>If you close our beloved chid care centres you will be doing the families of Port Phillip a great disservice.</p> <p>The council centres are not up to scratch and we cannot be expected to send our children to them.</p> |
| 15004 | <p>Hi there.</p> <p>My son has been attending North St Kilda childcare since he was 7 months old, now 3 years old.</p> <p>He is currently attending full time because of our current family work situation. He absolutely loves the centre and all the carers in his room. He has a close friendship group which would be sad if they had to be seperated. The hardest part of my day is picking him up as he never wants to leave.</p> <p>All the carers are fantastic, they love what they do and is evident in the way they interact with the children and families, with their daily activities and notice board for the parents.</p> <p>We particularly love the large open outdoor play area, plenty of room for everyone to play in and interact with older children. I have visited a few other council run childcare which didn't compare to north st kilda, which were alot older, rundown and cramped for space.</p> <p>We absolutely love North St Kilda childcare and would be deeply upset if the centre were to close as many other families would be too. Where would all these children go to?</p> <p>We understand if we had absorb some of the cost in order to keep the centre open.</p> <p>Thank you</p> |

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| 15013 | <p>3.1 suggests five future service delivery options It is alarming that Council may be contemplating withdrawing from direct children's service delivery. There are many references to full cost recovery, co-leasing, lease-to-own and asset sales but no real detail about what these might look like in practice or how these might impact individual services. The emphasis seems to be on financial imperatives rather than on the social capital and public benefits that children's services contribute. 3.2 talks about reviewing funding arrangements to ensure "return on investment and KPI deliverables" It is not realistic to expect compliance with Disability Access requirements or BCA (current) requirements particularly of older centres. 6.1 requires that "all assets meet a minimum of 66 places". This is not realistically achievable.</p> |
| 15027 | <p>It is not entirely clear the way the survey is worded that there is a proposal to transfer council child services to the community or private sector. I think I might have responded in a way that would not make my opinion clear. As a parent with a baby in council childcare, and as a user of the MCH services and Elwood Playgroup, I am appalled at the idea of council not providing some of the excellent family services it currently runs. I hope that Port Phillip carefully considers the potential negative impact of cutting or transferring services on particularly special needs and low socio-economic families.</p> |
| 15029 | <p>POLICY OBJECTIVE ONE: 1. Quality within services is not static. The NQS provides us with a framework to benchmark quality. The council quality subsidy provides us with a means to provide high quality education and care. Maintaining the existing quality subsidy which is well targeted and does achieve its existing intended objective for ensuring services provide quality education and care for children would be in the best interests. 1.1 Our view is that council should be providing funding to vulnerable and disadvantaged children to a greater extent than what is currently on offer. Vulnerable families with low income and low activity hours do not receive the number of hours of subsidised care that would better support them and their children. These families need more support from council. 1.2 Professional learning should include but not limited to Child Safe Standards. Services should be able to determine their own needs for professional development. 1.4 Money might be better spent on refurbishing building rather than on a website regarding children's services across the city. POLICY OBJECTIVE TWO: 2.1 Bubup Womindjeka have been in negotiations with Port Melbourne Toy Library to combine together to offer a greater variety of supports and opportunities to our local community. BW FCC can offer supports to improving the operations of the Toy Library. The policy objectives in the Options Paper should not be preventing us from moving forward with this merge. 2.3 Before the Fishermen's Bend development is undertaken, council should focus on ensuring services in the rest of the city are up to minimum standards first. 2.4 Council demonstrates a poor understanding of the way the COPP children's services operate, given 3 year kinder is currently being provided in many of its existing services. Council implies that the current services are not sufficient to support 3 year old kinder, which in most cases they are. POLICY OBJECTIVE THREE: Our view is that council should only be considering 2 options (not the 5 options in the paper): 1. For council to adopt a sustainable business model that allows them to continue</p> |

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| | <p>operating their own or some of their own services. This is important so that there is a mix of service management models to meet the needs of the community.</p> <p>2. If council are unable to continue provision of their own services that these services are managed and operated by not for profit, community run early childhood services within the community. Preferably not independent or large scale NFP organisations.</p> <p>The latter option provides BWFCC with an opportunity to potentially expand our portfolio by taking on a second site. This would be a wonderful opportunity, however, while this option looks OK we need more information about what co funding or lease to own means for services, are they going to sell out to large not for profit providers?</p> <p>POLICY OBJECTIVE FIVE:</p> <p>5.3 A kindergarten waitlist could be detrimental to the financial viability of services. The services we have consulted with would prefer not to have a central waitlist. The council should focus on ensuring there is an outreach worker whose role is to ensure that all children from families experiencing vulnerability and/or disadvantage are prioritized for access to kindergarten.</p> <p>5.6 The central waitlist for EC services was created at a time when there was an undersupply of services and few available vacancies in education and care facilities. There is no longer a shortage of places to offer families, therefore the central waitlist is no longer required. The current central waitlist for EC services limits us from increasing our occupancy as we are committed, via our funding agreement, to only take families from the waitlist. To have to share the pool with private and independent service would raise additional concerns for existing users trying to fill vacancies.</p> <p>POLICY OBJECTIVE SIX:</p> <p>6.1 Our view is it is prudent for council to develop an early year's facility framework. Those in council buildings need to be included in a consultation around the development of terms of reference and actively consulted throughout the development of the framework.</p> <p>DET have confirmed that it is preferred (but not compulsory) for centres to offer 66 places ONLY when only new buildings being built to offer kindergarten. All existing building and services do not require 66 places to be able to access funding for upgrades and refurbishments.</p> |
| 15032 | <p>I am a reasonably educated person who works with policy in a professional capacity. I am disappointed that I have taken the time on two separate occasions to sit down and attempt to provide meaningful responses, only to find that the structure of this survey and it's contents makes it impossible to provide meaningful, valuable answers. I suspect the only people who would be able to provide a valuable response are those who compiled the survey contents or who have been heavily involved in the policy compilation. I suggest Council take a closer look at itself and its use of plain language, double-speak and legalistic terminology. The bottom line is that yes, I support a further service reach to vulnerable people in our community but no, I do not support privatisation of yet more Council services. As a service user and ratepayer I expect that further consideration and consultation with service providers occur before policy changes are made with a view to reaching a mutually agreeable resolution.</p> |

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| 15105 | <p>I found the survey overly complicated and difficult to use. I have decided therefore it is best to simply write my comment in support of the brilliant kindergarten my son is so fortunate to attend.</p> <p>I understand that under the new proposal some children's centres would not be able to continue to operate at market rates and this will impact quality, price and therefore accessibility of places-particularly to vulnerable families.</p> <p>Will facilities or assets such as lady Forster Kinder be sold off? This would be a crying shame.</p> <p>Many facilities such as LFK are not "contemporary" but are still fit for purpose. Buildings such as LFK would not require significant work to make them complaint with the Disability Discrimination Act. Bigger services are not necessarily better services, we need a range of different services across the municipality to suit a range of family needs.</p> <p>Policy objective seven talks about the need for children to have access to natural environments. LFK is in a unique position as one of the only kindergartens located on the foreshore in Victoria and this should be celebrated and promoted. LFK has a limited lease with the CoPP on this foreshore site and this promotes a sense of uncertainty for our future at a time when the CoPP is prioritising natural play spaces in early childhood settings.</p> <p>Do we really want private for-profit providers to be the only option for children's services in the City of Port Phillip?</p> <p>Kindergartens do not want a centralised waiting list system. We want to be able to manage our own enrolments as per our own policies. The current CoPP system is not working and we do not need to assist the private (for-profit) market to fill their places.</p> <p>We moved our son from a privately run childcare at the end of last year as a four day week at kinder was going to cost \$600 a week. That pricing is outrageous to the point of being criminal. LFK offers a far superior service for a much more affordable price. I implore you to please consider this when making any policy changes.</p> |
| 15107 | <p>Lady Forster Kindergarten has been a caring and welcoming institution for many years and very deserving of any govt or private assistance in order to continue in its capacity to educate and foster a love of learning in little ones on their educational journey.</p> <p>They are the future and assisted by wonderful early learning centres and kindergartens like Lady Forster deserve every opportunity to learn and thrive under the expert care and professionalism of all the wonderful caring staff at LFK.</p> |
| 15114 | <p>Lady Forster kindergarten provides children and families with unique accessibility to the Elwood foreshore and the focus on natural environments for children's learning.</p> <p>I hope that when my children are attending kindergarten that not only for profit services would be available. This provides a risk of children having very little connections with their natural environment and local community.</p> |
| 15121 | <p>Some children's centres would not be able to continue to operate at market rates and this will impact quality, price and therefore accessibility of places-particularly to vulnerable families such as myself.</p> <p>Will facilities or assets such as LFK be sold off?</p> <p>Many facilities such as LFK are not "contemporary" but are still fit for purpose. Buildings such as LFK would not require significant work to make them complaint with the Disability Discrimination Act. Bigger services are not necessarily better services, we need a range of different services across the municipality to suit a range of family needs.</p> |

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| 15128 | <p>Please save community/local childcares !</p> <p>Rebate to apply for family with 2 children and more in childcare</p> <p>Fees are too expensive.</p> |
| 15148 | <p>Hi there my son attends this childcare on a full time basis north St Kilda childcare. When I heard it was closing I offered my services as a tradesman to want to help in any way with the maintaining of it so as to be able to operate. The facility is amazing and has an amazing array of staff that are always helpful and warming in any way they can be. As a local it's provides a lot of help for parents especially with the cost of living and being a fast paced lifestyle. Me and my partner work long and hard full time jobs and wouldn't be able to do it if it wasn't for this fantastic place. Please consider keeping it as it's a great facility for the community.</p> |
| 15155 | <p>I am concerned that some of the services we know and love will be repurposed or sold off. Not everything should be about dollar profit. There are huge benefits in having community run kinders & playgroups for both children and their parents.</p> |
| 15157 | <p>Q1: Policy recommendation 1.1</p> <p>Create a new grant program to provide a financial subsidy for families experiencing ongoing and situational vulnerability and disadvantage. This subsidy will be available for all eligible City of Port Phillip community members accessing any Early Years' Service in the City.</p> <p>DO NOT SUPPORT. This removes funding for ALL families, some of which need funding such as overseas families who do not qualify for health care cards, child care etc. These families are at risk and don't get anything. 'Funding should be for ALL</p> <p>Fund an early intervention outreach role to work with relevant service providers in the City (child protection, homelessness, mental health, family violence) to increase participation of vulnerable children in early childhood education services, especially kindergarten services.</p> <p>Yes, but remove the central wait list register as this role will do this.</p> <p>Q4: Policy recommendation 1.4</p> <p>Develop a Children's Services website that will provide information on all children's services in the City. This will include services provided, vacancies, specialist expertise, fee levels, educational approaches, target groups served and more. Participation in the website should be a condition for services to receive Council grants.</p> <p>GRANTS SHOULD NOT BE A CONDITION. Grants can be limiting and put onerous work on organisations.</p> |

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| | <p>DO NOT SUPPORT</p> <p>Monitor, track, encourage and report on the market response to childcare demand. DO NOT SUPPORT in current wording. This completely misses many options and would be impossible to manage. Family Day care exists in City of Port Phillip and yet council are unable to work this out. The data on the gov website does not include individual FDC's. Also council can't demand the information on waitlists from for profit and other providers.</p> <p>Review and update the service model for playgroups to include:</p> <p>A dedicated, or several functional multipurpose, playgroup space/s to be considered in Fishermans Bend, as part of an integrated hub.</p> <p>An additional playgroup or children's multipurpose space in the north end of Port Phillip to be considered (South Melbourne or Port Melbourne neighbourhoods).</p> <p>Make available the playgroup rooms in Bubup Nairn Family and Children's Centre across five days of the week and transition other programs into other Family Services Rooms in the building to increase availability and capacity.</p> <p>- COMPLETELY MISSES SPECIAL NEEDS Families. Any policy needs to include dedicated playgroups for special needs like Malvern Special Needs playgroup which families from CoPP travel too currently.</p> <p>With the addition of funded three-year-old Kindergarten, consider transitioning current Council assets into kindergarten facilities to meet future demand where relevant, especially where the private market is meeting the demand/need for childcare services in that area.</p> <p>ABSOLUTELY DO NOT SUPPORT. COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION deliver benefits for families that the private market CANNOT. Families have the opportunity to have a say in their child care and be part of committee and volunteering that IMPROVE engagement and reduce ISOLATION for families and children. NOT EVERY NEEDS A DOLLAR attached.</p> <p>Policy recommendation 3.1</p> <p>Council to decide the future service model for childcare services from five policy options (A, B, C, D, E).</p> <p>A. Council continues operating and subsidising childcare services as is</p> <p>This option is likely to be non-compliant with the National Competition Policy. It is unlikely Council will be able to maintain and renew all existing assets to meet current and future demand, functionality and compliance issues.</p> <p>Council subsidies will continue to be untargeted and not based on need.</p> <p>Some assets will not be fit-for-purpose or compliant with legislation.</p> <p>Could explore co-funding or lease-to-own opportunities with tenants of council-owned facilities.</p> <p>B. Council continues operating services, but at full cost recovery</p> <p>This option is likely to meet National Competition Policy requirements.</p> |
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| | <p>Requires a review of infrastructure and maintenance levies to ensure they cover all renewal and utility costs.</p> <p>Will require increased fees at Council-run childcare services to allow for cost recovery (\$5-\$15 per day).</p> <p>Explore co-funding or lease-to-own opportunities with tenants of council-owned facilities.</p> <p>Continued support for community managed centres.</p> <p>C. Council ceases operating Council-run childcare services and transition services to not-for-profit providers</p> <p>This would include full cost recovery rental arrangements, and utilities at cost to new owner.</p> <p>Meets all industrial obligations under relevant agreements and legislation.</p> <p>This could include purchase, co-funding or lease-to-own opportunities with not-for-profit providers.</p> <p>Operational savings to Council</p> <p>Asset sales to support transition arrangements</p> <p>D. Council ceases operating Council-run services and sells or transitions assets for other Council purposes</p> <p>This assumes that the market will meet current and future demand.</p> <p>Uncertain as to how market failures will be overcome.</p> <p>Operational savings to Council.</p> <p>Asset sales to support transition arrangements</p> <p>E. Council chooses a hybrid model based on above options</p> <p>Q9: Policy recommendation 3.1</p> <p>Please rank the following five options from 1 to 5, where 1 is your most preferred option and 5 is your least preferred option, by dragging the option to the box to match your preferred ranking.</p> <p>ONLY SUPPORT OPTION A - KEEP AS IS!!! NO EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT that not complaint with NPP, Council has not considered ALL services in their modeling. The excluded Family day care, many private kindergartens and child care under schools and excluded in-home care models that are available under the Child Care Scheme. COUNCIL NEEDS ENSURE THEY ARE using the correct data.</p> <p>Council has many building not meeting code that are not child care. This would apply to all council owned buildings. to exit the market on this would be devastating for families.</p> <p>Review all funding, subsidy and levy arrangements to ensure return on investment and KPI deliverables for acquittal purposes</p> <p>DO NOT SUPPORT - NOT EVERYTHING needs a dollar attached. INVESTING in children and families in the early years helps prevent isolation, poor academic performance and improve mental health and reduce family violence.</p> |
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| | <p>Utilise approved state funding to scope the creation of an effective and centralised municipal-wide enrolment system for community-run and independent kindergartens in Port Phillip. This will require significant consultation with service providers.</p> <p>DO NOT SUPPORT - WE DO NOT WANT A Central wait list. This is a tick and flick approach and does not allow for people to visit the centre and if they aren't happy with the philosophy , then choose another. It is bad for everyone when a family turns up, starts and does not like the philosophy.</p> <p>Develop a centralised portal and communication strategy as part of the Customer Experience and Technology Transformation project, and work with children's service providers and families to establish the best way for families to receive the information they need, in the way they need it, when they need it</p> <p>DO NOT SUPPORT - Council will spend money developing this and and not keep it upto date. I somewhat support, but have big concerns on it maintenance and cost to maintain. Council have the most boring posters and un-engaging facebook posts.</p> <p>Improve the current childcare waitlist and investigate expanding it to include private and independent centres in order to provide families with better information about places for children under the age of three, as well as to inform short- and medium-term planning for childcare</p> <p>DO NOT SUPPORT</p> <p>Policy Objective 6: Early Years services will be supported by safe, accessible, contemporary, fit-for-purpose, sustainable facilities and environments.</p> <p>Policy recommendation 6.1</p> <p>Develop an Early Year's Services Facility Framework that will deliver the following outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All assets to meet legislative and building compliance over the life of the strategy. All assets able to receive co-contribution funding from state government. This will require all assets to meet a minimum of 66 places. <p>DO NOT SUPPORT THAT CENTRES NEED TO BE CONTEMPORARY. THEY NEED TO BE FIT FOR PURPOSE. Having a minimum number is a state guideline for funding.</p> <p>NOT ALL ASSETS need to meet legislative and building compliance over the life of the strategy.</p> <p>Ensure additional facilities for services and consolidate existing services if required to meet functionality and compliance are incorporated into integrated facility hubs to address multiple service demands. Council will optimise opportunities for Major Capital Works grant applications available from Department of Education and Training for the building of integrated service hubs, especially on any new school sites, such as in Fishermans Bend</p> |
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| | <p>DO NOT SUPPORT SUPER CENTRES AND CO_LOCATION - THIS Removes community input and creates barriers to entry and increases car use.</p> <p>Work with early years' networks to consult and promote the range of opportunities to incorporate nature and sensory play into their service settings with supported funding opportunities.</p> <p>THIS IS ALREADY in the early years framework and being heavily promoted by other areas. Spend our money elsewhere on keeping assets and supporting not for profits and council run centres.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>DO NOT SUPPORT - NOT Everything IS GOING TO BE FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE if council charges rents and sells of assets. There are plenty of council assets that are not financially sustainable for council yet bring enormous benefit to the community.</p> <p>Policy Objective 6: Early Years services will be supported by safe, accessible, contemporary, fit-for-purpose, sustainable facilities and environments.</p> <p>DO NOT SUPPORT the use of the word contemporary!!! IS this a get out for council officers to exit the market?</p> |
| 15163 | <p>We do not support the sale of assets or the council leaving the childcare and kinder market, investing in your people is the cheapest investment council can make.</p> <p>There needs to be at least one special needs play group like Malvern special needs.</p> <p>We do not support co-location of services. Super centres do not suit the majority of people. They are bureaucratic, formal and increase car use. Big is not better, it decreases competition.</p> <p>Council have deliberately excluded family day care and in home care as options. There are many family day care services in Copp. Family day care are an excellent option and also employ local people and decrease car use.</p> |
| 15165 | <p>This draft policy is very confusing and not straight forward it has a specific bent to council selling asset and not being child focused. Council should look at a clean well written policy that Geelong has. (<i>respondent included policy wording</i>)</p> |
| 15168 | <p>NPP- Council should do a public interest test that could alternatively be applied which weighs up public benefits in terms of the relevant public policy objectives. This was not an option and should be included.</p> <p>Council should not sell of assets and buildings and force community run and council kinder into positions that could close them.</p> |

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| | <p>Community run centres have benefits for the whole community</p> <p>Council should fund a special needs play group like Malvern Special Needs</p> <p>Council must include Family day care and in-home options in all there draft policy. Council is incorrect in their understanding of how family day care operates, then are may many FDC in CoPP, however their central service provider may not be in CoPP, so council won't see these in the data they are looking at.</p> <p>Council should include MCHN services within a child services policy</p> <p>I do not support a central wait list</p> <p>Council should have a simple easier to follow policy, this is an options paper, not a policy. A good example people are discussing is Geelong's easy to read policy</p> <p>co-location is not always better, I am against it. I prefer models that are community based, local and not formal.</p> <p>The Dept of Education and Early Childhood development said that sharing facilities adds additional costs arising from sharing arrangements, including; higher transaction COSTS higher management costs Higher operating costs,</p> <p>Raising and supporting kids is expensive, but not investing in them now will lead to higher costs well beyond making assets complaint with DDA in the long run. It would be a short term mistake to exit the market or sell assets due to a short term problem.</p> |
| 15171 | <p>In the Early Years Services Current and Future Demand Analysis Report, the forecast demand for kindergarten places up to the year 2031 is inaccurate because the modelling does not consider the significant impact of the State Government's commitment to roll-out 15 hours of subsidised kindergarten for 3 year olds over the next decade. As stated in the Murdoch Children's Institute Evidence Review, Australia currently has relatively low rates of 3 year old kindergarten provision.</p> <p>The report's analysis of current demand for kindergarten was based on current capacity and utilisation rates, however, this presents a simplistic overview of the actual need for places because the kindergarten participation rate in Port Phillip is 7.8% lower than the state average. Further analysis is required to determine the reasons for lower than average kindergarten participation rates and to develop strategies to increase 4 year old kindergarten participation in Port Phillip.</p> <p>Sessional kindergarten currently provides an affordable preschool option for families who are ineligible to receive Child Care Subsidy, due to not meeting the Activity Test requirements. The Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (which is not available to long day care services) enables children in the following categories to receive free 4 year old kindergarten:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, or |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • holds, or has a parent/guardian who holds a Humanitarian or refugee Visa (see page 25), or • is a multiple birth child (triplets or more), or • holds, or has a parent who holds a Commonwealth Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card or Veteran's Affairs Card. <p>The Kindergarten Fee Subsidy is not available for long day care services in receipt of Commonwealth Child Care Subsidy. Therefore, if families are forced to take kindergarten places in long day care due to lack of availability of sessional kindergarten places, many vulnerable families will be disadvantaged further due to the prohibitive costs of long day care.</p> <p>The State Government's Early Childhood Reform Plan outlines four key reforms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting higher quality services and reducing disadvantage in early education • Providing more support for parenting • Making early childhood services more accessible and inclusive • Building a better system. <p>These reforms cannot be achieved without close partnership and commitment from local Councils. The City of Port Phillip's new Children's Services Policy should be closely aligned with Early Childhood Reform Plan. The proposed sale of community assets that currently provide early childhood services is completely unacceptable and in direct opposition to the Victorian Government's vision for the early years.</p> |
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Emailed submissions from individuals

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| Individual, suburb unknown | <p>I write to register my feedback for various sections of this proposed policy;</p> <p>Objective 3</p> <p>I do not support CoPP selling or transition-assets our children's resources, i.e. Elwood Community Playgroup, The Toy Library or the entire Poet's Grove Centre.</p> <p>Objective 6</p> <p>6.1 - I do not support a frame work being rolled out to each children's resource, i.e. Elwood Community Playgroup, The Toy Library or the entire Poet's Grove Centre.</p> <p>6.2 - I do not support the children's resources being merged into one super centre.</p> |
| Individual, Albert Park | <p>My name is (redacted) and I grew up in the City of Port Phillip and now raise my two preschool children here. I was most concerned to recently learn that our local council plans to restructure the funding model of the local council run childcare centres which could possibly result in the closure of these centres. Both my children attend neighbourhood house childcare in carter st, Albert park (also known as South Melbourne community co-op) which although community run is on council land and as part of the restructure council may demand rent for the site (even though maintenance fees are currently paid) which would result in its closure as the subsequent fee increase would not be competitive.</p> <p>Closure of neighbourhood house would be an absolutely travesty. The centre continually excels in the national standards and runs at 100% capacity ie clearly providing much needed exceptional care. Both my children have blossomed from the</p> |

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| | <p>nurturing environment this centre provides, which I believe could not be replicated by a private system.</p> <p>One of the things I have most loved about growing up and living in Albert Park is the sense of community here. I am so proud that our community has valued early education enough to provide an alternative to the model to the private childcare system, whereby a dedicated community board not profit is in control of governance. This passion clearly permeates through the centre, with everyone from the longstanding and brilliant director, Kate Hall, to the caring staff and the range and quality of play based education provided. Such an amazing service, as I am sure you are aware, is open to everyone who is placed on a centralised waiting list regardless of economic or cultural background, promoting further the egalitarian sense of community I am so proud of.</p> <p>I have contacted Martin Foley's office yesterday and am relieved that he is against the closure of childcare centres in the area. I hope the local council lead by yourself will be as supportive of maintaining our much valued community assets, that myself and fellow concerned parents/ community members are prepared to get behind to defend.</p> |
| Individual, St Kilda | <p>I am a resident of your ward and all three of our children either have, or are currently, attending a community run childcare service in Albert Park (South Melbourne Childcare Cooperative in Carter Street).</p> <p>I am writing to you in great concern regarding the potential impact of the proposed changes to Council's Childrens Services Policy, and in particular policy recommendation 6.1. This recommendation, if supported by Council, would appear to target existing, smaller, not for profit community-run childcare services (i.e. Neighborhood Houses) in Port Phillip that are consistently excelling in the quality of care they provide.</p> <p>Any change in Council's policy that would impact the ability of these centres to operate as they are now would be both short sighted and irresponsible. These centres are consistently in such high demand and are operating near or at full capacity BECAUSE the quality of care they provide is so fantastic. Rather than targeting these smaller centres, Council should be supporting these centres as examples of excellence, and advocating for this level of care to be achieved in every centre that receives Council funding.</p> <p>Whilst I support the general approach outlined in the Council's proposed Childcare Services Policy overall, and agree with much of its intent, I cannot support any recommendations that would put at risk such excellent services providers as the smaller childcare cooperatives. I believe the smaller providers generally offer a much greater level of care for our children, and as such, consider it would be untenable to endorse a policy that targets the operations of smaller centres that are excelling in the quality of care provided.</p> |

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| Individual, suburb unknown | <p>I write in relation to the current Children's Services Policy Review.</p> <p>My two youngest children currently attend Neighbourhood House, which is a wonderful venue, with a warm, family-friendly feel. Almost every parent knows, and greets, almost every child and other parent when they enter and leave the centre.</p> <p>My older children previously attended larger centres, both commercial and council-run. They suffered from the impersonal care, the high staff turnover and the lack of a true community feel. When my four-year old moved to the smaller centre, she thrived; she came out of her shell, and became a boisterous child who enjoyed being welcomed into the community that Neighbourhood House creates (and, presumably, other smaller childcare centres also create).</p> <p>It was therefore extremely distressing to me to read the suggestion in Objective 6.1 of the Review, which recommended the closure of such smaller childcare centres.</p> <p>I will be appalled and disappointed if the council takes such a step. Indeed, I will consider initiating - in combination with my colleagues and our local community - a legal challenge to any such decision.</p> <p>I urge you in the strongest terms to reject this assault on the small community run, childcare centres that have helped my children, and hundreds of others, to thrive.</p> |
| Individual, unknown | <p>I am writing to express my deep concern about the ramifications of section 6.1 in your draft Children's Services Policy. As I'm sure you are aware, requiring "all assets to meet a minimum of 66 places" would force the closure of South Melbourne Neighbourhood House.</p> <p>On a personal level I am highly invested in ensuring the continuity of Neighbourhood House. One of my daughter's currently attends the centre and my older daughter graduated several years ago.</p> <p>The educational, social and emotional benefits both my girls have received at Neighbourhood House have been profound and enduring. The centre is exemplary by every measure and it would be a travesty to deny current and future children gold standard in early years education.</p> <p>From a community perspective, I am concerned that such a policy will pave the way for big corporates to take over early childhood education in our community entirely. Having been the president of Southport Playhouse, I understand the value of community involvement and volunteering contributions and know how difficult this will become if all childcare centres are required to be large-scale.</p> <p>As with so many family and childhood initiatives in Port Phillip, Neighbourhood House is a centre of which the council should be proud. Please do not destroy Neighbourhood House (and other smaller centres) — the bedrock of the community for many past, present and future families.</p> |

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| <p>Individual, suburb unknown</p> | <p>I write to express my concern about the ramifications of section 6.1 in your draft Children's Services Policy.</p> <p>In particular, the requirement that "all assets to meet a minimum of 66 places" will force the closure of South Melbourne Neighbourhood House and make it unlikely for community-based providers in the future.</p> <p>Both of my girls attend/have attended Neighbourhood House and the educational, social and cultural benefits have been profound and enduring.</p> <p>The Centre is rated as exceeding the national quality standards. It would set an appalling precedent for Council to set by closing such a highly rated Centre.</p> <p>More broadly, if it were to go ahead, I suspect this policy will favour large commercial providers, which place making money ahead of child and community wellbeing</p> <p>Given the strength of community support for Neighbourhood House and community run centres, it would be a courageous Council that allowed this draft to stand. I invite you and your colleagues to revise this requirement and think through the ramifications of shuttering such a well regarded and recognised centre.</p> |
| <p>Individual, St Kilda</p> | <p>I'm writing to add to the conversation of Council's draft recommendations for a new children's services policy. I am a Port Phillip resident and ratepayer, as well as user of council childcare services, maternal and child healthcare services, playgroup and the library.</p> <p>I deeply care about my family's impact on the environment; particularly the amount of plastic waste and the carbon emissions we produce. In an effort to reduce my household waste upon the birth of my son, I started using a cloth nappy wash service which meant that I significantly avoided the amount of waste our household sent to landfill. The cloth nappies are also chemical free and gentle on my son's skin. The service picks up the soiled nappies once a week and delivers clean, high quality nappies and covers, as well as cloth wipes.</p> <p>I have spoken with other parents who use cloth nappies at Bubup Nairn childcare and they have very positive things to say. Unfortunately, the logistics of personally delivering and collecting cloth nappies for childcare are a bit complex, so as I am transitioning back to work I have started using eco-nappies for childcare instead. While these nappies won't take 500 years to break down, they are expensive, fill up the bin and will still create methane as they biodegrade slowly and poorly in landfill. When I rang the nappy wash service to reduce my service, the company Botanic Baby let me know that they provide their nappy wash service to some childcare centres in Melbourne.</p> <p>As part of the review of the new Children's Services Policy, I would like to encourage Council to consider the waste that these centres and their families produce from nappies. It would be in line with the Waste Management Strategy priority outcomes to consider a bold idea such as offering cloth nappy wash service for families at Port Phillip childcare centres. I realise these proposals can be met with skepticism and often considered too administratively difficult, but I think analysis will show that cloth nappies will prove to be cheaper for parents, reduce landfill waste for the centres, and be healthier for the children. Additionally, companies that offer all of the materials (nappies in different sizes, covers, wipes) and pick up, clean the nappies and deliver clean nappies weekly, make the process very inexpensive (even compared to budget disposables) and practical.</p> |

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|---------------------|---|
| | <p>I hope you will consider the significant amount of waste from childcare when reviewing the new children's services policy.</p> |
| Individual, Unknown | <p>I'm a resident of Lake Ward with two young children. I work full-time on the executive team of an ASX200 company and my wife works four days a week as a senior executive at one of Australia's leading energy companies. Our careers are made possible by having access to local long day childcare and kindergarten.</p> <p>I am concerned about the recommendations in the new Children's Services Policy Issues and Options Paper, and the impact it will have on access. In particular item 6.1 which implies closure or relocation of centres with less than 66 children.</p> <p>Our two daughters attend Neighbourhood House, which provides exceptional care and development, as well as providing a hub for the local community. It was graded as 'exceptional' in its last formal audit. It seems implausible that the council would apply a blanket size requirement ahead of quality of service and it is unacceptable to contemplate closing such a high performing centre.</p> <p>I ask you to rethink the recommendations where the council would be seen to close high-quality centres based on some arbitrary bureaucratic measure.</p> <p>Don't hesitate to call me on (redacted) for any further information.</p> |

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Appendix 3: Workshop outputs

Main discussion points by theme

Affordability

- The affordability of Long Day Care (LDC) was raised by a participant who commented that there may be a greater shift towards LDC and away from kinder in the future. Families who can't access child care subsidy can't afford LDC therefore wait until their child is 4 years old
- Concerns were expressed about the way in which Council has relied on census data to predict 0-4 age group future population growth

Anti-private services

- Some participants commented that Educators add the most value to child's experience – Council and community run services both provide good experience.
- If Council is struggling to run at profit → how will private providers make profit?

'Protect ratepayers: do not close centres overnight, they offer quality care, please do not go all private!'

'Private meets a requirement but are different values than Council run'

Cost increases

- Some participants felt the council estimate of a \$5 to \$15 a day increase to rectify NCP compliance issues was probably too low.
- Some were also concerned about the cost recovery recommendations if full cost recovery was to be required this would significantly increase fees.

Council support children services

Subtheme: Provision of Quality Services:

- Council should support public access to children's education in publicly sponsored way.

'As a rate payer, I believe providing quality early childhood services in my community. For me, I feel this is important and the type of community I want to live.'

Subtheme: Supporting transition arrangements

- In relation to Objective 3 Option C - Could transition arrangements include Committee of Management supported by Council?
- Savings could be reinvested to fund places for low income/marginal → same investment. New funding required.
- Transition is appealing however Q re Long term cost of management (society changes from community managed → services have struggled)
- Other questions raised by participants included:
 - But what is future of local communities managing a business?
 - Need a certain # places?
 - How can Council support this?

Information and communication

- For many participants the key word is COMMUNICATION
- Communication improvements will result in increased participation of families.
- All 6 recommendations points for Policy Objective 5 will meet that need – they all represent different ways of communicating
- Some participants commented that word of mouth is still the best way people learn about things for example the Toy Library held a 'Messy Play Day' which was a networking opportunity promoted by word of mouth

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- Council should not rely on emails – people get too many emails these days and miss important ones
- Rec 5.5 the centralised information portal - even if Council creates an amazing online tool people may not find it!

Kindergartens

- Most comments about kindergarten were in response to policy recommendation 2.4 and its reference to three-year-old funded kindergarten.
- There was a comment that State Government is undertaking its consultation now to help scope the future need for 3yr old kinder.
- Council confirmed that recommendation 2.2 the reference to childcare did not include kindergarten.
- Council confirmed it has also undertaken some research with support from Ernst & Young who have completed a capacity study.
- Some participants commented about the potential impact of this funding on 4y.o places – ie some centres may need to reduce 4yo places and this was a concern.

***'My concern is that Council would close services for 'kindergarten facilities'.
I find this policy confusing; it seems to cover so many things?'***

***'I believe that most services will cope with 3-year enrolment – rollout will
take a long time – more planning needed – via census info to determine if
needed.'***

- Kindergartens were also discussed when Policy Objective 4 (collaboration across all early years' services) was considered. A few participants commented about an existing kindergarten network that is not supported by Council (done in own time).

***'We already have a 'kindergarten teacher network'. We meet each term. My
director manages this. We meet at different kinders and at a café. I find this
is a very supportive network and keeps me up to date with what is going on.
PDs and assessment and rating info '.***

National Quality Framework and future performance indicators

- There was some discussion about the overlay of National Quality Framework (NQF) requirements and quality subsidy requirements to be met:
 - Some commented that it is not evident in the proposals that Council staff have a role in ensuring quality across the municipality.
 - The proposal for Key performance Indicators (KPI) needs consultation as there is no context yet for these. Council was advised to be careful where focus requirements for KPI's/agree with centres.
 - There were also questions about what support there would be from Council to reach NQF?
- There were a few concerns raised about how centres are currently assessed against the NQF: the comment was made that it is a point in time on day of audit assessment where one 'miss' such as timing of checking on the 'supervision issue' where if not 'seen by assessor' in that particular moment it results in a fail:

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- Result of this is even if exceeding across all others → assessed as 'not meeting' because of that fail.
- NQF (re access and inclusion) rating should speak to that - so support families to understand the rating system and encourage site visits by future service users.

Support for community run services

- Three main areas of support were identified during discussions:
 - Mixed feedback on maintenance at centres (one centre reported very responsive maintenance, another reported inconsistent response)
 - Length of leases
 - Collaboration with Council – networking and professional development

Maintenance

- There were several comments about the lack of responsiveness to maintenance requests.
- There was also some confusion created by different priorities between the centres and Council – for example one centre raised a request for repairs to its foyer lighting and were informed this was not a priority and the centre would have to wait until the new financial year then a short time later the centre is visited by a contractor to replace a water service deemed inefficient by Council (but that was in perfect working order).
- Maintenance levies - what do we get for it?! Can't initiate for some buildings because it will trigger additional requirements for compliance with DDA/Code and Council does not want to lose money.

Leases

- There were several requests allow community run facilities to commit to long-term leases at lowest / peppercorn rent for their facilities.
- Longer leases will decrease uncertainty and drive different (better) behaviours especially for community facilities – ie they will have the confidence to invest in centre fabric / outdoor yards
- One participant explained that 5 or 6 years ago Council moved from MOU to lease, from seeing community run centres as 'service partners' to 'tenants' → cost recovery business model which has resulted in a move away from 'providing a service valued by community'

Collaboration

- There were some comments about how Council used to support networking events but over the last 12 months there has been a lack of collaboration and lack of coordination of network meetings.

'Training of staff is of upmost importance due to lower standard of training in current institutions. Support for all staff either way is imperative, especially Educational. leaders (need to have more time to ensure quality documentation, planning and reflective practice occurs alongside family partnerships.'

'Much of 4.1 has historically been in place and 4.2 is currently in place – just without specific support. (for childcare centres). It would be nice to have Council acknowledge the importance of both 4.1 and 4.2 and help facilitate both.'

Support for Council run services

- There was general support for maintaining accessible Council run facilities

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'I do not want to reside in community where children's access is determined by profit'

Support for existing assets

- Some participants also raised concern about money being spent on bringing buildings up to code when the priority is educators + the way centres are run (quality)
 - The 'fabric' of assets is less important (fabric means visually appealing / look/feel).
- Some raised whether it is possible to add new components (not necessarily attached to original) vs refurbish 'as built' so as not to trigger requirements to upgrade old buildings?
 - Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) + not Building Code?
 - What does that 'define to' in the policy options document and is it also therefore a challenge to Councillors?
- In relation to asset sales to support transition arrangements Council was advised to:
 - Look forward ie not short fix to sale.
 - Remember the need for universal access which is done by allotting Council's own land for that purpose in an ongoing way – needs to be demonstrated by Council before any sale that it simply wouldn't be used again (* qualifier of remain in portfolio)
 - Link was made to 'Kennett sales'...and questions were raised about how would market failures be overcome?
- A few participants raised an issue with the word contemporary in policy objective 6 stating that not all facilities / spaces need to be shiny and new. Council was advised not to disregard services/facilities because of their age – as hubs can be formulaic / old buildings are more characterful - retain assets and meet requirements.

'Older facilities well maintained is the key.'

- Comments about the word contemporary included:
 - Contemporary could refer to different things such as Age/character or Servicer/facilities eg toilets etc.
 - The word contemporary needs to be considered in the context of the other words around it – and fit for purpose is already there and incorporates most things anyway.
 - Some kindergartens/LDC operate out of beautiful buildings that are older style and have a lot to offer.
 - The word is misplaced in this policy objective.
- There was some confusion about whether Objective 6 refers to all assets. Some participants felt this was not realistic → should include all NEW assets. Advice was provided that as Council has no control of State/Fed so be careful of mapping to their asset related requirements as they can change unexpectedly.
- Concern was also raised that future buildings will end up looking the looking all the same especially re the requirement for 66 places for viability.

Support for targeting vulnerable families

- Some service providers commented that the requirement to 'report to child protection' made it difficult to support vulnerable families.
- Some stated that Equity and inclusion is narrowly considered in COPP and that judgements about advantage /disadvantage are dangerous.
 - There was a strong view expressed that State Gov /Federal Gov need to be responsible for this aspect and not local government.
- There was some acknowledgement of current funding (for sessional kindergarten) looks after vulnerable families who are not eligible for childcare subsidies.

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Toy libraries and playgroups

- Most discussion points related to policy recommendation 2.1 and increasing operating hours:
 - Toy Library access to all family types for quality resources would reach more children.
 - Operate well now - increase hours would not necessarily make things better (ie pack up requirements for rooms).
 - Playgroups require families to fit hours of operation and this creates difficulties with working families.
 - For Play group #2. 1 is essential.

Waitlist and places

- There were many comments about the ineffectiveness of the waitlist:
 - The operation of the waitlist does not recognise what families value in service provision such as siblings being prioritised to allow an ongoing relationship with family or the benefits of co-located service access
 - Waitlist → nothing ever comes of it! Find out via Word of Mouth to access centres
 - If could work properly it would be great
 - Requirement to use waitlist is not fit for purpose → get rid of it, it is not working!
 - Not enough spaces on list ie list is depleted
 - No one wants it!
 - List is rigid - issue is having to go on list even if places available at preferred provider
 - It is linked to funding / restriction of trade issue – it is a flawed system → (Council allocating places)
 - Most services want to manage their own list

‘We like to manage our waitlist. Our kinder prefers to meet families and families who need support or at risk are supported. As a sessional kinder, we are one of the only early childhood service in Elwood giving families with health care cards free kindergarten. Poet’s Grove has gone to a longer session and has higher fees. They do not offer ‘free kinder’ to health care card holders. This is why we like to manage this.’

‘Children’s centres currently using the current waitlist all acknowledge it is out of date and no longer serves the purpose as it was intended. It would be a disaster to then add more services – it needs a massive overhaul.

Talk to the kinders – they don’t want it!’

‘My kindergarten manages its waitlist and we provide spaces for families in need. We like to manage this ourselves.’

- There was concern about the reference in Policy Objective 6 about the minimum of 66 places - from a parent perspective

‘It is not realistic that centres are ‘contemporary’ or that centres meet a minimum of 66 places. The building fabric is not as important as the educators and centre managements. Funding priorities should not promote ‘building structures’ as opposed to building education.’

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Comments about specific policy recommendations

Additional notes captured about relative ranking of policy objectives 1 to 7

Preferences discussions (refer to table of tallied results below)

- 1st preference is PO #1 = Universal Access x 2 participants
 - Reason is Early Childhood Service = Human Service (rates to go here not just Roads, Rates, Rubbish)
 - #1 (x2) → Fair/inclusive approach – people coming from same start / Future proofing
 - Objective 1 – the only way to provide all our children with equitable access of learning to set foundations of life skills.

It resonates with me that the policy should be fair and inclusive – future proofing children who are vulnerable from future distress and issues.

- 1st preference is PO #2 (meeting needs...)
- 1st preference PO #7 Nat Enviro: so much learning takes place o/s (offset high density) (links to mental health) outdoor leader
 - Economically assess everything else – ie including PO# 7 within this. Quality (play based makes a huge difference to every child) → sustainability: every child has access to quality service
- 2nd preference is PO #1 (universal access)

Additional notes captured in response to Objective 1

- There was general support for all recommendations related to Objective 1.
- There was particular interest in early intervention outreach (rec 1.3) – this was seen as a great step to help address groups in reaching these groups (as NDIS not meeting these requirements) – especially support for refugees.
 - There was also a caution that there are other agencies in the early intervention space and Council should take care not to double up.
- Some questions were raised about who are the Partners referred to in the policy objective?
- Reference as also made to COAG support universal access & the MAV Commitment to 'universal access': Councils sign up to this.
- There was a comment that recommendation 1.2 Compliance with Child safe Standards should not be a policy recommendation as it is the law.
- In relation to recommendation 1.4 there was a question about how Council would effectively manage website - this comment was based on waitlist experiences (and the desire by some centres to self-manage this)
 - Some participants said they would trust a website endorsed by Council if it is:
 - Factual
 - Linked to ACEQUA website
 - Kept up to date re: ratings
 - Reviewed regularly by Council
- There was a comment for Council to remember that all centres are managing 3 levels of Gov compliance requirements and not to add to that burden.

Additional notes captured in response to Objective 2

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- Some participants commented that 3-year-old kindergarten funding may not happen until 2022 → so it is too early to say transition is an option (recommendation 2.4)
 - It is seen as harder to fill than 0-3.
 - 3-5-year-old sessional / standalone → more options here.
 - A lot will be assumed before asset transition required and more data required.

Additional notes captured in response to Objective 3

OBJECTIVE 3:

- Some confidence from Council's explanation at workshop that Options A to C only refer to Council run centres, but these words are not reflected in the policy document.
- There is not any recognition of where we are situated in Melbourne ie older area / organic growth / heritage buildings → so we need a more flexible approach.
- The policy should distinguish between:
 - Council owned (Council as landlord)
 - Council owned and run (Council as employer)

'Option C: It seems like the best compromise of all the contributing factors, and I have a child at Poet's Grove and think it runs perfectly, so wouldn't want anything to change.'

Additional notes in response to Objective 4

- From a ratepayer perspective there was a question about why Council would need to do 4.1 facilitating collaborative and collegiate relationships with early years' networks. An alternative suggestion was that Council continue to support families by providing positive parenting classes /speakers (that staff can also access).
- From a service provider perspective both recommendations were supported and seen as hard to achieve:
 - Questions were asked about the potential for Council to open up its 2 days PD /year for all service providers to attend
 - Upskilling staff is seen as a constant requirement:
 - Graduates are not great quality therefore left to approved provider to upskill.
 - PD needs to be increased and someone needs to pay for it.
 - V.I.T renewal requires disability training and time for this also needs to be supported.
- 4.1 For Childcare Centres → was in existence however turnover of Council Officers has meant it has been dropped eg 20 years ago this was a strong focus for Council – so is there an opportunity for those centres rated under the NQF as 'Exceeding excellent' to provide role modelling / mentoring for other centres?
- Education leaders are key people who need the opportunity to collaborate (need time to ensure Professional Development is possible).

Additional notes in response to Objective 5

- There was general support for these recommendations and important because they recognise both choice for families and the significance consultation with service providers (Rec 5.3 centralised enrolment system).
- One service provider commented about how they already survey all people on the waitlist for future planning purposes – ie access to potential service users.
- There was also a comment about Council being aware of increasing the administrative /compliance burden on service providers.
- Funding is difficult to navigate and there are concerns that changes at a Federal Gov level will negatively impact vulnerable access (Fed Childcare Subsidy).

5.1 can seem a bit odd but word of mouth is the best way to spread info amongst parents.

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Additional notes in response to Objective 6

- Some participants commented that consistency of environment is a gift and is consistent with National Quality Framework requirements.
- Increased awareness of services available will be good for people coming into the community → it would help especially for Toy Libraries:
 - Note that for Toy Libraries sustainability does not equal open every day.
- Questions were raised by some about the potential for new hubs:
 - Will they be more viable?
 - For new purpose-built facilities – is land available?
- For #6.3 Council was encouraged to 'Get it right from start' by including 'look and feel' considerations of users and not just building new facilities to be like a classroom!
 - Council was also advised to consider climate change impacts (future needs for heating and cooling).
- Council was encouraged to offer more occasional care / multipurpose options.

'Legislation and Regulation dictate what changes need to be made to fit within aims of quality, safety and access.'

Additional notes in response to Objective 7

- There was consistent support for the associated policy recommendations, and it was seen as very important to families.
- COPP was seen as a leader in providing access to open space.
- There was a recognition that not all existing centres will be able to provide access to bush / natural outdoor areas. Suggestions to respond to this were:
 - Look at opportunities to repurpose other facilities to provide access.
 - Excursions to existing adventure playgrounds where at least 20% of those are under utilised
 - This prompted discussion of some of the challenges experienced by centres meeting excursion related compliance issues such as risk assessment requirements and Working with Children check requirements per Child Safe Standards.
 - Excursions outside centres is problematic due to adult/child ratio – it depends on ratio 1:5 not enough (2:11 for Bubup W)
 - Poet's Grove: excursions 5:1 ratio
 - Helicopter parenting! Beach kinder has taken time to initiate

'I find it very difficult to rate these separate recommendations - they are all important – I do feel Indigenous perspectives are so important so I will put this at 1 but they all could be.'

'Collaboration and consultation is key to improving quality environments.'

'They (recommendations) provide well – but my two favourites provide a more universal sense for kids of all ages.'

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Relative ranking for overall Policy Objectives

| Policy Objective | Rank 1 | Rank 2 | Rank 3 | Rank 4 | Rank 5 | Rank 6 | Rank 7 |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 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.' | 1 1 1 | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | |
| Totals | 3 | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | |
| 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.' | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 1 1 1 | | |
| Totals | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 3 | | |
| 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.' | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 1 1 |
| Totals | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 2 |
| Policy objective 4: 'Council will encourage collaboration across all Early Years' services.' | | | 1 | | | 1 1 1 | 1 1 |
| Totals | | | 1 | | | 3 | 2 |
| 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.' | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 |
| Totals | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 |
| Policy Objective 6: 'Early Years services will be supported by safe, accessible, contemporary, fit-for-purpose, sustainable facilities and environments.' | | 1 1 1 | 1 | | | 1 | 1 |
| Totals | | 3 | 1 | | | 1 | 1 |
| Policy 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.' | 1 | | 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | | |
| Totals | 1 | | 1 | 2 | 2 | | |

Relative ranking of options and recommendations within each policy objective

| Recommendations | Rank 1 | Rank 2 | Rank 3 | Rank 4 |
|-----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|-----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|

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| | | | | |
|--|-------|-------|---------|---------|
| Policy recommendation 1.1 Create a new grant program to provide a financial subsidy for families experiencing ongoing and situational vulnerability and disadvantage. This subsidy will be available for all eligible City of Port Phillip community members accessing any Early Years' Service in the City. | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Totals | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Policy recommendation 1.2 Support Child Safe Standards implementation across all early years' services (especially toy libraries and playgroups) through an education and capacity-building program. | | 1 | 1 1 1 1 | 1 |
| Totals | | 1 | 4 | 4 |
| Policy recommendation 1.3 Fund an early intervention outreach role to work with relevant service providers in the City (child protection, homelessness, mental health, family violence) to increase participation of vulnerable children in early childhood education services, especially kindergarten services. | 1 1 1 | 1 1 1 | | |
| Totals | 3 | 3 | | |
| Policy recommendation 1.4 Develop a Children's Services website that will provide information on all children's services in the City. This will include services provided, vacancies, specialist expertise, fee levels, educational approaches, target groups served and more. Participation in the website should be a condition for services to receive Council grants. | 1 | | 1 | 1 1 1 1 |
| Totals | 1 | | 1 | 4 |

| Recommendations | Rank 1 | Rank 2 | Rank 3 | Rank 4 |
|---|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| Policy recommendation 2.1 Review and update the service model for toy libraries to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review funding model and operating subsidy to increase operating hours at current toy library sites to increase access and availability to services for residents now and into the future in existing Port Phillip areas. Develop one new toy library site in Fisherman's Bend to service the growing population, as part of an integrated hub. | 1 | 1 1 1 1 | | 1 |
| Totals | 1 | 4 | | 4 |
| Policy recommendation 2.2 Monitor, track, encourage and report on the market response to childcare demand. | | 1 | | 1 1 1 1 |

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| | | | | |
|---|--------------|----------|--------------|----------|
| Totals | | 4 | | 4 |
| Policy recommendation 2.3 Review and update the service model for playgroups to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A dedicated, or several functional multipurpose, playgroup space/s to be considered in Fisherman's Bend, as part of an integrated hub. An additional playgroup or children's multipurpose space in the north end of Port Phillip to be considered (South Melbourne or Port Melbourne neighbourhoods). Make available the playgroup rooms in Bupub Nairn Family and Children's Centre across five days of the week and transition other programs into other Family Services Rooms in the building to increase availability and capacity. | 1 1 1 1 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| Totals | 5 | 1 | 1 | |
| Policy recommendation 2.4 With the addition of funded three-year-old Kindergarten, consider transitioning current Council assets into kindergarten facilities to meet future demand where relevant, especially where the private market is meeting the demand/need for childcare services in that area. | | | 1 1 1 1 1 | 1 |
| Totals | | | 5 | 1 |

| Objective 3 - Options | Rank 1 | Rank 2 | Rank 3 | Rank 4 | Rank 5 |
|--|----------|----------|----------|--------|----------|
| A. Council continues operating and subsidising childcare services as is <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This option is likely to be in non-compliance with the National Competition Policy. It is unlikely Council will be able to maintain and renew all existing assets to meet current and future demand, functionality and compliance issues. Council subsidies will continue to be untargeted and not based on need. Some assets will not be fit-for-purpose or compliant with legislation. Could explore co-funding or lease-to-own opportunities with tenants of council-owned facilities. | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 1 |
| Totals | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 1 |
| B. Council continues operating services, but at full cost recovery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This option is likely to meet National Competition Policy requirements. Requires a review of infrastructure and maintenance levies to ensure they cover all renewal and utility costs. Will require increased fees at Council-run childcare services to allow for cost recovery (\$5-\$15 per day). | 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | | |

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| Objective 3 - Options | Rank 1 | Rank 2 | Rank 3 | Rank 4 | Rank 5 |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore co-funding or lease-to-own opportunities with tenants of council-owned facilities. • Continued support for community managed centres. | | | | | |
| Totals | 1 | 2 | 2 | | |
| C. Council ceases operating Council-run childcare services and transition services to not-for-profit providers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This would include full cost recovery rental arrangements, and utilities at cost to new owner. • Meets all industrial obligations under relevant agreements and legislation. • This could include purchase, co-funding or lease-to-own opportunities with not-for-profit providers. • Operational savings to Council • Asset sales to support transition arrangements | 1 1 1 | 1 1 | | 1 1 | |
| Totals | 3 | 2 | | 2 | |
| D. Council ceases operating Council-run services and sells or transitions assets for other Council purposes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This assumes that the market will meet current and future demand. • Uncertain as to how market failures will be overcome. • Operational savings to Council. • Asset sales to support transition arrangements | | | | 1 1 | 1 1 1 |
| Totals | | | | 2 | 3 |
| E. Council chooses a hybrid model based on above options (please describe below what this could look like) | 1 | | 1 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Totals | 1 | | 2 | 1 | 1 |

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| Recommendations | Rank 1 | Rank 2 |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Policy recommendation 4.1 Facilitate collaborative and collegiate relationships with early years' networks. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify professional development needs for educators (including assistance in sourcing bulk discounts for training and providing free training room space). Childcare staff to visit and learn from centres in the municipality or within Melbourne that are consistently receiving an 'Exceeding' or 'Excellent' NQS rating, encouraging a 'community of practice'. These recommendations to apply to all providers, including independent and private providers. Support of Educational Leaders and networking across services. | 1 1 1 1 1 | 1 |
| Totals | 5 | 1 |
| Policy recommendation 4.2 Support the development of a kindergarten network to provide collaborative practice and integrated services that inform pedagogy and practice, for example approved provider responsibilities, professional development, quality referrals and transition to school programs. | 1 | 1 1 1 1 1 |
| Totals | 1 | 5 |

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| Recommendations | Rank 1 | Rank 2 | Rank 3 | Rank 4 | Rank 5 | Rank 6 |
|---|------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Policy recommendation 5.1 Proactively create and promote opportunities for families with children to meet other families and develop social connections through such things as community events and parents' workshops. | 1 | | 1 1 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| Totals | 1 | | 3 | 1 | 1 | |
| Policy recommendation 5.2 Improve communications about the availability of, and access to, all early years' services, especially kindergarten to culturally and linguistically diverse communities. | 1 1 1 1 | 1 | | | | 1 |
| Totals | 4 | 1 | | | | 1 |
| Policy recommendation 5.3 Utilise approved state funding to scope the creation of an effective and centralised municipal-wide enrolment system for community-run and independent kindergartens in Port Phillip. This will require significant consultation with service providers. | | | | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 |
| Totals | | | | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Policy recommendation 5.4 Develop a Memorandum of Understanding for playgroups with guidelines regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Size and inclusion Available support for volunteers, committees and parents Sustainability, including sharing of resources between groups and recycling | | | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 | |
| Totals | | | 2 | 2 | 1 | |
| Policy recommendation 5.5 Develop a centralised portal and communication strategy as part of the Customer Experience and Technology Transformation project, and work with children's service providers and families to establish the best way for families to receive the information they need, in the way they need it, when they need it. | | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 | 1 1 | |
| Totals | | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | |

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| Recommendations | Rank 1 | Rank 2 | Rank 3 | Rank 4 | Rank 5 | Rank 6 |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Policy recommendation 5.6 Improve the current childcare waitlist and investigate expanding it to include private and independent centres in order to provide families with better information about places for children under the age of three, as well as to inform short- and medium-term planning for childcare. | 1 | 1 1 | | | | 1 1 1 |
| Totals | 1 | 2 | | | | 3 |

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| Recommendations | Rank 1 | Rank 2 | Rank 3 |
|--|--------|--------|--------|
| Policy Recommendation 6.1 Develop an Early Year's Services Facility Framework that will deliver the following outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All assets to meet legislative and building compliance over the life of the strategy. All assets able to receive co-contribution funding from state government. This will require all assets to meet a minimum of 66 places. | 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 |
| Totals | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Policy recommendation 6.2 Work with all community-managed services over time to implement the framework outlined above. | 1 1 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Totals | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Policy Recommendation 6.3 Ensure additional facilities for services and consolidate existing services if required to meet functionality and compliance are incorporated into integrated facility hubs to address multiple service demands. Council will optimise opportunities for Major Capital Works grant applications available from Department of Education and Training for the building of integrated service hubs, especially on any new school sites, such as in Fisherman's Bend. | 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 |
| Totals | 1 | 2 | 2 |

Stage 2 engagement report - Appendices

| Recommendations | Rank 1 | Rank 2 | Rank 3 | Rank 4 |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Policy recommendation 7.1 Develop model for optimising access to existing assets in the city such as parks, beaches, and adventure playgrounds. | 1 1 | 1 | 1 1 | |
| Totals | 2 | 1 | 2 | |
| Policy recommendation 7.2 Advocate for the promotion of outdoor learning environments and programs that promote children's connection to nature and environmental sustainability practices, for example Clean up Port Phillip Day, Be Out There, Let's G.O (Get outside), and Indigenous nature-based cultural programs. | 1 | 1 | 1 1 1 | 1 1 |
| Totals | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| Policy recommendation 7.3 Develop a minimum design guideline for future playground works/upgrades at childcare centres that can be tailored for each site and implemented in stages, including investigating the development or suitability of nature and sensory play environments within open space settings for excursion purposes, for example developing bush kindergarten setting/s in the municipality. | 1 1 | 1 1 | | 1 |
| Totals | 2 | 2 | | 1 |
| Policy recommendation 7.4 Work with early years' networks to consult and promote the range of opportunities to incorporate nature and sensory play into their service settings with supported funding opportunities. | | 1 1 1 | | 1 1 |
| Totals | | 3 | | 2 |

To: City of Port Phillip Mayor and Councillors

Re: Every Child, Our Future – policy issues and options paper

We acknowledge, and appreciate, the City of Port Phillip's long and proud history of actively supporting community-managed children's services in the municipality over many years (including at those services directly managed by Council). We trust that, whatever the outcome of this policy review process, Council will continue to demonstrate a commitment to the provision of high quality, community-managed early education and care in Port Phillip. We endorse the first objective adopted by Council in September 2018 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"*.

We call for council to continue to support existing centres, as the increase in the population of young families and children creates the need for more early childhood education, not less. Early childhood education demand increases as more young families seek to make this part of Melbourne their home, and our council- and community-managed centres provide some of the highest quality care in the country, giving kids the best possible start in life.

Given this record of achievement and community support, Council is well positioned to expand its contribution to Council and community-managed early education and care. We call upon council to at least maintain the existing places and level of support whilst engaging properly with providers and families. We believe that Council should have an ongoing leadership role in the direct provision and support of early childhood education in the City of Port Phillip and note that plans to increase the level of three year old kindergarten participation being rolled out nationally will increase the role for local government. We ask council to adopt the following principles whilst establishing a negotiating group consisting of various stakeholders and interested parties including, but not limited to, management representatives from current council run services, management of community based not-for-profit services and parent committee representatives:

- Guarantee the existing number of places will be maintained, if not increased
- Continue the ongoing direct role for council in provision and support for early childhood education
- Pass this resolution and get it directly in front of the councillors for support. Take no action until this is done. Establish negotiating group consisting of stakeholders as detailed above.

Levies and subsidies:

Currently, Council's agreements with community-owned services apply a system of subsidies and levies to support high quality in children's services, provide equity of access to those services for all children and, at the same time, ensure that services contribute to their ongoing operating costs:

- Quality subsidy (5% of salary-related expenditure) – a subsidy that is well targeted and which recognizes the vital importance of educators (including qualifications, ratios, continuity, resources and professional development) to the achievement and maintenance of high-quality early education and care.
- Early Education Grant (EEG) – intended to ensure that children from families experiencing vulnerability and/or disadvantage appropriately access early education and care. These are the children that we know benefit the most from early education and care. It should be noted that, according to the Child Care in Australia quarterly report, 14,000 fewer children were in receipt of the Additional Child Care Subsidy in September 2018 (3 months after the new subsidy system was introduced) than were in receipt of the equivalent subsidies 12 months earlier. The EEG should be expanded to ensure that children from families with low incomes and low activity hours are receiving the amount of subsidized care they need (at least 2 full days p/week).
- Maintenance levy – calculated on a per child, per day basis at a standard rate for all services and indexed annually. Maintenance requirements for individual services vary widely with some services contributing much more in maintenance levies than is expended on maintenance for that service. It should be noted that, based on reports received by services, the costs of maintenance provision seem to be unusually high. This might prove to be an area where Council could achieve cost savings, without reduction in maintenance provision, in the future.
- Infrastructure levy – also calculated on a per child, per day basis at a standard rate for all services and indexed annually. While these funds are sometimes used for capital works at existing services, they are also used to contribute to the provision of new services in the municipality. It is likely that most services contribute much more in infrastructure levies than is expended on capital works for that service. Also based on reports received by services, the costs of capital works seem to be unusually high. For example, a study-nook area (non-structural partition with sliding door, built in desk and overhead cupboards) cost \$15,000+. This might also prove to be an area where Council could achieve cost savings.

If Council decides to review the existing subsidies and levies, the objectives of supporting high quality provision, equity of access and accountability transparency should be maintained.

Fit for purpose buildings:

We are very aware of the difficulty faced by Council with respect to buildings that are not fit for purpose and/or have major structural concerns and concede that repair in some instances is not a practical option. While we acknowledge that obtaining State funding to contribute to the cost of new buildings and/or major redevelopments is highly desirable, we urge Council to plan such projects with the best interests and needs of the community as the first priority – not just the need to meet funding guidelines. We have been advised that 66+ places are preferred, but not necessarily mandatory, for State government co-funding of major projects. In any case, it is our experience that eligibility and priorities for state government funding vary from year to year and there is no guarantee that being registered for 66+ places will ensure eligibility for future funding.

Regardless of State co-funding eligibility, we would like to see council ensure that those families affected by service closure or restructure have community-managed, not-for-profit options made available to them, rather than shifting service delivery to large-scale, corporate and/or for-profit providers. We would also like to see appropriate timelines put in place to ensure the disruption to children and families is minimised and managed sensitively.

With respect to policy objective three, our view is that Council should be considering only 2 options (not the 5 options in the paper):

1. For council to adopt a sustainable business model that allows them to continue operating their own, or some of their own, services. This is important so that there is a mix of service management models to meet the needs of the community.
2. If council are unable to continue provision of their own services, that these services are supported to transition to not-for-profit, local community-management (not independent, for-profit, corporate or large scale NFP organisations)

Leases:

If we are to move forward on the current leases and funding agreements, the terms of the leases prohibit centres from actively forward planning and looking at best utilisation strategies for their businesses. In order to engage in proper strategic planning to account for the cyclical nature of supply and demand in the sector,

services need longer leases. We propose the lease periods be extended to a reasonable period, such as they were previously. Up to 10 years (5 + 5) to enable security for committees of management and families. In doing so, we note that other levels of government run comparable leases for 20 years or more.

Council costs:

We understand that much of the council deficit in the running of their own services has come from being neither for-profit nor not-for-profit and not fitting a particular management model. In relation to the need to recoup losses and move services to a more viable management option, we believe there are many cost saving alternatives that are currently used in the not-for-profit model which could support council in these efforts.

Some of the cost saving measures could include:

- Parents to pay for public holidays. All community-managed services charge for these days. Either parents who attend on the day are required to pay, or the fee is incorporated in the daily fee and all families incur the cost.
- Reduction of casual staff costs. Although some costs are unavoidable with mass illness, this is a rarity, and most services employ permanent part-time, full-time and casual staff ongoing to avoid the huge agency costs.
- There are many other cost saving measures that could be incorporated into daily operations to avoid such huge deficits as has been documented. Directors of successful community-managed services would be more than happy to share their expertise and support other services (as has happened historically).

Look to other councils within Victoria who operate their own services and/or support other not-for-profit services for benchmarking. Many other municipalities have variations on the options in the policy document. It would be prudent to seek information from these councils to have a full understanding of what is currently in place across Victoria, so that councillors can make informed decisions.

Centralised Waiting List:

Remove the centralised waiting list as it has lost its original purpose and repurpose existing staff to ensure fair distribution of funding to families experiencing vulnerability and/or disadvantage.

Vulnerable families with low income and low activity hours do not receive the number of hours of subsidised care that they so often require.

Outreach Maternal Child Health Service:

Expand the Outreach Maternal Child Health Service to include other outreach objectives such as supporting families and children experiencing vulnerability and/or disadvantage to access kindergarten and other early years services. Keryn McMahon, a former Maternal Child Health Outreach Nurse, developed a very valuable and highly successful program to ensure as many children at the age of 3.5 years had their Key Age and Stage (KAS) Assessment. The program was so successful that Keryn was asked to present at the International Society of Early Intervention with an academic from Monash University in Stockholm in June 2016. A wide range of City of Port Phillip families and Early Years Services benefited hugely from this program at the time.

A broadened Outreach Service would be an efficient way of ensuring that all children are receiving this important Developmental Assessment, linking families and children with the range of children's services across the municipality and addressing the low kindergarten participation rates in Port Phillip.

York Street:

York St Kindergarten – is an unused facility that has been dormant for several years. Council needs to consider either reopening it as an Early Years' Service or, alternatively, selling the property to offset council's \$2.1 million deficit.

National Competition Policy (NCP):

Competitive Neutrality Policy Victoria (CN Policy) sets out the new Victorian approach to competitive neutrality:

- Competitive neutrality involves achieving a fair market environment by removing or offsetting any competitive advantages or disadvantages due to public ownership of the government business. However, competitive neutrality does not override the range of social, environmental, economic and regional responsibilities of Government agencies, which must be taken into account in determining whether the application of CN Policy is in the public interest.

The Office of the Commissioner for Better Regulation (OCBR) notes that “in some cases a significant business activity operates in part to achieve social, environmental and other policy objectives. Where the implementation of fully cost-reflective pricing or other CN measure may compromise other public

policy objectives, the government entity should conduct a public interest to demonstrate the case for not implementing the measure.”

We believe that Council should more fully explore the options for making a public interest case to support ongoing direct provision of child care services.

We thank Council for their consideration of these issues and trust that any decisions will be made with genuine community consultation and collaboration and in the best interests of families and children.

Yours faithfully,

Linda Davison

Clarendon Children's
Centre Co-operative



Kate Hall

South Melbourne
Child Care Co-operative



Bernadette Dower

Ada Mary a'Beckett
Children's Centre





Every Child Our Future

City of Port Phillip Children's Services Policy Feedback

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

**Star Health
April 2019**

Introduction

Star Health is a major provider of health and community services across the inner southern region of Melbourne. Star Health is a not-for-profit organisation located at four dedicated centres within the St Kilda, Prahran and South/Port Melbourne areas, and we deliver more than 150,000 services each year.

As one of Victoria's largest community health services, Star Health provides access to doctors, dentists and a broad-range of allied health and other supports. Star Health provides a broad range of services- spanning pregnancy, childhood, adulthood and older age services. With specialist expertise in engaging high risk and hard-to-reach groups, it offers health services to all, regardless of a person's ability to pay.

As well as direct service delivery, Star Health engages in community building and health promotion activities to build the health and wellbeing of the local community.

Star Health values social justice and strongly believes that everyone, no matter what their circumstance or health needs, is equally entitled to access Victoria's health services so that they can live a healthy and happy life.

Thank you for allowing us to provide further feedback on *Every Child Our Future* Policy objectives and recommendations.

1 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.

1.1. Create a new grant program to provide a financial subsidy for families experiencing ongoing and situational vulnerability and disadvantage. This subsidy will be available for all eligible City of Port Phillip community members accessing any Early Years' Service in the City.

Star Health supports a financial subsidy grant program to allow vulnerable or disadvantaged families to access early years services, including childcare and kindergarten services.

Recent evidence by the Federal Department of Education has shown that the number of children supported through the childcare subsidy system by the childcare safety net fell by more than 14,000 over the past year, most likely due to the changes that came into effect in July 2018. This indicates that more support is required to assist vulnerable or disadvantaged families to access services. We believe Council providing financial support will help to mitigate this in Port Phillip.

To be effective, the grant subsidy program provided by Council needs to be simple and accessible for both families and service providers. Feedback provided to the Health Promotion Team at Star Health during 2017-18 by early service providers informed us that funding of childcare and kindergarten is a complex system, with additional paperwork and documentary evidence often required for subsidies or grant programs which can make the process onerous and time-consuming. If the grant subsidy program provided by council is too complex, it will create another level of complexity and may further contribute to inequities in service access for vulnerable and disadvantaged families by making it too hard for them to access the subsidies.

Source: <https://www.smh.com.au/education/really-worried-big-drop-in-vulnerable-families-using-child-care-20190412-p51dlu.html>

1.2. Support Child Safe Standards implementation across all early years' services (especially toy libraries and playgroups) through an education and capacity-building program.

Star Health supports this policy objective.

1.3. Fund an early intervention outreach role to work with relevant service providers in the City (child protection, homelessness, mental health, family violence) to increase participation of vulnerable children in early childhood education services, especially kindergarten services.

Council currently partially funds (equivalent of 3 days a week) Star Health to provide an antenatal social worker role to provide support to vulnerable mothers during pregnancy. However, the current role is only funded to support women during pregnancy and to establish linkages to relevant services/ supports post birth. The role currently has no capacity to maintain engagement with mothers beyond the first few weeks post birth. This role has demonstrated in the last 2 years significant success in engaging with more vulnerable pregnant women in the community to build their capacity to seek and engage with relevant services and supports for themselves and their unborn child – which improves their health and wellbeing outcomes. It would be worthwhile to consider the opportunity to expand the breadth of this role for instance by increasing capacity to enable supports for these same women to continue for up to 2 years post birth (if required). This role could easily be increased to at least a full-time position due to its outreach nature which provides the flexibility to be present where more vulnerable women would already be engaged, for example at Salvation Army and Launch Housing, and especially if engagement can continue with mothers for further than a few months post birth. The First 1000 Days framework (<https://www.rch.org.au/ccch/first-thousand-days/>) provides evidence on the importance of engaging early to positively influence health and wellbeing outcomes throughout the life course – which this role has the potential to deliver on. The basis of the relationship this role can build with pregnant women can be the beginning of positive supports and therefore positive outcomes in the first 1000 days of a child's life.

We would recommend as part of this review and in relation to this objective that council consider increasing funding this role to the equivalent of a full-time worker which can enable continued engagement with parents after the birth of a child to enhance effective early linkage of these parents into services that will increase their knowledge and participation in early children education services e.g. EMCHN or MCHN, playgroups, childcare.

1.4. Develop a Children's Services website that will provide information on all children's services in the City. This will include services provided, vacancies, specialist expertise, fee levels, educational approaches, target groups served and more. Participation in the website should be a condition for services to receive Council grants

Star Health supports making local service information more accessible for all community members. To ensure this recommendation is effective, the proposed website needs to be regularly maintained to ensure all information is correct and up to date. It could also broaden its scope and provide links to other reputable websites where families can access more information (e.g. Raising Children Network, For Parents (Department of Education and Training), Maternal and Child Health App).

2. 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.

2.1. Review and update the service model for toy libraries to include:

- *Review funding model and operating subsidy to increase operating hours at current toy library sites to increase access and availability to services for residents now and into the future in existing Port Phillip areas.*
- *Develop one new toy library site in Fishermans Bend to service the growing population, as part of an integrated hub. Policy recommendation*

Star Health agrees with the above recommendations; however we would also like to see exploration of other factors that may be impacting accessibility of Toy Libraries, particularly by vulnerable families (e.g. cost, location of services, volunteering requirements, no mobile toy library). We would also encourage Toy Libraries to promote their services more widely, including to local supported playgroups (e.g. Smalltalk)

This could also be an opportunity to more widely promote the importance of play and the impact a quality home-learning environment can make on children's learning outcomes to families.

2.2. Monitor, track, encourage and report on the market response to childcare demand.

Star Health support this policy objective, with an addition that this information be made available to all relevant stakeholders in Port Phillip.

2.3. Review and update the service model for playgroups to include:

- *A dedicated, or several functional multipurpose, playgroup space/s to be considered in Fishermans Bend, as part of an integrated hub.*
- *An additional playgroup or children's multipurpose space in the north end of Port Phillip to be considered (South Melbourne or Port Melbourne neighbourhoods).*
- *Make available the playgroup rooms in Bubup Nairn Family and Children's Centre across five days of the week and transition other programs into other Family Services Rooms in the building to increase availability and capacity.*

An integrated children's hub is best-practice. StarHealth supports integrating playgroups into new facilities, as proposed with Fishermans Bend, as well as considering a new multipurpose space in the north end of Port Phillip.

2.4. With the addition of funded three-year-old Kindergarten, consider transitioning current Council assets into kindergarten facilities to meet future demand where relevant, especially where the private market is meeting the demand/need for childcare services in that area.

The addition of funded three-year old kindergarten by the Victorian Government is a welcome reform, providing more children with the opportunity to be ready for school. From 2022, the funding will provide five-hours a week of kindergarten for three-year-olds, scaling up to fifteen hours per week over the next decade (beginning with a regional roll-out). In contrast, the Federal Government has only made a commitment to fund fifteen hours of four-year old kindergarten to the end of 2020.

If Council wishes to move in the direction of transitioning into kindergarten services, more should be known about the commitment of funding to four-year-old kindergarten by the Federal Government, and further consultation may be required with families to determine what model (long day care with kindergarten, sessional kindergarten, or a combination of both) best suits families.

Source: <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/ready-for-school-kinder-for-every-three-year-old/>

3. 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.

3.1. *Council to decide the future service model for childcare services from five policy options (A, B, C, D, E).*

Star Health supports Council staying in the service delivery market for childcare and kindergarten services. By staying in the market, Council can help ensure high quality standards and continue to provide support for community-managed and other models of childcare delivery in the area. As the [Lifting our Game](#) report states, 'Government managed services perform best in regards to achieving the National Quality Standards, as they are the lowest proportion of these services not meeting the NQS when compared with all provider types'.

We support Option B (Council continues operating services, but at full cost recovery) with the acknowledgment that additional grant subsidies will be provided by Council (as per policy objective 1.1) and available for low income families.

If Option B is not feasible, Option C where council transitions services to not-for-profit providers would at least ensure high standards are kept (as the worse performing provider types in regard to not meeting the NQS are private-for-profit providers and school providers according to the Lifting our Game report). This will also see funds reinvested into the services.

A hybrid of Option B and Option C could also be considered.

3.2. *Review all funding, subsidy and levy arrangements to ensure return on investment and KPI deliverables for acquittal purposes*

4. Policy Objective 4

Council will encourage collaboration across all Early Years' services

4.1. *Facilitate collaborative and collegiate relationships with early years' networks.*

- *Identify professional development needs for educators (including assistance in sourcing bulk discounts for training and providing free training room space).*
- *Childcare staff to visit and learn from centres in the municipality or within Melbourne that are consistently receiving an 'Exceeding' or 'Excellent' NQS rating, encouraging a 'community of practice'.*
- *These recommendations to apply to all providers, including independent and private providers.*
- *Support of Educational Leaders and networking across services.*

Star Health supports the above objectives to improve collaboration across Early Years Services, particularly using learnings from centres who have achieved 'Exceeding' or 'Excellent' NQS ratings.

The Health Promotion Team at Star Health is currently working with multiple early learning centres across the Port Phillip area on a range of health and wellbeing initiatives (including Smiles 4 Miles, The Achievement Program, Being Equal and Respectful Relationships). In our work with early education providers, we have observed the following which correlates to high performing centres (centres who have achieved 'Exceeding Expectations' or 'Excellent' NQS ratings or who are undertaking additional health and wellbeing programs which will enable future higher ratings):

- Management structure of centres- staff with dedicated project time devoted to quality or health and wellbeing programs
- Partnerships with a variety of external organisations
- Establishing networks of practice to allow key champions to come together to discuss program initiatives and problem solve collectively
- Team approach to embedding quality programs – not solely relying on one person to do all the work

Council could help encourage centres to invest in structures such as the above to help further improve the standards of care provided across Port Phillip and improve the abilities of staff and centres.

4.2. Support the development of a kindergarten network to provide collaborative practice and integrated services that inform pedagogy and practice, for example approved provider responsibilities, professional development, quality referrals and transition to school programs

Star Health supports the above objective, and suggest consideration be given to broadening the scope beyond just a kindergarten network to include networking for all services in place who support children from birth through to school entry.

5. 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.

5.1. Proactively create and promote opportunities for families with children to meet other families and develop social connections through such things as community events and parents' workshops.

Becoming a new family is an increase risk period for social isolation. Increasing social connections of parents and families to counteract this, is also a priority of local service providers. Our consultations during 2017-18 advised us that parental engagement is a key goal for most providers, however some seem to be doing it better than others. Services want to see more engagement between families and services, as well as more connections established between families. Some services are finding this challenging, whilst other services report high engagement and connection.

There is a concern amongst service providers though that only the 'worried well' attend parenting programs and the families who need more support and guidance are not attending. More needs to be done to determine what additional information parents

want, trialling different models of engagement and offering childcare or transport to assist access for vulnerable families.

To encourage more community events or parent's workshops to foster social connections for families in the community, Council may consider utilising the Community Grants program to encourage local service providers and organisations to provide activities in this space.

5.2. Improve communications about the availability of, and access to, all early years' services, especially kindergarten to culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Star Health supports this policy objective and would like to see a broader communication strategy for CALD communities, to include not only kindergarten access, but also child immunisation locations (and associated costs if the family is not covered by Medicare), and linking CALD families who move into the area with other services, such as Maternal and Child Health, to ensure the 3.5year old key ages and stages visit is completed prior to formal schooling.

In our work with early education providers, many of the educators and complementary staff are also from CALD communities. Supporting centres to make the best use of the cultural knowledge of CALD staff in order to better engage and support CALD families, may help to increase engagement.

5.3. Utilise approved state funding to scope the creation of an effective and centralised municipal-wide enrolment system for community-run and independent kindergartens in Port Phillip. This will require significant consultation with service providers.

Reducing the complexity and administration work of enrolment processes would be a good outcome for families and service providers. We have heard in our consultations that the current system can be frustrating. It is essential that this system has in built flexibility to work for both the families and centres needs.

5.4. Develop a Memorandum of Understanding for playgroups with guidelines regarding:

- *Size and inclusion*
- *Available support for volunteers, committees and parents*
- *Sustainability, including sharing of resources between groups and recycling*

The addition of the MOU needs to be simple and add value to the playgroups as most are run by volunteers. Anything too complex may deter families from participating.

5.5. Develop a centralised portal and communication strategy as part of the Customer Experience and Technology Transformation project, and work with children's service providers and families to establish the best way for families to receive the information they need, in the way they need it, when they need it.

Through our work with service providers, some Early Learning Services and Kindergartens are already utilising new technology to assist with communication between centres and families. Council may benefit from looking into the the following applications:

- [Emprevo](#): utilised by a local community-managed centre to manage communication between staff and families and managing days of care, and filling up any vacancies
- [Story Park](#): allows educators to communicate the learnings of children to families via a private connection

As with all communication, Council needs to consider that some families may have less access to technology and data than others, and other methods of communication may still be required to ensure equity of access.

- 5.6. *Improve the current childcare waitlist and investigate expanding it to include private and independent centres to provide families with better information about places for children under the age of three, as well as to inform short- and medium-term planning for childcare.*

Improving the experience of childcare waitlisting services for families would be a fantastic outcome, however the changes need to benefit both families and centres and not make it more complex to access services.

Additional recommendations

Further to the existing recommendations for this policy objective, we also advocate for the following:

Work with all service providers to identify disadvantaged families who may not be accessing kindergarten for eligible three and four-year-old children

This will allow children from disadvantaged families to gain valuable access to early education and prevent them from being left behind.

Work with service providers to identify emerging communities who may not be accessing kindergarten for eligible three and four year-old-children

With the development of Fishermans Bend and families moving into Southbank areas, develop a strategy to engage these families who already have children to access kindergarten services in the area and other services (e.g. Maternal and Child Health).

6. Policy Objective 6

Early Years services will be supported by safe, accessible, contemporary, fit-for-purpose, sustainable facilities and environments

- 6.1. *Develop an Early Year's Services Facility Framework that will deliver the following outcomes:*

- *All assets to meet legislative and building compliance over the life of the strategy.*
- *All assets able to receive co-contribution funding from state government. This will require all assets to meet a minimum of 66 places.*

Star Health is supportive of this objective.

- 6.2. *Work with all community-managed services over time to implement the framework outlined above.*

Star Health is supportive of this objective.

- 6.3. *Ensure additional facilities for services and consolidate existing services if required to meet functionality and compliance are incorporated into integrated facility hubs to address multiple service demands. Council will optimise opportunities for Major Capital Works grant applications available from Department of Education and Training for the building of integrated service hubs, especially on any new school sites, such as in Fishermans Bend.*

An integrated children's hub is best-practice. Star Health supports this model for any future new sites, including as part of schools.

7. Policy 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.

7.1. Develop model for optimising access to existing assets in the city such as parks, beaches, and adventure playgrounds.

The model should optimise both access quality of existing assets for children and families, as well as service providers. It should be strategic and highlight areas that are close to Early Learning Centres, as well as identifying and mitigating any relevant risks for educators to encourage them to take children out into the community more often. It also needs to be friendly and accessible for parents and families to encourage different learning experiences within the home environment.

7.2. Advocate for the promotion of outdoor learning environments and programs that promote children's connection to nature and environmental sustainability practices, for example Clean up Port Phillip Day, Be Out There, Let's G.O (Get outside), and Indigenous nature-based cultural programs

Council should also consider partnering with local environmental groups such as Beach Patrol and the Port Phillip Eco Centre to assist with this objective.

7.3. Develop a minimum design guideline for future playground works/upgrades at childcare centres that can be tailored for each site and implemented in stages, including investigating the development or suitability of nature and sensory play environments within open space settings for excursion purposes, for example developing bush kindergarten setting/s in the municipality.

Star Health is supportive of this objective.

7.4. Work with early years' networks to consult and promote the range of opportunities to incorporate nature and sensory play into their service settings with supported funding opportunities.

Star Health is supportive of this objective.

Additional recommendation

7.5. Wider promotion of the importance of play to the learning and development of children to parents

Through our consultations with service providers, we were consistently told by educators that parents do not understand the importance of play, and the benefits play brings to children. If council are looking to explore nature-based play, a wider promotion to all families of the importance of play and how children use play to understand their world, could be a beneficial strategy.



EVERY CHILD OUR FUTURE

Community Alliance of Port Phillip (CAPP) Submission

The Community Alliance of Port Phillip believes that “Council should continue to directly provide children’s services to the community and support and resource community managed services including childcare centres, kindergartens, after school care and holiday programs.” (CAPP 2017 Policy Framework, page 15)

CAPP policy also states that Council should: “Consult in a genuine way with staff of children’s services, management committees and parents before amending or developing new and existing policies and practices.”

CAPP is unconvinced that genuine consultation has been achieved, particularly in light of the recommendation of the Children’s Services Reference Group that a diversity of childcare services should be supported, including council run and community managed child care services.

This Submission will make a number of general comments but will concentrate on Policy Option Three and the issue of National Competition Policy

CAPP supports the clear rationale for the development of the Children’s Services Policy and the need for Council to continue the provision of its current services. For this rationale we particularly refer to the following sections:

- Why do we need a Children’s Service Policy
 - The First 1000 days
 - The Effect of Disadvantage on Early Year’s Development
 - Barriers to access for Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Children and families.

We strongly support universal service provision with extra support to centres for their care of vulnerable families, rather than targeted services. Universal provision is what the Evidence Review prepared for CoPP by the Murdoch Children’s Research Institute says provides the best outcomes for vulnerable families. Universal services also provide better opportunities for integration with other community services provided by Council and other service providers such as maternal and child health, Star Health etc..

CAPP also notes that Council recognises the importance of Children's Services not just for the children, but for the whole community, and we quote: "In addition to the impact on children living in Port Phillip, investment in quality early years' services has a long-term economic impact for our local communities, as quality early years' services contribute to the economy with their facilities, employment and training enable parents to participate in the workforce."

After reading the full document, CAPP is somewhat bewildered as to how this rationale was then translated into the specific policy recommendations.

CAPP notes the commentary on the State Government Compact Agreement includes the observation that "in addition to Council's responsibility as planners, they also have responsibility for coordination and delivery of service for children and families."

CAPP would like to understand how the Compact Agreement requirements feed into the recommended policy options. CAPP recommends that the community should be provided with a report on how any change to child care provisions will comply with the Compact requirements. CAPP is particularly interested in how the Compact Agreement outcomes:

- Families feel well supported by high quality inclusive services for children and families in the early years; and
- Vulnerability: location and disadvantage do not determine outcomes for young children

will be addressed in the new Children's Services Policy.

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

The Paper states on page 24 that "National Competition Policy (NCP) is an important consideration guiding the selection of options outlined in this Policy Options Paper. Further, the process of collecting and analysing the data to assess NCP compliance highlighted a number of areas where potential improvements need to be addressed". If this was the case, has the Council implemented any of these improvements?

In the section on Where Council needs to Focus? On page 44 the second dot point states that "Council should be compliant and seek competitive neutrality in its business operations."

CAPP questions the importance placed on the application of NCP in guiding policy options. However, CAPP does understand that NCP is a complaints based process and that in order to avoid a complaint CoPP does need to undertake analysis.

CAPP notes that NCP does not cover not for profit entities and so the community managed centres are excluded from the requirement to comply with National Competition Policy.

On page 24 we are informed that in 2017/18 Council conducted a financial assessment to evaluate Council subsidies in accordance with guidelines provided by the Office of the

Commissioner for Better Regulation. This assessment based on four Council run childcares services shows that Council subsidised these centres.

However the application of National Competition Policy requires more than a financial assessment it requires Council to follow a four step process (Attachment 1):

Step 1 – Are the activities a significant business?

Step 2 – Assess the benefits and costs of introducing competitive neutrality policy measures.

Step 3—Public Interest Test

Step 4— Implement CN measure if required

CAPP is of view that once this assessment is complete, particularly the public interest test, it will be found that it is **not** in the public interest to apply National Competition Policy to Council's direct provision of childcare services.

Public interest

In establishing public interest CAPP believes that the following needs to be recognised:

- Provision of early year's services is an essential service from an equity perspective and for community development as it increases involvement in the community and workforce participation. There are economic and social benefits to the City that should be articulated.
- CAPP notes that on page 40 of the document it is stated that whilst there is now an established market for early childhood education and care services in Port Phillip the document recognises that there are certain market failures. It is CAPP's contention that only Council's direct service provision and support for not-for-profit services will alleviate these failures.
- In establishing policy the Council should be cognisant of the effect on the community of individual market failure if there is no Council provision. There is no guarantee if Council were to discontinue direct service provision that not-for-profit community providers would be able to take over management of the services. Markets do not support equitable distribution of services and so CoPP will be less able to achieve Policy Objective One if it is not a direct service provider. There are also indications that the market model is not sustainable due to the high rents requested of providers by landlords, something which inevitably leads to higher fees. The corporate collapse of the ABC childcare centres which left many families and workers stranded some years ago demonstrated the problems that arise when childcare services are provided 'for profit' and Council should stand strongly in support of public and community not-for-profit provision of all early childhood services, including childcare.

Finally when being asked to change essential services Council must be provided with a full analysis of all the issues. It is not good enough to suggest a major change to the provision of

an essential service to the community by presenting five options with no analysis of the associated risks and benefits for each of them.

Conclusion

CAPP is unconvinced that genuine consultation has been achieved, particularly in light of the recommendation of the Children's Services Reference Group that a diversity of childcare services should be supported, including Council run and community managed child care services.

It is CAPP's view that there is not enough endorsement of the procedures to date to offer support to the policy proposals.

CAPP recognises that the overall direction of the report favours continuing with the various support services directed at children including play, maternal health, adventure playgrounds kindergarten, etc.

However it is CAPP's view that Council's on-going involvement/responsibility for delivery of day care is probably the area of childhood intervention which is most relevant in addressing issues of childhood vulnerability. A Council run service can most easily adapt its service delivery model to ensuring those with the greatest need are provided with the highest level of service. However in doing so it needs to be both committed and agile and able to overcome the following areas of conflict:

- It is contested because shared responsibilities allow slippage
- It is contested because it is expensive
- It is contested because it is complex
- It is contested because there is no agreement as to whether it should be considered a universal service or should be directed to those with the greatest need.
- It is contested because a model that concentrates on high need children may not be in children's, families' and the community's best interests

It should not be competition policy that leads the debate on what is in the public interest of the community but the needs of the community itself.

CAPP would like to see concentration on resolving these key issues before a final position is reached.

Finally CAPP believes that the CoPP should not make any decision regarding the future provision of childcare due to the significant policy announcements made by the Federal Labor Opposition, including relating to the Child Care Subsidy and early childhood educator pay. If there is a change of government federally there will be significant policy ramifications that the CoPP needs to understand before setting a new Children's Services Strategy.

CAPP recommends that Councillors take a strong stand in support of continued direct provision of childcare.

Attachment 1: National Competition Policy / Competitive Neutrality)

The Victorian government says the following on **National competition Policy (Competitive Neutrality Policy)**:

*Under the Competition Principles Agreement, Victoria is obliged to apply competitive neutrality policy and principles to all significant business activities undertaken by government agencies and local governments. The Victorian Government will fulfil this obligation and also meet its wider responsibility to the community **by requiring competitive neutrality be applied only where it is in the public interest to do so.** [our emphasis]*

Competitive Neutrality Policy Victoria (CN Policy) sets out the new Victorian approach to competitive neutrality.

*Competitive neutrality involves achieving a fair market environment by removing or offsetting any competitive advantages or disadvantages due to public ownership of the government business. However, **competitive neutrality does not override the range of social, environmental, economic and regional responsibilities of Government agencies, which must be taken into account in determining whether the application of CN Policy is in the public interest.** [our emphasis]*

The Commissioner for Better Regulation considers Competitive Neutrality complaints and the Office of the Commissioner for Better Regulation (OCBR) supports the Commissioner.

OCBR recommends a four step process to apply the Competitive Neutrality Policy and the below is from their website.

Step 1 – Are the activities a significant business?

Government entities are responsible for determining which of their activities fall within scope of the NCP. The OCBR guidance note identifying significant business activities for competitive neutrality sets out criteria to consider when assessing whether an activity is a significant business for CN purposes.

Step 2 – Assess the benefits and costs of introducing competitive neutrality policy measures.

Step 3—Public Interest Test

In some cases a significant business activity operates in part to achieve social, environmental and other policy objectives. Where the implementation of fully cost-reflective pricing or other CN measures may compromise other public policy objectives. If this is the case a public interest test should be conducted to demonstrate the case for not implementing the measure.

To satisfy CN Policy a public interest test should, at a minimum:

- 1. clearly identify the policy objectives that is to be achieved and ensure that the policy objectives has official endorsement by the Council;*
- 2. demonstrate that the achievement of the stated policy objectives would be compromised if the CN neutrality measure was implemented; and*

3. *determine the best available means of achieving the overall policy objectives, including an assessment of alternative approaches.*

The public interest test should be undertaken in consultation with the community through an open and transparent process. At the conclusion of the process, the conduct and outcomes of the public interest test should be made publicly available.

Step 4— Implement CN measure

Government entities are required to implement competitive neutrality measure/s to significant business activities where it is in the public interest to do so.

CONTACT:

Ann Byrne
Treasurer

SUBMISSION TO THE CITY OF PORT PHILLIP'S CHILDREN'S SERVICES POLICY INFORMATION PACK

THE AVENUE CHILDREN'S CENTRE AND KINDERGARTEN

The Avenue Children's Centre and Kindergarten (the Avenue) is a community run childcare centre based in Balaclava, operating since 1975 in a converted residential home in the Avenue. The Centre currently has 40 places for children aged between 6 weeks and school age. It offers long day-care, all meals are provided, and there are separate rooms for Babies (0-2years), Toddlers (2-3years) and Kindergarten (3-5years). The Avenue offers a unique, safe and nurturing environment for the children, and one which aims to meet their specific social and educational needs.

The Avenue's Committee of Management (COM) is made up of twelve current parents. It is a long standing Committee that provides stability to the Avenue and consistent involvement in the day-to-day running. More generally, our entire parent cohort is very committed and engaged in the management of the centre.

1. Introduction

The COM of the Avenue welcomes the opportunity to respond to the options and recommendations outlined in the Children's Services Policy information pack. This is our second submission to the City of Port Phillip's (CoPP) review of the Children's Services Policy, with the first submitted in August 2018 (see Appendix 1). The first submission proposed six key areas of reform, which differ slightly from the proposition presented in the current submission but still remain important considerations for the Council in its redevelopment of the Children's Services Policy.

The COM has been supportive of the CoPP's review since it commenced. We believe that the existing Childcare Policy and accompanying funding model require significant changes to ensure the continued availability of quality, accessible and affordable early children's services in the local community. As reiterated in our previous submission and in our communications with the CoPP, we value diversity in the provision of early childhood education and the benefits that different types of centres offer children. We also see the value in having a range of centres with different management models, such as privately owned and not-for-profit, exist in the CoPP to suit the diverse needs of the families that reside and work in the area. In particular, we can attest to the important and central role that community run childcare centres have in the local community.

The COM is highly appreciative of the financial support it receives from the Council, however, we believe that the funding model is no longer sustainable for various reasons. This is particularly in the context of the challenges facing the CoPP, including increasing population growth, compliance with various state and federal legislative frameworks, and ensuring the availability of appropriate and contemporary services in the community. The COM believes that the recommendations presented in the information pack go some way to addressing the existing Policy's ongoing issues.

The purpose of this submission is to specifically respond to the recommendations outlined under Policy Objectives Three and Six, and also propose a way forward to ensure the longevity of the Avenue as a childcare centre in the CoPP.

2. Responses to recommendations

- a) Policy Objective Three: Early Years services will be financially sustainable and consistently aligned with relevant policies and legislation at the local, state and federal level.

The COM is most supportive of option C under Policy Objective Three, with particular regard to opportunities for the Council to provide 'purchase, co-fund or lease-to-own opportunities with not-for-profit providers' and 'asset sales to support transition arrangements'. The COM believes that an opportunity to purchase the Avenue from the Council will ensure its continued operation as a viable, quality and accessible childcare centre in the CoPP. Under this purchase option, the Avenue would be responsible for its day-to-day maintenance, larger capital works and managing the wait list, resulting in significant efficiencies and cost-savings to the Avenue and also to the Council. Section three of this submission details this purchase option further.

Further, when establishing the parameters for the future funding model of childcare services, the COM strongly advises the Council to think beyond economic and data driven metrics to determine the viability of specific centres. While financial sustainability is an important measure, it is essential that the Council also consider the broader contribution of centres in fostering an inclusive and engaged community in the CoPP. This is particularly important for smaller community-run centres, such as the Avenue, which provides a highly valued and in demand service. The appeal of the Avenue to existing and prospective families is the fact that it offers a homely, comfortable and personalised environment for our children. This environment also encourages parents to feel connected to the Avenue and there is a strong sense of commitment and pride among both parents and staff.

In saying that, the COM believes that some core components of how the Council funds childcare services are unworkable and require urgent redress. As we raised in our previous submission, the Council subsidising council-run centres via the Operations Subsidy is clearly unsustainable in the long-term. Nor does it comply with National Competition Policy. We understand from our communications with the CoPP that these are widely held views and that addressing this current situation will be a key outcome of the review. The COM believes that the features detailed in option C (or a hybrid model of B and C) will achieve the stated objective of Policy Objective Three for council-run services.

As you will be aware, unlike many of the other childcare centres in the CoPP, the Avenue has consistently operated as financially viable and profitable childcare centre. This has been as a result of careful and prudent management by the COM and long standing staff, and ensuring that the Avenue maintains a consistently high utilisation rate. Over the last five years, we have achieved over 90% utilisation, and often in excess of 95%. We note that demand for kindergarten services may rise significantly when funded programs are extended to 3 year old kindergarten in addition to the existing funding for 4 year old kindergarten. Further, based on modelling conducted on behalf of the Avenue, we understand that our area of the municipality has lower supply than other areas of the municipality for long day care services.

Where the Avenue is most challenged in its day-to-day operations is the maintenance of the building. The Council's current maintenance model has proven to be a highly inefficient and expensive way for the Council to manage the maintenance of childcare centres. As noted in our previous submission, the Avenue has consistently paid more via the maintenance levy than has been spent on the Centre. The amount paid to the Council in relation to the maintenance levy has been relatively static over the last 10 years at around \$40,000. However, in six of the last 12 years, the Council has spent less than \$20,000 on the Centre in relation to maintenance issues, with an average of \$26,277.97/yr spent since 2005/6. The COM strongly believes that childcare centres should be responsible for managing their day-to-day maintenance, and that the maintenance levy should be abolished.

- b) Policy Objective Six: Early Years services will be supported by safe, accessible, contemporary, fit-for-purpose, sustainable facilities and environments.

Infrastructure Levy

As highlighted in our previous submission, an ongoing issue for the Avenue has been attempting to secure a commitment from the Council to undertake infrastructure upgrades to the building to ensure it offers a sustainable, safe and fit-for-purpose environment for our children. Similar to many of the buildings utilised by the CoPP's community run childcare services, the Avenue also requires upgrades to comply with various legislative requirements, including the Disability Discrimination Act.

Despite the Avenue liaising with council officers over the past six years regarding major capital works, the Council has failed to make the necessary investments to undertake the essential upgrades, despite promises at various stages to do so. Due to the ongoing deterioration of the building, we are now in a position where a significant amount of money is required to upgrade it so it meets the appropriate standards. While we understand that some of the Council's reluctance to move forward on these upgrades is the review of the Children's Services Policy, it is incredibly frustrating from a management perspective given how much the Avenue has contributed to the infrastructure fund. Since 2005, the Council has spent a total of \$118,806 in relation to capital upgrades at the Avenue, despite the Avenue contributing at least triple that to the fund via the infrastructure levy. For example, from 2013 to 2018, the Avenue contributed over \$212,000 to the levy. We also note that at present, the infrastructure fund has in excess of \$5.1m in it, which could and should be used as a priority to upgrade those facilities that have contributed to the fund and require capital works to be completed. A breakdown of contributions to the levy by council-run and community-run centres is provided in Attachment B of our previous submission.

In late 2017, we proposed co-funding the works required with the Council, however, because of this review, the proposal was rejected. Our offer in this respect still stands.

Early Year's Services Facility Framework

Under Policy Objective Six, it is now clear that the Council intends to improve its existing assets through the development of an Early Year's Services Facility Framework. The purpose of which will be to ensure those assets comply with relevant legislative and building frameworks, and that the Council aims to receive co-contribution funding from the Victorian Government through the Children's Facilities Capital Program for applicable works. The COM understands that in 2018-19, the three major grant categories under the Government's program are:

- Integrated children's centre grants
- New early learning facility grants
- Early learning facility upgrade grants.

The Council refers to these categories in the information pack, although it erroneously states that the grants are only open to childcare centres that have 66 places or more. This is incorrect.

In reality, the integrated children's centre grants and the new early learning facility grants are only open to centres that will have 66 places or more. However, the early learning facility upgrade grants is open to all centres, regardless of size, so long as that centre runs a funded kindergarten program. Early learning facility upgrades must either increase the number of approved places or improve the quality of the learning environment at existing facilities that are licensed for early childhood education and care. Renovated and refurbished facilities must be used to deliver a funded kindergarten program for children in the year before school. This can be sessional and/or integrated with long day care. On this basis, the Avenue would be eligible to receive a grant under this capital program.

As we have submitted previously, we would be particularly concerned if the Council sought to introduce an arbitrary size limit on centres it supports, particularly where the references to those figures appear to have been taken from a misreading of the Victorian Government's grants program.

3. The Avenue's purchase proposal

As per our support for option C under Policy Objective Three, and after much discussion among the COM, we wish to propose purchasing the Avenue from the Council over an agreed period of time. We understand that this would not be the first time that the Council disposed of an asset back to the community (e.g. the Elwood St Kilda Neighbourhood Learning Centre in Tennyson St), and we are aware of numerous other examples of communities purchasing assets from councils elsewhere in the state.

As a small community run centre, the Avenue has been successful in achieving ongoing financial viability and profitability through careful management, retention of staff and retention of families, particularly at the kindergarten level where there is increased competition throughout the CoPP. We have done this while maintaining consistently low fees, beneath council-managed centres and significantly below the rates charged by for-profit centres in the municipality. We strongly believe that as one of the more viable centres in the CoPP, we will continue to operate at an optimal level as an independent not-for-profit centre.

If the Council agrees to consider this purchase option, the COM will present a comprehensive business case. We are currently considering the most feasible purchasing model for this asset, in addition to conducting further in-depth financial modelling to confirm the Avenue's financial independence and long-term viability. In the meantime, we wish to flag with you the other factors on which the business case will be premised:

- The purchase model could be based on paying a market rate with appropriate adjustments based on the Avenue's contributions to date to the maintenance and infrastructure levies, but still provide an equitable return to the Council.

- As one of the centres with the lowest fees in the area, there is room to increase our daily rate to provide a more commercial return to ensure:
 - ongoing maintenance requirements are managed internally and in a timely manner
 - the centre remains fit-for-purpose
 - surplus funds are available for purchase cost repayments.
- Due to prudent management by the COM, we have accumulated significant funds to assist with covering the refurbishment requirements which will ensure compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act and the National Construction Code. This refurbishment would not impact the number of places available at the Centre.
 - We understand from the Council that the works required to extend the life of the Avenue building to 10-15 years is between \$700,000 and \$970,000. However, reports from external consultants commissioned by the COM indicated that this quotation contains significant contingency and overheads associated with doing construction works with the Council.
 - The Avenue's established pool of funds could be used immediately to ensure compliance of legislative requirements, with a phased project plan that would aim to address other capital work requirements over an 18 month period (post purchase).

4. Conclusion

The COM strongly believes that the CoPP should remain committed to supporting a range of childcare services to the families who reside and work in the area, however we recognise that the current model is unsustainable both from the Avenue's perspective, and that of ratepayers and residents of the municipality.

In particular, we reaffirm to the Council the important and central role that small community-run centres have in the local community, with the Avenue a key example of a centre that fosters an inclusive environment for both the children and their families. Further, as a small community-run centre, the Avenue has been successful in achieving ongoing financial viability and profitability, allowing funds to be reinvested back into the children and professional development for our staff.

As a COM, we consider the proposed purchase of the building from the Council solves many of the issues highlighted throughout the Children's Service Policy Review, by taking away the financial responsibility the Council has for the building yet maintaining a small, community-run centre within the municipality that will continue to offer an important service to local residents and families.

As noted in our previous submission, we believe that at a minimum the Council should allow childcare centres to be responsible for their day to day maintenance, in addition to managing their own waiting lists. Further, the operation, maintenance and quality subsidies should be reduced or abolished entirely. Finally, the council should spend the \$5.1m it currently holds in the infrastructure fund to upgrade centres that require works, and this should be done in an equal manner without discriminating between council-managed and community run centres.

Thank you for considering our submission and we welcome future discussions with the CoPP on the matters raised.

APPENDIX 1:

SUBMISSION TO COUNCIL RE CHILDREN'S SERVICES POLICY REVIEW (2018)

This submission is written on behalf of the Committee of Management (COM) of the Avenue Children's Centre and Kindergarten. We welcome this opportunity to contribute to the City of Port Phillip's (CoPP) Children's Services Policy Review (the Review) and raise a number of important matters for the CoPP's consideration. We also made a submission to the *Draft Council Plan 2017-2027*, which very much complements the sentiment of this current submission and identifies the positive contribution of community run centres to the local community. We recommend these two submissions be considered together.

As the COM of a small but highly valued community run childcare centre, we are acutely aware that there is no 'one size fits all' when it comes to early childhood education. However, we believe it is vital that the Council recognises the special and important place that small community run centres have in both the lives of children growing up in the CoPP and their families. As per the CoPP's 'Early Years Guiding Principles', we strongly believe that the Council should ensure that a variety of early childhood centres that offer different environments (including large, new multi-function centres, alongside smaller community centres) continue to operate within the CoPP. This should be a priority of the Council. In particular, we consider the Council's ongoing support for these different centres as an essential service that should be made available for families residing, working and paying rates in the CoPP. We consider there are a number of areas of reform that could enhance the future viability of council supported centres, including the Avenue. In particular, we have identified five key areas for reform in this submission.

THE AVENUE CHILDREN'S CENTRE AND KINDERGARTEN

The Avenue Children's Centre and Kindergarten (the Avenue) is a community run childcare centre based in Balaclava. It has operated since 1975 in a converted residential home in the Avenue. The Avenue currently has 40 places for children aged between 6 weeks and school age. The Avenue offers long day-care, all meals are provided and we have separate rooms for Babies (0-2years), Toddlers (2-3years) and Kindergarten (3-5years). The Avenue seeks to embody all of the CoPP's Early Years Guiding Principles by offering a unique, safe and nurturing environment for our children, one which aims to meet their specific social and educational needs.

Our staff are very committed to the Avenue, and we have an enviable history of staff retention, including two staff members (one being our Centre Manager) who have over 10 years of service and an additional staff member who has been with the Avenue for over 25 years. The ability of the Avenue to attract and retain staff is a testament to the value we place as a centre on staff satisfaction and development. In addition, staff retention provides continuity of care for our children, and differentiates our centre from many others where staff turnover is typically high.¹

The Avenue COM is made up of twelve current parents. It is a long standing Committee that provides stability to the Avenue and local and consistent involvement in the day to day running. More generally, our entire parent cohort is very committed and engaged in the management of our centre. Parents are

¹ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-06-29/high-staff-turnover-in-childcare-sector-affects-kids-development/7555038>

strongly connected with the Avenue and this is reflected in the well-attended functions that are regularly held for families including working bees, fundraising events, information evenings and social family gatherings.

As a small childcare centre, we understand the financial issues that may arise. However, through careful and prudent management the Avenue is, and has been in the past, run as a financially viable and stable operation. This has allowed the COM to allocate funds to programs for the children, including excursions/incursions, as well as consistently invest in professional development for staff. We also pride ourselves on our educator to child ratio and the fact that the Avenue has the lowest daily rate in the area. Further, we note there are many examples of successful, small (eg: less than 50 places) community managed child care services across Melbourne indicating that viability is not always an issue at this size.

Finally, as a small not-for-profit centre that consistently sets its fees below council-run and privately-owned childcare services, we are very aware of the difficulties associated with financial viability. We recognise that the key to financial viability is ensuring we maintain a consistently high utilisation rate. We have been successful over the last 5 years in achieving over 90% utilisation, and often in excess of 95%. We understand that many of the larger centres in the municipality, both privately owned and council run, struggle to maintain such high utilisation rates.

INTEGRATED SERVICES

We recognise that a key policy direction across all levels of Government is the pursuit of integrated services – that is the delivery of one or more children's/early year's services in the same location. Integration is more than co-location and the aim is for seamless service delivery and continuity of care across services. It is seen as particularly beneficial for socially/ economically disadvantaged children, as well as providing benefits for staff. While the Avenue is constrained in terms of space, it does already provide an integrated kindergarten and long day program, and with the support from Council is enjoying a good relationship with Maternal and Child Health and the immunisation program. We would welcome further engagement with the Council in relation to potential opportunities to increase our integration with other children's services in the CoPP.

COUNCIL INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDCARE THROUGHOUT MELBOURNE AND THE CITY OF PORT PHILLIP

While 70% of Councils are involved in long day care in some way (47% as licensees; 68% as owner and maintainer of facilities), the CoPP appears to have a unique arrangement in relation to the latter function. The CoPP currently invests significantly more in children's services than many other local governments. This level of support is very much appreciated by families who attend the Avenue.

Arguably, the Council offers a higher level of support through the quality subsidy and until recently its subsidisation of fees for low income families. It is only one of three councils providing central enrolment for long day care for services for which they are not a licensee. While the Council offers a comprehensive maintenance function, it charges for the function. Maintenance and infrastructure upgrades to childcare facilities are funded by, among other things, charging a maintenance levy and infrastructure levy to the centres.

Leasing arrangements typically vary across councils in Melbourne, although the COM is aware that both the City of Darebin and the City of Boroondara require that their respective childcare services be

responsible for day to day maintenance, cleaning and expenses associated with outdoor areas. Neither appear to charge a maintenance fee.

COUNCIL'S FUNDING MODEL

A key aspect of the Review, as we understand it, is consideration of the financial contribution Council is able and willing to make in order to provide a variety of children's services, including childcare. We strongly support a review of the funding model that is currently in place, and while we firmly believe that the Council should continue to support childcare services throughout the CoPP, we believe that the funding model needs to change significantly.

In particular, we note that the Council is subsidising five council run centres, via the Operations Subsidy, to in excess of \$1 million dollars each year. This is clearly not sustainable longer term. We believe an assessment needs to be made as to why these centres require such significant extra funding in order to continue operating. As a small centre that has consistently charged fees lower than the council-run centres, and significantly below private childcare centres in the CoPP, we recognise that maintaining financial viability can at times be difficult. However, through careful management, retention of staff and retention of families – particularly at kindergarten level where there is increased competition throughout the CoPP – the Avenue's COM has ensured our centre's financial viability, and profitability..

MAINTENANCE AND INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUES

Many of the buildings currently used by community run childcare services are ageing and require infrastructure upgrades to comply with various pieces of legislation; including the Disability Discrimination Act and Occupational Health and Safety Act. The council currently holds \$5.14m in an infrastructure fund, raised via the infrastructure levy charged to each council-run and community run centre. The table at attachment B outlines the amount contributed by each of these centres over the last five years. In our experience, we have not had great success in accessing funds from this pool to complete capital upgrades. In fact, since 2005 the Council has spent a total of \$118,806 in relation to capital upgrades at the Avenue. We understand this money would have come from the infrastructure fund.

We have obtained information in relation to funds raised via these levies (See attachment A and B) and funds spent on centres in relation to maintenance (attachment C). Having reviewed this information, we are concerned that the allocation of these funds is inequitable. In particular, the Avenue has consistently paid more via the maintenance levy than has been spent on the Centre in relation to maintenance. The amount paid to the Council has been relatively static over the last 10 years at around \$40,000. However, in six of the last 12 years, the Council has spent less than \$20,000 on the Centre for maintenance issues, with an average of \$26,277.97/yr spent since 2005/6. In the last week we have received an indication from council that they will assist the Avenue by funding new storage for our kinder room and fix a boundary fence that has been in need of replacement for a number of years. The COM is very grateful for this financial assistance from the council in relation to the storage and welcomes the council fixing the fence which has been an ongoing concern for the COM for a number of years.

In relation to infrastructure upgrades, the Avenue has been liaising with council officers for a number of years regarding essential and urgent upgrades and other required works. Despite this, none of the major capital works have been performed. Consequently, due to ongoing deterioration and failure of the

Council to make the necessary investment to conduct the required maintenance, we are now in a position where a significant amount of money is required to be spent on the Centre in order to upgrade it and have it comply with the various legislative requirements.

We understand from the Council that the works required to extend the life of the Avenue building to 10-15 years is between \$700,000 and \$970,000. In late 2017, we proposed co-funding the works required with the Council however, because of this Review, this proposal was rejected. The COM would like to again offer to meet with Councillors and/or Council officers to further discuss this co-funding arrangement.

AREAS FOR REFORM

While we are strongly of the view that the Council should maintain involvement in providing a variety of children's services, including supporting childcare via both community run centres and potentially operating council run centres, there are a number of reforms we ask the Council to consider, including:

1. **Removal of the operations subsidy** – it is clearly not sustainable to continue providing in excess of \$1 million a year to ensure the five council-run centres continue to operate. A review should be conducted as to why these centres require significant funding.
2. **Transition council-managed centres to community childcare model** - Consideration should also be given to transitioning the council managed centres to the community-run model as it has clearly been shown to result in better management, higher utilisation and stronger community links.
3. **Allow centres to manage their day-to-day maintenance and remove the maintenance levy** – the current model is highly inefficient and expensive. Further, as we have demonstrated above, the levy is actually revenue raising for the Council in relation to many of the centres, both council-managed and community-run centres. We consider it would be much more efficient and cost effective to abolish the maintenance levy and allow each centre to manage their own maintenance.
4. **Reduce or remove the quality subsidy** – while we applaud the Council for its additional funding in relation to the quality subsidy, the Council should consider reducing or completely removing this subsidy if cost-savings are required. . The COM has determined that for the Avenue, removal of the quality subsidy would not affect its viability.
5. **Utilise the infrastructure levy funds to upgrade viable centres** – it is unclear why the Council has allowed the infrastructure levy fund to build up to such an extent despite requests from a number of centres, including the Avenue, for funding to upgrade their facilities. From our experience, very little money has been spent on the Avenue over the last 13 years, however, we have made a significant contribution to the, now substantial, fund.
6. **Abolish the centralised waiting list** – We consider there are significant efficiencies that could be realised if the centralised waiting list was abolished and each centre was able to run its own waiting list. In our experience, our staff spend a significant amount of time contacting families on the waiting list only to find that they are no longer seeking care. This administration task takes many hours of our senior staff's time; time that could be utilised to greater effect. It would be much more efficient for centre co-ordinators to have their own waiting lists and be in a position to manage these themselves.

CONCLUSION

The COM strongly believes that the CoPP should remain committed to supporting a range of childcare services to the families who reside and work in the area. In particular, we reaffirm to the Council the important and central role that small community run centres have in the local community, with the Avenue a key example of a centre that fosters an inclusive environment for both the children and their families. Further, as a small community run centre, the Avenue has been successful in achieving ongoing financial viability and profitability, allowing funds to be reinvested back into the children and professional development for our staff.

While the Council should continue to support childcare services, we firmly believe that the funding model for community and council-run centres requires significant change. Our key areas for reform are drawn from our conclusion that the existing funding model is unsustainable. In particular, our proposals for childcare centres to be responsible for their day to day maintenance, in addition to managing their own waiting lists will achieve significant efficiencies for both individual centres and the CoPP. Broader reviews of the operation and quality subsidies could also assist identify future cost-savings for the CoPP, while also ensuring that the most viable childcare centres operate at optimal levels with the required upgrades as funded through the infrastructure levy.

In lieu of these reforms, we would like the opportunity to discuss again with the CoPP our proposal to jointly upgrade the Avenue through a co-funding arrangement to ensure the completion of numerous and much required capital works.

Thank you for considering our submission and we welcome future discussions with the CoPP on the matters raised.

ATTACHMENT A
FUNDS RAISED VIA MAINTENANCE LEVY

Table 1: Council run centres contribution to Council via the maintenance levy

| | Barring Djinang | Bubup Nairm | Clark Street | Coventry | North St Kilda | Total |
|--------------|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| 2013-2014 | - | \$82,916.00 | \$68,678.00 | \$59,595.00 | \$79,973.00 | \$291,162.00 |
| 2014-2015 | - | \$128,191.00 | \$72,120.00 | \$64,536.00 | \$84,494.00 | \$349,341.00 |
| 2015-2016 | - | \$128,407.00 | \$80,450.00 | \$71,281.00 | \$92,238.00 | \$372,376.00 |
| 2016-2017 | - | \$129,236.00 | \$77,128.00 | \$70,492.00 | \$90,989.00 | \$367,845.00 |
| 2017-2018 | \$ 2,632.00 | \$129,623.00 | \$74,753.00 | \$67,900.00 | \$89,478.00 | \$364,386.00 |
| TOTAL | \$2,632.00 | \$598,373.00 | \$ 373,129.00 | \$333,804.00 | \$ 437,172.00 | \$1,745,110.00 |

Table 2: Community managed centres contribution to Council via the maintenance levy

| | Ada Mary A'Beckett | Bubup Womindjeka | Clarendon | Eildon Road | Elwood | Poets Grove | South Melbourne | The Avenue | Total |
|--------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 2013-2014 | \$128,919.00 | \$ 15,552.00 | \$25,317.00 | \$ 42,331.00 | \$39,599.00 | \$63,087.00 | \$ 24,293.00 | \$ 45,189.00 | \$384,287.00 |
| 2014-2015 | \$108,244.00 | \$ 35,563.00 | \$24,290.00 | \$ 38,631.00 | \$40,282.00 | \$63,013.00 | \$ 11,712.00 | \$ 45,067.00 | \$366,802.00 |
| 2015-2016 | \$108,149.00 | \$ 133,262.00 | \$19,564.00 | \$ 40,310.00 | \$40,906.00 | \$48,367.00 | \$ 23,883.00 | \$ 44,817.00 | \$459,258.00 |
| 2016-2017 | \$112,777.00 | \$ 140,363.00 | \$25,105.00 | \$ 42,738.00 | \$41,604.00 | \$82,233.00 | \$ 24,811.00 | \$ 46,461.00 | \$516,092.00 |
| 2017-2018 | \$115,861.00 | \$ 151,080.00 | \$25,608.00 | \$ 30,131.00 | \$40,920.00 | \$73,349.00 | \$ 24,112.00 | \$ 48,116.00 | \$509,177.00 |
| TOTAL | \$ 573,950.00 | \$ 475,820.00 | \$ 119,884.00 | \$ 194,141.00 | \$203,311.00 | \$330,049.00 | \$ 108,811.00 | \$ 229,650.00 | \$2,235,616.00 |

ATTACHMENT B

INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY RAISED

Table 1: Council run centres contribution to the infrastructure levy

| | Barring Djinang | Bubup Nairm | Clark Street | Coventry | North St Kilda | TOTAL |
|--------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| 2013-2014 | | 77,605 | 64,279 | 55,778 | 74,850 | \$272,512.00 |
| 2014-2015 | - | 119,952 | 67,486 | 60,389 | 79,063 | \$326,890.00 |
| 2015-2016 | - | 120,105 | 75,247 | 66,672 | 86,274 | \$348,298.00 |
| 2016-2017 | - | 120,976 | 72,198 | 65,986 | 85,173 | \$344,333.00 |
| 2017-2018 | 2,466 | 121,460 | 70,046 | 63,624 | 83,844 | \$341,440.00 |
| TOTAL | 2,466 | 560,098 | 349,256 | 312,449 | 409,204 | \$1,633,473.00 |

Table 2: Community managed centres contribution to the infrastructure levy²

| | Ada Mary A'Beckett | Bubup Womindjeka | Clarendon | Eildon Road | Elwood | Poets Grove | South Melbourne | The Avenue | Total |
|--------------|--------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| 2013-2014 | 23,024 | 14,555 | - | 39,624 | 37,066 | 59,053 | 39,035 | 39,888 | \$252,245.00 |
| 2014-2015 | 123,508 | 71,899 | - | 36,149 | 37,694 | 58,963 | | 42,172 | \$370,385.00 |
| 2015-2016 | 123,950 | 124,652 | 25,428 | 37,702 | 38,261 | 45,242 | | 41,919 | \$437,154.00 |
| 2016-2017 | 128,953 | 131,393 | 46,239 | 39,453 | 38,946 | 76,962 | | 43,492 | \$505,438.00 |
| 2017-2018 | 132,269 | 141,567 | 47,076 | 28,228 | 38,342 | 68,733 | | 45,086 | \$501,301.00 |
| TOTAL | 531,704 | 484,066 | 118,743 | 181,156 | 190,309 | 308,953 | 39,035 | 212,557 | \$2,066,523.00 |

² Note where figures are missing we understand it is due to this information not being able to be collated by Council officers.

ATTACHMENT C
MAINTENANCE FUNDS SPENT BY COUNCIL

Table 1: Council-run centres³

| FY | Bubup Nairm | Clark street | Coventry | North St Kilda | Total |
|-----------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 2016-2017 | \$141,885.00 | \$80,824.00 | \$25,643.00 | \$78,008.00 | \$326,360.00 |
| 2017-2018 | \$113,963.00 | \$130,666.00 | \$105,400.00 | \$286,880.00 | \$636,909.00 |
| | \$255,848.00 | \$211,490.00 | \$131,043.00 | \$364,888.00 | \$963,269.00 |

Table 2: Community-run centres

| FY | Ada Mary A'Beckett | Bubup Womindjeka | Clarendon | Eildon Road | Elwood | Poets Grove | South Melbourne | The Avenue | Total |
|-----------|---------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| 2016-2017 | \$87,115.00 | \$78,478.00 | \$28,852.00 | \$81,464.00 | \$49,729.00 | \$46,077.00 | \$30,120.00 | \$37,604.00 | \$439,439.00 |
| 2017-2018 | \$90,260.00 | \$49,826.00 | \$37,334.00 | \$38,954.00 | \$9,159.00 | \$88,941.00 | \$19,041.00 | \$37,714.00 | \$371,229.00 |
| | \$177,375.00 | \$128,304.00 | \$66,186.00 | \$120,418.00 | \$58,888.00 | \$135,018.00 | \$49,161.00 | \$75,318.00 | \$810,668.00 |

³ Note Barring Djinang is not listed as we understand it has only recently opened.

Elwood Children's Centre response to CoPP Children's Services Policy (CSP) recommendations

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| To | Tony Keenan: City of Port Philip (CoPP) GM Community & Economic Development |
| Contacts | 8563 7739 / 0466 929 455 Tony.Keenan@portphillip.vic.gov.au |
| cc | Louise Crawford – CoPP Deputy Mayor Canal Ward |
| Date | 13.05.2019 |
| From ECC COM | Pennie Brown, Natalie Wills, Michelle Murphy, Nick Smith, Abigail Gordon, Elena Del Mercato, Fiona Gilchrist |
| ECC Contact | Pennie Brown – COM 0412 233 397 penniejeanbrown@gmail.com |
| Objective | <i>To provide ECCs feedback on the draft policy recommendations in Council's new Children's Services Policy</i> |

ECCs Focus & Position re Children's Services Policy (CSP) recommendations:

- **Lack of clarity** regarding the CSP seven policy's (confusing, convoluted)
- The online questionnaire calling for community comments is confusing, misleading and **leads you in a direction sympathetic to CoPP outcomes/objectives**.
- The overall community engagement and workshop process felt like "Lip Service", as **none of the childcare sectors feedback was taken into account**.
- **Short/pressing timeframes** re engagement and workshops.
- The policy recommendations are **economic based, rather than focusing on social benefits, public good and developing communities**.
- We believe strongly that **Council should privilege social benefits over economic benefits when looking for a return on assets**.
- Within the policy review **families from CoPP who took part in the consultation were generally happy with the variety of services across the municipality**.
- The **66 place requirement was an inaccurate and misleading figure**, and only applies to new centres not existing ones. Point needs amending in policy review for clarity.
- **Model delivery is confusing**, and not thought out, and **an option/stance is not clear when it comes to the long term future of community run centres**.

ECCs Focus & Position re our centre:

ECC is a parent managed, community-based children centre located at 67 Tennyson st, Elwood. There are (on average) 55 families, 65 children and 16 full time staff at ECC.

- **Advocating for small community run centres**
 - **A home away from home.** Smaller centres offer a unique learning and caring environment, which some children respond better to. They are like an extended family, something you don't tend to get at larger centres.
 - Council needs to ensure a **good cross section of types, sizes and models when deciding on key recommendations.**
 - Community managed centres are dwindling – **our centres point of difference is its size and family feel** – started 30 years ago by families in the community **once you remove these services they will never return.** Bigger / Hubs are not always better.
- **Ensuring the review doesn't cause uncertainty with families/staff**
 - Ensuring any impacted centres are given the **longest lead times possible**, confirmation to **cover fee gaps** if/when a centre has an end date.
 - **Redeploying staff and families to similar centres** to ensure no-one is put out and **continuity of care** is considered to ensure the smooth transition of children, careers, families.
- Elwood is identified in the CSP as a neighbourhood with the highest proportion of working families, 68%, it makes no sense to shut down a child care service. What lies ahead, population growth will increase as will the demand for childcare services/places.
- ECC is financially sustainable / we break even.
- ECC, as it exists, is an affordable, safe environment that has been rated as 'Exceeding National Quality Standard'.
- ECC's (premises) is council owned and community run/managed, and ear marked as *"Facility has no capacity to meet future needs without rebuilding"* - what does this mean for our future?
- There is no clear model delivery presented for community run centres like ECC, which leaves our future in question.

The Uncertainty regarding ECC's future, with a new proposed lease of 11 months (with the rationale being the CSP commencing July 2020) and with our facility being earmarked as *"Facility has no capacity to meet future needs without rebuilding"*

- Does this imply that council have already made up their mind about **the future of our centre** and the other centres flagged red in the *Children's Services Facility: Asset Overview Summary*?
- **Clarity on timeline** if ECC is looking at closure, 1-5 years?
- **Leaves ECC vulnerable – families and staff could start leaving if the centre is facing closure.**
- Why has this occurred and triggered the need for an **11 month lease**?
- If close, what's the **continuity of staff, kids**? Guarantee at next place?
- **What would it take to get our building compliant without the need to trigger a planning permit?** We acknowledge we can not cater to all ie disability, wheelchair access
- Opportunities to become an **independent centre**?
- **Incentives for families to stay with ECC**, knowing the centre is earmarked for possible closure.
- Are there other suitably located options that **ECC could be moved** to if the current site is deemed unviable.

Note: Other Community centres marked as "Facility has no capacity to meet future needs without rebuilding" are: Eildon Road, The Avenue, Lady Forester Kindergarten

Discussion on CoPP CSP Seven Policy Objective Points:

***Note: Policy objectives 4 and 7 do not pose a threat or raise concerns for the EC services.*

1. Council will work with partners to ensure that every child, regardless of their abilities and background, will have access to affordable, safe, accessible, quality early years services to support development to their full potential.

We agree every child needs access to care and education, no matter their background and socioeconomics. We support the recommendations.

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.

This could be code for 'close down problem buildings'. We agree Council needs to understand the needs of families but not to influence the provision of services, but to support services. We support the policy recommendations, provided CoPP works closely with and support the various services.

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

We believe that the community based not for profit sector are all financially sustainable, some having very long histories of doing so, in ECC's case over 30 years.

It should be noted that, to the best of our knowledge, all NFP/community operated services in the CoPP are operating at, at least, break even and are financially viable and sustainable. Many of the community services are already paying their own utilities.

There are 5 policy recommendations for service model delivery:

Note: Options A,B&C would dramatically increase fees and become out of reach of vulnerable and lower income families.

A. Council continues operating and subsidising childcare services as is.

This option sounds great on paper but is flagged as non-compliant. When you look into the policy recommendations it is all negative and will unlikely pass through the council.

- What does explore co-funding or lease-to-own opportunities with tenants of council-owned facilities look like?

B. Council continues operating services, but at full cost recovery.

- Clarification is required on what full costs recovery means.
- Will this be implemented with immediate effect or introduced over a number of years?
- Full costs recovery rental agreements, may force child care costs up and reduce quality.
- We need clarity on what co-funding and lease- to-own means? Does this mean that CoPP services will be sold to private investors?

- We need to understand what “continued support for community managed centres” looks like? Does this include funding?

C. Council ceases operating council-run childcare services and transition services to not-for-profit providers.

*ECC is community run, however our response to this model:

- Indicates that council may sell some of their early childhood assets – does this include buildings currently occupied by community managed services?
- What does this model look like for the council run-childcare centres?

D. Council ceases operating council run services and sells or transitions assets for other council purposes.

*ECC is community run, however our response to this model:

- We are strongly against this model.
- If these services are taken over by private or independent operators costs will soar. This will greatly affect the quality of care for children.
- Council would get an operational savings, but would they then lose the investment in families and children and cease to be child services orientated.

E. Council chooses a hybrid model based on above options.

- Would like to know more?

4. Council will encourage collaboration across all Early Years' services.

Collaboration seems to be lacking across services, CoPP does not drive this, and we believe they should and we support the policy recommendations.

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.

We understand that families need access to information and are in support of the policy recommendations.

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

Council must build/alter assets so that they meet community demand – build/improve what is needed not what will attract state funding.

There are issues with accessibility as council has already stated they would not spend money to refurbish buildings who do not comply with the disability code. This policy objective has many hidden consequences for some services especially for ECC, and through no fault of our own. This needs to be considered case by case as not all services are derelict, but do need improvements to assist in making the building compliant.

An independent building reviewer should be sought.

- Remove all assets able to receive co-contribution funding from state government. This will require all assets to meet a minimum of 66 places. This information is inaccurate and misleading.
- **The word 'contemporary' to be removed** as it does not recognise that older buildings can also be fit-for-purpose.
- **Clarity on the word 'accessible'** (disability?) The majority of children's services buildings are over 50 years old and require significant work and expense to comply with the National Construction Code and the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).
- ECC is accessible in other ways, for example servicing children in the community in other ways = with educational and medical needs.
- Not all facilities need to be 'Hubs' – Bigger services or co-located services are not necessarily better services. Forcing services into a super centre will reduce or remove our close community bonds and benefits. **We do not support this.**

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.

Access to natural environments should be paramount for children, and we support the policy recommendations.

ELWOOD COMMUNITY PLAYGROUP INC

51 Broadway, Elwood, Vic, 3184
Incorporation Number A0046245D



History of ECP

Elwood Community Playgroup Inc (ECP) has been in operation for around 20 years. Playgroup started out the back of 51 Broadway while the MCHN were there. Then while Poets Grove was developed Playgroup moved down to the foreshore, near Lady Forster Kindergarten and returned in about 2010 to operate at 51 Broadway as a dedicated playgroup centre since then.

ECP runs 42 sessions 7 days a week with dedicated groups slots, flexible drop in spots where any member can attend, sole parents and Dad's groups. We have around 300 children with access to centre and playgroups weekly. We have over 80 volunteers across the committee, events and group representatives. We offer a unique opportunity to council and other services in that we are the only service that provides for the family unit. Childcare and kindergarten are focused on the child, being a parent led playgroup, parents/carers are always with their child and the whole family benefits from the model. We charge \$30 per family per year (or \$20 concession).

Elwood Community Playgroup is often referred to as one of the biggest playgroups in Australia and is visited by other playgroups and services across Australia and more recently from the UK. Many playgroups contact us to enquire how to set out theirs and we keenly share our knowledge, process and procedures.

We have had strong connections with council and in recent years have had significant support with the replacement of many of the end of life capital items such as wall heaters, air conditioners, hot water service, sunshades, carpets etc. In 2018 council supported ECP to co-fund the upgrade to the rear yard which was opened by then Councillors Dick Gross, and Tim Baxter, Louise Crawford was unable to make the date.

We operate a free clothes and book space so that any members can donate or take items they need. With an average of 1 item taken a day this diverts items from landfill and encourages reuse. In 220 days at \$15 per item cost, we have reused over \$3300 items and giving items a second home.



We are heavily engaged in grants, fund raising and running events. In the past 36 months here are some the things we have done, procured or been granted

- Adult & Child Defibrillator

- Funding from Vic Roads for checking and installing around 136 child car seats. (Begins July 1 2019)

- Tram Mud Kitchen

- Upgraded Paint, Arts & Crafts space

- Timber table and chairs for the baby rooms

- Moved away from push button toys to engaging and developmental toys spending around \$2000

- Held 2 Farm Yard Days where farm animals take over playgroup! (Around 70-100 families attend) and we have included low sensory time with these)

- Held an open day for the public in 2018

- Held Christmas events with around 70-100 families attending each event

- Run 3 working bees with around 30 member volunteers each time

- Held committee dinners to build relations and acknowledge the effort of volunteers

- Move email and documents to Google GSuite to centrally manage emails and documents to facilitate easy hand over of roles within the committee and help meet with the Privacy Act.

- \$5000 Community grant for our volunteers to purchase a printer, hard surface power cleaner and other essential items for our volunteers

ECP Responses to the Council Draft Children's Services Policy

| POLICY | Elwood Community Playgroup Response |
|---|---|
| <p>Policy recommendation 1.1 Create a new grant program to provide a financial subsidy for families experiencing ongoing and situational vulnerability and disadvantage. This subsidy will be available for all eligible City of Port Phillip community members accessing any Early Years' Service in the City.</p> | <p>Do not support in current wording. Depending on eligibility this removes funding for some or all families. We have families who are here from overseas who do not yet qualify for health care cards, child care subsidies etc that are currently used to decide access to grants. These families are at risk of isolation, depression and other issues and don't get anything from state and federal funding. Whilst their income may look acceptable, they are faced with paying full immunisations costs, full GP costs, and full day care costs without access to any rebate. Consequently they are unable to work or get respite through childcare as the costs of childcare exceeds their daily income. Often the access to grants require many visits and forms that take can be deterrents rather than encouragers to accessing services, this is on top of meetings with Centrelink and the many other services. Any solution should take into these needs and limit the paperwork and bureaucracy of accessing funding.</p> |
| <p>Policy recommendation 1.2 Support Child Safe Standards implementation across all early years' services (especially toy libraries and playgroups) through an education and capacity-building program.</p> | <p>Support, however we may require that council provide significant support and some funding where playgroups have volunteers who are not members or have staff, as this would make any incorporated playgroup a mandatory reporter and significantly increase volunteer efforts in training and operations of Child Safe Standards.</p> |
| <p>Policy recommendation 1.3 Fund an early intervention outreach role to work with relevant service providers in the City (child protection, homelessness, mental health, family violence) to increase participation of vulnerable children in early childhood education services, especially kindergarten services.</p> | <p>Support and include playgroups sessions where these families may be reached.</p> |
| <p>Policy recommendation 1.4 Develop a Children's Services website that will provide information on all children's services in the City. This will include services provided, vacancies, specialist expertise, fee levels, educational approaches, target groups served and more. Participation in the website should be a condition for services to receive Council grants.</p> | <p>Response: Support if the condition to grants is removed. Grants should not be a condition to having access to the website to update and participate. This would provide a barrier rather than an inducer to participation. This does not ensure participation on the website as many organisations do not apply for grants. -This needs to include CoPP Staff, roles and services. One of the big areas raised in the Reference Group is incredibly difficult to keep up with Council staff and organisational changes.</p> |

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| <p>Policy Recommendation 2.1</p> <p>Review and update the service model for toy libraries to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review funding model and operating subsidy to increase operating hours at current toy library sites to increase access and availability to services for residents now and into the future in existing Port Phillip areas. • Develop one new toy library site in Fisherman's Bend to service the growing population, as part of an integrated hub. | |
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| <p>Policy Recommendation 2.3 Review and update the service model for playgroups to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A dedicated, or several functional multipurpose, playgroup space/s to be considered in Fisherman's Bend, as part of an integrated hub. • An additional playgroup or children's multipurpose space in the north end of Port Phillip to be considered (South Melbourne or Port Melbourne neighbourhoods). • Make available the playgroup rooms in BubupNairm Family and Children's Centre across five days of the week and transition other programs into other Family Services Rooms in the building to increase availability and capacity. | <p>Somewhat support, playgroup spaces should be available 7 days to reach all members of the community. Often weekends are the only time when the secondary carer can go to playgroup, or the entire playgroup can meet all members of the families.</p> <p>Any policy needs to include dedicated playgroups for special needs like Malvern Special Needs playgroup which families from CoPP currently travel too. A dedicated space (or exceptionally well organised inclusive space for Special Needs playgroup is required to support these families and children. It is important to understand that playgroups come in all forms and some do incorporate respite option such as Malvern Special Needs Playgroup. Malvern Special Needs activities include "Twice weekly development play sessions to preschool children with special needs under the supervision of therapists, a kindergarten teacher and a coordinator. Volunteers assist to provide 1 on 1 supervision of the children. Sessions include indoor and outdoor play with the assistance of specialist equipment. These sessions achieve positive developmental outcomes and help improve the wellbeing of the children and their families. - Parents are provided with respite during the sessions to support their own wellbeing as well as ongoing professional advice and support which assists them in providing improved care for their children.""</p> <p>A suitable location is needed to start this in CoPP and work with State Government to fund the ongoing operation and consider how NDIS funding may assist. https://www.facebook.com/pages/Malvern-Special-Needs-Play-Group/591316730891738</p> <p>We are unsure how council came up with no additional requirement for playgroups until 2026. -There are requirements for Special Needs Playgroups, Developmental Playgroups, Dad's Groups, Grandparents and Sole Parent's groups. These that are not yet being met consistently across CoPP. ECP runs Sole Parents and Dads Groups on weekends -Playgroups should have the ability to run 7 days a week and in each local suburb to improve social connections for parents and children. Meeting at playgroups outside of your area that your child will attend childcare/kinder and school (typically a suburb) can reduce the benefits of playgroups and lead to isolation in their own suburb where connections are needed to establish relationships.</p> <p>Playgroup Victoria Response– With the implementation for the NDIS there has been an increase in families with children with disabilities and special needs look for alternatives. With the options families are able to access with the means of the NDIS package their children are receiving diminishing based on cost, Playgroup is a vital and affordable option. While Playgroup is at this stage not something families can use the NDIS package for, it provides a much needed option for parents. The Federal Government has recently recognised that there are current Commonwealth recipients of disability support where it is unlikely will fully transition to the NDIS. As a result they have recently extended funding to Playgroup Australia for our PlayConnect.</p> |
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| | <p>PlayConnect is a supported playgroup for children and families with Autism or autism like behaviours. We would strongly encourage the CoPP within this planning cycle to ensure that the community has access to venues such as Elwood for programs such as PlayConnect into the future.</p> |
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| <p>Policy recommendation 2.4 With the addition of funded three-year-old Kindergarten, consider transitioning current Council assets into kindergarten facilities to meet future demand where relevant, especially where the private market is meeting the demand/need for childcare services in that area.</p> | <p>No comment as not specific to playgroups</p> |
| <p>Policy recommendation 3.1 Council to decide the future service model for childcare services from five policy options (A, B, C, D, E).</p> | <p>It is important to remember that selling off assets to meet short term needs does not always fit a long term policy. How would council respond if for profit providers exited the market if the assets are sold off and still needed to meet the outcomes of this policy? Market failures can occur; selling off assets severely limits council ability to meet the policy objectives.</p> <p>Playgroup Victoria (PGV) Response— Access to low or no cost community facilitates is paramount to the engagement of families in Playgroup. Playgroup Victoria has recognised that reducing barriers to participation is paramount. As a result, PGV has reduced the cost for families and Playgroups with registration of Playgroups no free for first time parent groups transitioning in to Baby Playgroups as well as Supported Playgroups. PGV Registration for all of ECP is now only \$50 per annum which includes Public Liability and Property Insurance for the entire membership base, rather than individuals. The City of Monash has recently recommissioned two facilitates and offers them for free to the community for Playgroups. Participation has increased by more the 150% in less than 12 months. PGV encourages and works will local councils to facilitate this.</p> |

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| <p>A. Council continues operating and subsidising childcare services as is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This option is likely to be in non-compliant with the National Competition Policy. • It is unlikely Council will be able to maintain and renew all existing assets to meet current and future demand, functionality and compliance issues. • Council subsidies will continue to be untargeted and not based on need. • Some assets will not be fit-for-purpose or compliant with legislation. • Could explore co-funding or lease-to-own opportunities with tenants of council-owned facilities. | <p>Have assumed this not applicable to playgroup or 51 Broadway, if it is, we reserve to right to further comment.</p> |
| <p>B. Council continues operating services, but at full cost recovery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This option is likely to meet National Competition Policy requirements. • Requires a review of infrastructure and maintenance levies to ensure they cover all renewal and utility costs. • Will require increased fees at Council-run childcare services to allow for cost recovery (\$5- \$15 per day). • Explore co-funding or lease-to-own opportunities with tenants of council-owned facilities. | <p>Have assumed this not applicable to playgroup or 51 Broadway, if it is, we reserve to right to further comment.</p> |

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| <p>C. Council ceases operating Council-run childcare services and transition services to not- for-profit providers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This would include full cost recovery rental arrangements, and utilities at cost to new owner. • Meets all industrial obligations under relevant agreements and legislation. <p>This could include purchase, co-funding or lease-to-own opportunities with not-for- profit providers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational savings to Council • Asset sales to support transition arrangements • Continued support for community managed centres. | <p>Have assumed this not applicable to playgroup or 51 Broadway, if it is, we reserve to right to further comment.</p> |
| <p>D. Council ceases operating Council-run services and sells or transitions assets for other Council purposes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This assumes that the market will meet current and future demand • Uncertain as to how market failures will be overcome. • Operational savings to Council. • Asset sales to support transition arrangements | <p>Do not support - Not everything is going to be financially sustainable if council charges rents and sells off assets. There are plenty of council assets that are not financially sustainable for council yet bring enormous benefit to the community. Think of sporting fields, surf life saving clubs that council have invested in. Playgroups need spaces to operate that are in council owned building. There are no For-Profit providers in this space, councils and playgroups need to work together to meet the outcomes.</p> |
| <p>E. Council chooses a hybrid model based on above options</p> | <p>We are unable to comment as the mix is unknown</p> |

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| <p>Policy Recommendation 3.2 Review all funding, subsidy and levy arrangements to ensure return on investment and KPI deliverables for acquittal purposes</p> | <p>We are concerned this this will turn into a data exercise and not account for defining and valuing community benefits. This has become increasingly important, however KPIs and return on investment often lack being able to measure in monetary terms the value of community benefits. According to the report - Relationship Matters: The Social and Economic Benefits of Community Playgroups, Centre for Urban Research - RMIT university 2016,</p> |
| <p>Policy Objective 4: Council will encourage collaboration across all Early Years' services.</p> | <p>This policy misses recommendations that include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -MCHN to visit playgroups and toy libraries -Set up a Playgroup Network so that playgroups can learn and share ideas - Consider that Playgroups could be considered to be part of identifying disadvantaged families and new and emerging communities who may not be accessing kindergarten -Explore options for outreach roles to regularly visit playgroups for quick talks (15 minute speed talks) |
| <p>Policy recommendation 4.1 Facilitate collaborative and collegiate relationships with early years' networks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify professional development needs for educators (including assistance in sourcing bulk discounts for training and providing free training room space). • Childcare staff to visit and learn from centres in the municipality or within Melbourne that are consistently receiving an 'Exceeding' or 'Excellent' NQS rating, encouraging a 'community of practice'. • These recommendations to apply to all providers, including independent and private providers. • Support of Educational Leaders and networking across services. | <p>Do not Support in current format Focus here is on childcare and kindergartens, however the policy writes about "ALL" Early Years Services, however this misses toy libraries and playgroups collaboration and educational needs. These needs must be included.</p> |
| <p>Policy recommendation 4.2 Support the development of a kindergarten network to provide collaborative practice and integrated services that inform pedagogy and practice, for example approved provider responsibilities, professional development, quality referrals and transition to school programs.</p> | <p>Have assumed this not applicable to playgroup or 51 Broadway</p> |
| <p>Policy Objective 5: Families will have access to the</p> | <p>It is unclear how the "Where do we need to focus?" within the Policy issues and options paper</p> |

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| services and information they need, at the times they need it, to make choices appropriate for their needs. | is meet with these policy recommendations below. |
| <p>Policy Recommendation 5.1 Proactively create and promote opportunities for families with children to meet other families and develop social connections through such things as community events and parents' workshops.</p> | <p>This should include heavily promoting and supporting playgroups as a major driver to meet this recommendation. There is a great vehicle in playgroups where this need can be met and further enhanced. According the "Relationship Matters: The Social and Economic Benefits of Community Playgroups Study" Women who move suburbs, lose contact with their mothers' group, lack confidence or are socially or culturally isolated, may lack the time and resources required to find a playgroup through their own initiative" Council with the state and territory-led playgroup organisations could boost their work with MCH Nurses, GPs and other contact points for families of young children, to integrate them into a group of carers with children of similar ages, providing the impetus for community playgroup formation and sustaining and growing existing playgroups.</p> <p>-Playgroups have high levels of "social trust" which is a key element of community capacity building. Trust encourages cooperation and reciprocity, fosters knowledge sharing and facilitates business transactions. (*)</p> <p>-We would like to see MCHN including families with 2nd and subsequent births into MCHN groups. We have many families where it is the 2nd and subsequent child that changes the dynamics in a household and can create excessive stresses and this is when they require MCHN and the social supports that playgroups offer. These families are not necessarily entitled to supports that vulnerable families have, yet the stresses are large and can be isolating for parents and therefore affect the child.</p> <p>Playgroups offer a unique opportunity in that this is the only service that caters for the parent/carers and child from 0-preschool. Childcare and Kindergartens are focused on the child; playgroups support both the child and parent/carer and are arguably better positioned to help the family unit. Recent studies in have in USA have shown that it can be more beneficial to teach the parent who then teaches the child or make help behaviour changes, rather than only directing support at the child. Furthermore, in order to help the child, we must help the family. Increasing participating in childcare can lead to a loss of confidence in parenting, it can send message to parents that are not good enough. We need to balance childcare and parenting needs in order to focus on children.</p> <p>-Dads- Associate Professor Richard Fletcher** says "There's still a very strong idea in the community and amongst professionals about parental roles. Many think that engaging mothers as the primary caregiver is sufficient, and fathers are just an optional extra," he explains. "Fathers are invisible in many places, and that is endemic. Not because people dislike fathers, but because the system is set up to be focused on mothers" Richard's research revealed possible long-term negative impacts on the children of dads with mental health issues. Fathers' depressive symptoms in the first year after the birth predicted behaviour problems in their</p> |

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| | <p>children years later. "If dads' mental health has such a dramatic impact then we need to be screening dads for depression, not just mums," Richard explains. "This is a relatively new idea." "We were so focused on the mum being the main affect that we didn't factor in the dads. Now we see it matters a lot, right from birth." What can council do to change this and make a positive difference?</p> |
| <p>Policy recommendation 5.2 Improve communications about the availability of, and access to, all early years' services, especially kindergarten to culturally and linguistically diverse communities.</p> | <p>Support, we have many families from diverse backgrounds that would benefit</p> |

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| <p>Policy Recommendation 5.3 Utilise approved state funding to scope the creation of an effective and centralised municipal-wide enrolment system for community-run and independent kindergartens in Port Phillip. This will require significant consultation with service providers.</p> | No comment as not specific to Playgroups |
| <p>Policy recommendation 5.4 Develop a Memorandum of Understanding for playgroups with guidelines regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size and inclusion • Available support for volunteers, committees and parents • Sustainability, including sharing of resources between groups and recycling <p>Support</p> | Support in general, however would like to understand if this is legally binding and how it applies to 51 Broadway before supporting this recommendation. |
| <p>Policy recommendation 5.5 Develop a centralised portal and communication strategy as part of the Customer Experience and Technology Transformation project, and work with children's service providers and families to establish the best way for families to receive the information they need, in the way they need it, when they need it.</p> | Support |
| <p>Policy recommendation 5.6 Improve the current childcare waitlist and investigate expanding it to include private and independent centres in order to provide families with better information about places for children under the age of three, as well as to inform short- and medium-term planning for childcare.</p> | No comment as not specific to Playgroups |
| <p>Policy Objective 6: Early Years services will be supported by safe, accessible, contemporary, fit-for-purpose, sustainable facilities and environments.</p> | We do not support the use of the "contemporary". Playgroups and children's space do not need to be in a contemporary space to be fit for purpose. |

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| <p>Policy Recommendation 6.1 Develop an Early Year's Services Facility Framework that will deliver the following outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All assets to meet legislative and building compliance over the life of the strategy. • All assets able to receive co-contribution funding from state government. This will require all assets to meet a minimum of 66 places. | <p>This appears to be focusing on childcare and kindergarten. Playgroups and Toy Libraries should not be compelled to receive co-contribution from state government nor meet 66 places. It is assumed this is a mistake in wording. ECP building at 51 Broadway is an asset, yet would not be expected to have state funding nor meet 66 places.</p> |
| <p>Policy recommendation 6.2 Work with all community-managed services over time to implement the framework outlined above.</p> | <p>See point above</p> |
| <p>Policy Recommendation 6.3 Ensure additional facilities for services and consolidate existing services if required to meet functionality and compliance are incorporated into integrated facility hubs to address multiple service demands. Council will optimise opportunities for Major Capital Works grant applications available from Department of Education and Training for the building of integrated service hubs, especially on any new school sites, such as in Fishermans Bend.</p> | <p>Do not support, integrated hubs are not always better. Having access to services that people can walk to have significant benefits. It creates a sense of local community, has families out walking, meeting people along the way and reduces the use of vehicles. Many facilities such as ECP are not "contemporary" but are still fit for purpose. Buildings such as ECP would not require significant work to make them compliant with the DDA. Bigger services are not necessarily better services; we need a range of different services across the municipality to suit a range of family needs. Many people are able to walk to some services for the very fact that they are not co-located. If services are co-located, then only people nearby would have quick and walkable access. Many of our members love our centre as it does not have a big reception and does not feel like a business. The very reason we "just work so well" is because we are everything that a business model is not.</p> |
| <p>Policy 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 year's services.</p> | |

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| <p>Policy Recommendation 7.1 Develop model for optimising access to existing assets in the city such as parks, beaches, and adventure playgrounds.</p> | <p>-Support however make the following comment,</p> <p>We support All Abilities "Play grounds" such as Hays Paddock in Kew see https://www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/recreation-arts/parks-and-gardens/hays-paddock. Playgrounds need to go beyond a "bucket or net" swing.</p> <p>-Unfenced playgrounds can cause significant barriers for families with children who have developmental or special needs. Unfenced playgrounds are a barrier to many families with 2 or more children. We have families that will not go to parks with 2 or more children as it is too stressful to manage the situation of 1 or more children go in different directions.</p> <p>Council to build a special playground for children and parents/carers of all abilities; a place where no child is denied the chance to have fun.</p> <p>Ideas include</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Raised sandpits so the people in wheel chairs can be wheeled up to it and people can participate 2. Consider when using bark and how it limits people in wheel chairs and prams 3. Flying foxes with adaptive seats for wheel users 4. Wheel chair friendly mazes 5. Pictures of non-verbal communication symbols |
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| <p>Policy recommendation 7.2 Advocate for the promotion of outdoor learning environments and programs that promote children's connection to nature and environmental sustainability practices, for example Clean up Port Phillip Day, Be Out There, Let's G.O (Get outside), and Indigenous nature-based cultural programs</p> | <p>We support and would like assistance in building our services to include Beach Playgroups (Elwood Foreshore) and Nature Playgroups (Suggest Elsternwick old gold course as ideal location)</p> <p>Many of our members have expressed support for these, we seek council funding and support to implement these or for council to run and our members attend.</p> <p>-A great bush playgroup is the YMCA in Anglesea that is set in bushland. Here kids play in the bush, build tents from sticks, play in mud, have a camp fire to make damper, play on drums made from wood and tin and play in nature. https://www.facebook.com/kidsgobush</p> |
| <p>Policy Recommendation 7.3 Develop a minimum design guideline for future playground works/upgrades at childcare centres that can be tailored for each site and implemented in stages, including investigating the development or suitability of nature and sensory play environments within open space settings for excursion purposes, for example developing bush kindergarten setting/s in the municipality.</p> | <p>No comment as not specific to Playgroups</p> |
| <p>Policy recommendation 7.4 Work with early years' networks to consult and promote the range of opportunities to incorporate nature and sensory play into their service settings with supported funding opportunities.)</p> | <p>Support but should be extended to Playgroups and toy libraries</p> |
| <p>Sources</p> | |

Elwood Community Playgroups response to **Draft Future Service Model Options - Toy libraries and Playgroups**
Draft Future Service Model Options - Toy libraries and Playgroups
Appendix 3 update and corrections for Elwood Community Playgroup

Elwood playgroup runs around 42 sessions a week including special interest groups of Dad's Group and Sole Parents Groups since 2018, last year we ran Grandparents group and look forward to seeing how we can run this again.

We have regular run drop in sessions available weekdays for any members to attend, in addition to their other 2 hour sessions, this has been in operation since around 2014-2015

Out fees our now \$30 or \$15 for concessions per annum. There is no longer an additional Playgroup Victoria fee of \$40 or \$20 concession

The fees cover the costs replace of our assets which include, toys, child and adult furniture, tables, chairs, arts, craft, soft play etc. We have over \$35,000 in assets

The fees also cover the cost of tea, coffee milk and events such as "Farm yard Day" and Christmas event each year

We operate 7 days a week 9-6 and have evening activities and meeting as needed to meet the flexibility required by our members

We have guest speakers at many committee meetings and our AGM

We have over 80 volunteers to operate our playgroup. Our committee volunteers efforts exceed 30 hours per week, we have no staff so everything from memberships, president, treasurer, secretary, events, working bees, MCHN new groups visits, site inductions, maintenance, purchasing and keeping playgroup running is volunteer led by parents.

Options

Option 1 - The council should retain the current service model while enhancing the delivery of support playgroups and ensure they meet the demand for Fishermans Bend

ECP Response

- Again council to consider Special Needs Playgroups
- Council to consider how it can introduce beach/bush/nature playgroups in all suburbs
- Council should provide to Playgroups the names, roles and contacts of various Council staff who can assist. Often these changes and we don't know who to go to, or for what, so we don't.
- Council to fund staff or fund playgroups who could lead beach/nature/bush playgroups
- Council to consider building and running a memberships platform and one-stop for all playgroups, so that people can go on, select location, day and time and suitable sessions and pay if needed and collect the necessarily family data and join up quickly. A central online system will help council and playgroups understand demographics, special needs, and other relevant data to help improve playgroups to meet the needs of families. This would have the added benefit of removing 3 volunteer roles from Elwood Playgroup who are consumed with this effort daily. This would also help with storing private data securely.
- We support playgroup faciliatory running ad-hoc sessions through the year, this helps keeps members engaged and also provide them ideas on playing and engaging with their child, it can also help break down barriers within groups who may become tight knit.
- Council to support volunteers better and recognise their efforts openly.

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| <p>Option 2 The council should enter into a partnership model with playgroups and toy libraries and deliver both services from within a dedicated building that also hosts MCHN, kinder and Long day Care</p> | <p>Do not support co-location for all playgroups. For reasons mentioned previously co-located is not always better.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -We do not support a cost recovery model of revenue through playgroups of membership fees. - We understand that committees time is finite in that it ends when the child starts school, however that is no different to community kindergartens, childcare, and toy libraries committees that manage the transitions of knowledge skills and experience. <p>Playgroup Victoria (PGV) Responses– Access to low or no cost community facilitates is paramount to the engagement of families in Playgroup. Playgroup Victoria has recognised that reducing barriers to participation is paramount. As a result, PGV has reduced the cost for families and Playgroups with registration of Playgroups no free for first time parent groups transitioning in to Baby Playgroups as well as Supported Playgroups. PGV Registration for all of ECP is now only \$50 per annum which includes Public Liability and Property Insurance for the entire membership base, rather than individuals. The City of Monash has recently recommissioned two facilitates and offers them for free to the community for Playgroups. Participation has increased by more the 150% in less than 12 months. PGV encourages and works will local councils to facilitate this.</p> |
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Below are pictures from our amazing centre that helps create a safe space for children and families to meet, socialise, crv. laugh, learn and share







Every Child Our Future: Policy Issues and Options Paper

Bubup Womindjeka Family and Children's Centre submission

Bubup Womindjeka Family and Children's Centre (BW FCC) values our role in the Early Years Services sector in the City of Port Phillip (CoPP) and are proud of our contributions to the local community, our families and partners and the education and care service community. We value the centre that was built for us and recognise that we are privileged to have such a beautiful and practical building to house our many services. We have developed a broad suite of family and children's programs and services to meet the needs of the local community and recognise that the CoPP has been a valuable partner, supporting us in many of these achievements. We believe that Port Melbourne and Albert Park families and children have greatly benefited from the ways BW FCC has utilised the various CoPP contributions to our service, including the Quality Subsidy, the former Affordability Subsidy and the low-income subsidy.

We are one of the outcomes of the visionary 2006 Children's Services Policy. We ask Council to view a new early years policy as an opportunity to again be bold and visionary, to make it possible for future generations of babies and young children to thrive in our municipality. An investment in the early years grows exponentially and reciprocally. It benefits all of our community.

Our submission covers all of the Policy Objectives, but our main focus is Policy Objective One, which we believe is fundamental and thus some comments are relevant to other policy objectives.

Policy Objective One – For every child to have access to affordable, safe, accessible, quality early years services.

The Evidence Review prepared for CoPP by the Murdoch Children's Research Institute states that a universal service system approach is the best way of reaching vulnerable families and that services must of high quality, able to offer differential support, and be inclusive. The policy recommendations clearly do not support meeting these criteria.

Affordable

- BW FCC submit that all families should be able to access early years services without causing financial stress.
- Financial subsidies should be dependent on quality, in line with the research evidence of significant cognitive and emotional benefits for children who receive high quality care in their early years. We submit that services must at least meet National Quality Standards.
- We agree that Council should provide funding for vulnerable and disadvantaged children and request that it be to a greater extent than currently available. Under the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) system vulnerable families with low income and low activity hours do not receive the number of hours of subsidised care that would better support them and their children. The Interim Early Education Grant fails families needing support to avoid intervention so is failing a preventative measure.
- We suggest that to determine the potential cost to council, Council could canvas existing centres to determine the number of potential children requiring council funding to access

education and care services. The Affordability Subsidy did this well, by creating a formula to determine how much funding would be allocated to each child by measuring the percentage of CCB and allocating funding accordingly. With CCS, looking at a combination of activity hours and CCS subsidy, to determine eligibility for council funding. (i.e. 50% subsidy eligibility, but low activity levels prohibiting them from accessing more than one day of care)

- There should be no hidden incentive in an affordability subsidy for fee increases. We suggest that the cost to families should be the same or minimal variance across all services and the cost to CoPP be the same or minimal variance. This would mean higher fee services would also subsidise eligible families.
- While vulnerable and disadvantaged families are a priority, the community said that the cost of care can be prohibitive to returning to work. Limiting the grant to families experiencing ongoing and situational vulnerability and disadvantage may exclude families with low and moderate incomes which could limit their participation in early years services and thus families' community engagement and female workforce participation. Including families with low and moderate incomes in the proposed new grant program will improve their access.
- We submit that lack of affordable access to early years services by low and moderate income earners is an example of market failure that Council could address.

Accessible

- We see potential for council to achieve Policy Recommendations 1.3 and 1.4 and Policy Objectives Three, Four and Five by thinking more broadly in considering creating a team dedicated to achieving accessibility in all its meanings. We envisage the team having responsibility for breaking down barriers and ensuring that vulnerable families have access to affordable early years services and enough education and care hours to support positive developmental outcomes for children. The team would also support accessibility for children with disabilities, multiple complex needs and children and families from diverse cultures and those whose home language is not English. Another crucial responsibility would be seeking and supporting the 18% of children eligible for kindergarten who are not attending a funded kindergarten program within the city.
- The Central Waiting List as it currently is, does not meet service needs and requires review, and if it is to continue, it must meet service, family and community needs. Increased flexibility, reduced administrative requirements and increased use of better technology, especially to support the smooth and timely access to services for vulnerable families, is required.
- Similarly, we request further consultation with kindergartens, families and family and children's and community support services before introducing a Kindergarten Waiting list.

Safe

- We support policy recommendation 1.2 and submit that professional training offered to early childhood must go beyond Child Safe Standards
- We believe that Council has a role to play in supporting not-for-profit services to adhere to and be compliant with relevant legislation and regulation as an aspect of ensuring all children are safe and protected.

Quality

- According to the Murdoch Children's Research Institute Evidence review the significant cognitive and emotional benefits for children who receive high quality care in their early years continue through primary and secondary school and are strongest for children from

disadvantaged backgrounds. High quality, characterised by low ratios of children to educators who provide stable and warm relationships and positive interactions, is essential for infants and young children to benefit.

- The National Quality Framework (NQF) has had much success in improving the quality of early childhood education and care services across the country. Key elements are the improved educator to children ratios and qualification requirements and the National Quality Standard, which sets out structural and process elements of quality and standards for services to meet and provides a range of guidance material to support service.
- While community managed not-for-profit education and care services have benefited from the NQF reforms the CoPP Quality Subsidy has provided the means to provide high quality as described by the National Quality Standards. Basing the grant on 5% of service salaries expenditure supports services to target both structural and process elements of quality by employing educators with higher qualifications, and/or more staff, and/or providing increased professional learning.
- BWFCC submit that continuing the Quality Subsidy and expanding eligibility to all community owned and not for profit organisations within the municipality, excluding independent schools, would be an effective strategy to support better outcomes for children in services that do not have the organisational and business related advantages of for-profit businesses. We believe this is compliant with National Competition Policy.

Policy Objective Two

Policy recommendation 2.2

- BWFCC suggest that Council could be more proactive in influencing the provision of early years services.
- We submit that council should have a role in guiding the market – making sure services are in areas that need more places; are built to meet age related need and flexible enough to meet future need; and meet playground minimum design guideline (Policy recommendation 7.3)

Policy Objective Three

Policy recommendation 3.1 – Future childcare service model

- This is the most important, complex, contentious and far reaching policy recommendation and we submit that it would be imprudent for Council to decide on the future childcare service model based on the information provided in the Options Paper. A further paper is required that explores, explains and expands proposed options and includes possible implications and consequences, supported by evidence, such as the research noted in Every Child Our Future.
- This new paper must be put out for community consultation.
- National Competition Policy (NCP) and disability access appear to be the main policy and legislative drivers for the options included in the Options Paper. While disability access requirements may be straightforward although with some complexities in implementation, there are various ways to achieve NCP compliance that include Council operating early years services.
- There are numerous ways of meeting this policy objective that include Council operating early years services. We submit that including council operated services in the mix of service management models will better meet the needs of the community and support a sustainable early years sector in the municipality.

- It is possible for Council to adopt a sustainable business model that allows them to continue operating their own or some of their own services. This option must be thoroughly explored.
- Transitioning council service to not-for-profit providers is also an important option. Our experience indicates that community run early childhood services that are embedded in and responsive to their community succeed.

Policy recommendation 3.2

- Reviewing all funding and levy arrangements is prudent. Any returns on investment should be weighted to social returns and benefits. Some form of KPI deliverables for acquittal purposes may be reasonable.
- Prior to establishing the review BWFFC is keen to be consulted regarding the principles that would guide the review.
- Our preliminary concerns include
 - How the needs of the Port Phillip community's vulnerable and disadvantaged families will be supported
 - How services will have the capacity to support community building
 - How excellence in ECEC will be supported.

Policy Objective 4

- BWFFC support the Policy recommendations but note they focus on early childhood education and care and submit there would be better service and community outcomes if all early years services were included.
- We suggest that Dot points 1,3 and 4 under the heading 'Where do we need to focus' would make suitable policy recommendations.
- We note Policy recommendation 4.1 and recommend that a paid secretariat would support these networks to be sustainable in the long-term networks.

Policy Objective 5

- We support the policy recommendations and ask you to refer to our position on accessibility.
- BWFFC recognises the importance of playgroups in the community and support the development of a Memorandum of Understanding. Playgroups provide families with links to their community, decrease issues around social isolation and ensure positive social and developmental outcomes for children.
- We recommend that Council consider funding a number of Playgroup Facilitators. Our experience is that supported playgroups, such as the 19 playgroups being offered at BWFFC which are servicing over 200 children or 174 families, generate better attendance and enhance the ability to achieve these goals. Our playgroups are supported by a qualified educator who plans a program, ensures the environment is set with developmentally appropriate experiences, models educational practice and works with families to link them to other community services.
- Policy recommendation 5.5 is strongly supported; we agree that families' access to information must be improved.

Policy Objective 6

Policy recommendation 6.1

- Council has considerable early years services facility assets and costs. BW FCC agree that it is good stewardship for council to develop an early year's facility framework.
- Those in council buildings need to be included in consultation around the development of terms of reference and actively consulted throughout the development of the framework.
- The Facility Framework needs to consider the many ways facilities are currently valued – not just their dollar value
- Council also has an important role in providing early years service infrastructure. We submit that the nett CoPP owned/managed early years buildings/places must increase and be multi-functional over the life of the strategy to meet growing demands
- We submit that Council should be building/altering assets so that they meet service needs and community demand. It is important buildings have flexible spaces to enable changed offerings as community needs change and are able to be adapted to any legislative and regulatory changes over time.

Policy Objective 7

- BW FCC strongly support the policy recommendations. We are very fortunate in our outdoor space and location to Lagoon Reserve and know the difference that access to natural environments make.
- We recommend that council find a mechanism for Policy recommendation 7.3 to be a requirement for all new services in the municipality.

Bubup Womindjeka Family and Children's Centre

May 2019

Poets Grove Family and Children's Centre submission on Every Child Our Future: Policy Issues and Option Paper

As the largest provider of children's services in the Elwood neighbourhood, Poets Grove Family and Children's Centre plays a key role in meeting the needs of families in the Elwood community. Poets Grove operates at 100% occupancy and does not have the capacity to meet increased demand. The Policy Recommendations in Policy Objective 3 and Policy Objective 6 could have a significant impact on the accessibility of children's services in Elwood in the future. The suggested closure, sale or relocation of other Elwood services will have a detrimental impact on the accessibility of services in Elwood, and will place even greater demand on Poets Grove. Poets Grove is not in a position to meet any increase in demand now or into the future. Any potential upgrades to the Poets Grove building are unlikely to result in an increase in places, given the regulatory requirement for the premise to have an additional 7 square metres of unencumbered outdoor space for each additional childcare place created.

Having analysed the reports and data that have informed the new Children's Services Policy recommendations, we are concerned about the validity of some of the reports. Therefore, we do not support any of the policy options for Policy Recommendation 3.1, given the inaccuracies in some reports which have informed these options, especially the *Children's Services Asset Summary* and the *Early Years Service Current and Future Demand Analysis*.

Children's Services Asset Summary

This report assesses the capacity and readiness of Children Service facilities to meet future needs. Poets Grove has been given a Future Readiness rating of *1: Facility has capacity to meet future needs now*. We disagree with this assessment, given that Poets Grove operates at 100% occupancy and does not have the ability to increase capacity now.

Early Years Service Current and Future Demand Analysis

We are concerned about the accuracy of the forecast for future demand in our neighbourhood, because there are two important factors which have been completely omitted from Council's modelling and analysis:

1. Port Phillip's current low kindergarten participations rates, and
2. The State Government's commitment to roll-out 15 hours of subsidised 3 year old kindergarten over the next 10 years.

Both of these factors impact on the actual need for places now and into the future, as outlined below.

1. Port Phillip's low kindergarten participation rates.

Port Phillip has a lower kindergarten participation rate than the Victorian average (85.6% compared to 93.4%)¹. Whilst Port Phillip's low kindergarten participation rates are referenced in *Every Child Our Future – Policy Issues and Option Paper* (p. 35), the modelling used in the *Early Years' Service Current and Future Demand Analysis* does not take this important issue into account. Given that one of the policy's key objectives is to improve accessibility of services, the low kindergarten participation rates should have been factored into the modelling for forecasting the actual need for kindergarten places now and into the future.

¹ Department of Education and Training (2019), VCAMS Kindergarten Participation rate 2017. Sourced from http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/research/VCAMS_Indicator_31_1a.xlsx

Low kindergarten participation rates may be attributed to a lack of affordable kindergarten in certain neighbourhoods.

One possible reason for low kindergarten participation rates is limited accessibility of affordable kindergarten to low-income families. According to a report by Grosvenor as cited in the Council's *Early Years Services Access Analysis* (p.3), childcare places which do currently exist in the municipality are Long Day Care 3-5 year old places and are mainly in the Port Melbourne and South Melbourne neighbourhoods. This data, along with high utilisation rates of sessional kindergartens, suggests that further analysis is required to understand why kindergarten participation rates are low when kindergarten places do currently exist in LDC services. The issue of affordability of kindergarten places available through LDC needs to be addressed.

Whilst standard kindergarten per capita funding is paid to both sessional kindergartens and LDC services, most LDC services do not pass this on as a reduction in fees for their 4 year old funded kindergarten places. For some families who are ineligible to receive the Child Care Subsidy (eg. families who do not meet the Activity Test requirements), the high cost of kindergarten in a LDC service makes this option prohibitive.

Sessional kindergarten currently provides an affordable kindergarten option for families who are ineligible to receive Child Care Subsidy. The State Government's Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (which is not available to long day care services) enables the following children to receive free sessional kindergarten:

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, or
- holds, or has a parent/guardian who holds a Humanitarian or refugee Visa, or
- is a multiple birth child (triplets or more), or
- holds, or has a parent who holds a Commonwealth Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card or Veteran's Affairs Card.

If the number of sessional kindergarten places in Elwood were to decrease as a result of the future relocation of Lady Forster Kindergarten (as suggested in Council's report, *Children's Services Asset Summary*) the accessibility of affordable kindergarten in Elwood, particularly to the most vulnerable in our community, will be greatly reduced.

2. State Government subsidised kindergarten for 3 year olds will be rolled-out over the next 10 years.

As stated in the *Murdoch Children's Institute Evidence Review*, Australia currently has relatively low rates of 3 year old kindergarten participation. The Victorian Government has committed \$5 billion over the next ten years to deliver 15 hours of funded kindergarten for all 3 year olds. This significant reform will have an enormous impact on the future demand for kindergarten places, yet, this important factor has been omitted from the modelling used to determine the future demand for places in the Council's *Early Years Services Current and Future Demand Analysis Report*. Therefore, the forecasts for future demand for places stated in this report are inaccurate.

To determine a more realistic forecast of future demand for places up to 2031, new modelling is required which factors in the current low 4 year kindergarten participation rate and the plans for 15 hours of subsidised 3 year old kindergarten which will be delivered in the next 10 years.

Council currently supports Poets Grove by leasing the facility at a discounted rate and this financial support enables Poets Grove to maintain low child to educator ratios and moderate childcare fees. Low child to educator ratios are a key strength of Poets Grove. Any withdrawal of financial support through increased rental costs will reduce Poets Grove's ability to maintain these operational conditions. Low child to educator ratios enable Poets Grove to operate frequent excursions into the local community, with a focus on promoting children's connection to nature and environmental sustainability practices. This is an example of how Poets Grove is currently achieving Policy Objective 7.

Policy Objective 7: Children will have access to natural environments which allow them to learn about and experience play in nature.

As highlighted in the *Every Child Our Future – Policy Issues and Options Paper* (p.37), regular nature play benefits children in a number of developmental domains. Poets Grove supports children in developing a strong connection to nature with frequent excursions to many natural environments in our local area, including Elster Creek Reserve, Elsternwick Park, Point Ormond Reserve, Elwood Beach foreshore and St Kilda Botanical Gardens. These frequent nature play excursions are a key feature of Poets Grove’s kindergarten programs. The operational conditions that enable frequent excursions are low child to educator ratios. As mentioned above, an increase in costs to Poets Grove will reduce Poets Grove’s ability to maintain low child to educator ratios and threaten the continuation of our regular nature play excursions.

Lady Forster Kindergarten

Submission to City of Port Phillip

Every Child Our Future: Policy Issues and Options Paper



15 May 2019

Lady Forster Kindergarten



SUBMISSION TO: City of Port Phillip

RE: *Every Child Our Future: Policy Issues and Options Paper*

DATE: Wednesday 11 May 2019

FROM: Prepared by the Committee of Management of Lady Forster Kindergarten on behalf of the members of the
Lady Forster Kindergarten Incorporated Association.

Lady Forster Kindergarten acknowledges the Boonwurrung as the Traditional Owners of this country and pay tribute to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and give respect to the Elders past and present.

Preamble

Lady Forster Kindergarten (LFK) appreciates the opportunity to have actively participated in all aspects of consultation regarding development of a new *Children's Services Policy* for the City of Port Phillip (CoPP).

We acknowledge the significant contribution that our local Council has made in supporting early years education across the municipality over many years and its endeavours to provide access to quality education for children from all backgrounds, particularly addressing the needs of vulnerable children and families.

We also acknowledge the tremendous support provided to our community-based kindergarten service through the provision of building(s), maintenance, repairs, funding and the input of the many service-based teams at Council including the Family, Youth & Children, Property/Maintenance and the Grounds & Parks teams.

More recently we thank the Children's Services Review Team for their work on this review and their efforts to consult and represent the wide diversity of views on this Policy across the municipality.



We have split our submission into two parts:

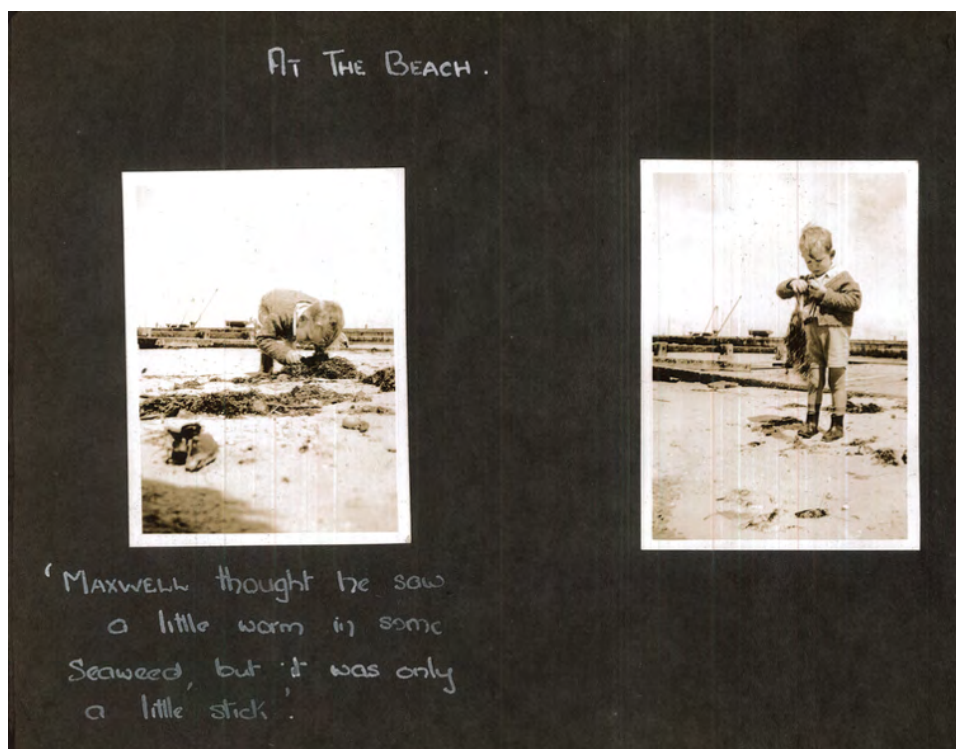
PART ONE aims to 'introduce' you to our kindergarten – to 'tell our story'

PART TWO details our responses to the *Every Child Our Future: Policy Issues & Options Paper*

Part One: Our Story

Lady Forster Kindergarten is one of the oldest kindergartens in the City of Port Phillip with its legacy reaching back nearly 100 years to its inception in 1924. A rich heritage of community-embedded, play-based learning experiences for what must be over 10,000 children who have now walked through our doors.

A group of women started the kindergarten in response to seeing children playing in the streets in post-war Port Melbourne where adults were scarce and working long hours in the abundant Port Melbourne factories. The play-based learning philosophy of the kindergarten was established early with strong ties to Port Phillip Bay.



The Kindergarten grew during the 1900's to be an integral part of the community in Port Melbourne. LFK has always been a strong and resilient community - the original building sank into the ground in 1969. Through community support, a new building replaced the original, designed by renowned Melbourne architect Kevin Borland. The kindergarten continued to grow and meet the community need there on its one-acre oasis on the edge of inner-city Melbourne. In 2012, after losing a two-year campaign to remain on the Port Melbourne site, the kindergarten relocated five suburbs away, to its current location on Elwood foreshore with a 10-year lease established in 2014.

The re-establishment of the kindergarten within a new community in Port Phillip has been a challenging exercise but we are very proud of where we are today. LFK is a vital and highly-respected kindergarten delivering an education program rated as 'Exceeding the National Average' by *The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)*, a kindergarten that is embraced by the community it serves.

Our values at Lady Forster Kindergarten
are simple and guide our actions daily.

There are five of them – all of equal importance:

- Inclusiveness and equity
- Quality
- Community
- Culture
- Environment

Value 1: Inclusiveness and Equity

Enrolment profiles and Waiting List status

- Lady Forster Kindergarten Inclusion Profile based on current enrolments (May 2019):

| | |
|---|-----|
| Current Kindergarten Enrolments (includes 30 children enrolled in our Holiday Program) | 115 |
| Number of children with a health care card | 6 |
| Number of children from CALD background | 18 |
| Number of Indigenous children | 2 |
| Number of children with a diagnosed disability | 1 |
| Number of children with language/speech delays | 7 |
| Number of children with challenging behaviours | 1 |
| Number of single parent families | 8 |
| Number of same-sex parent families | 2 |

- Building from a handful of families at the original kindergarten in Port Melbourne commuting to Elwood, LFK enrolments are now at capacity with extensive waiting lists for our Sessional Kindergarten Programs and our Friday Occasional Care Program
- Our numbers now are:
 - Three-year-old Sessional Kindergarten: 19 children per week
 - Four-year-old Sessional Kindergarten: 19 children per week
 - Four-year-old Extended Hours Kindergarten: 28 children per week
 - Occasional Care: 19 children per week
 - Holiday Program: 30 children external to LFK; in addition to enrolled children, who participate in the two-week holiday program per term

Our waiting lists for 2020 (as at May 2019) are...constantly growing!

- Three-year-old Sessional Kindergarten: 47
- Four-year-old Sessional Kindergarten: 35
- Four-year-old Extended Hours Kindergarten: 35
- Friday Occasional Care: 21

- **Affordability/Fee structure**

LFK has the lowest fees for Extended Hours Kindergarten in the City of Port Phillip at around \$67-80 per day as compared to \$143 per day as the average for the area (Source: *Care For Kids*) This \$67-\$80 fee is then reduced substantially when the *Child Care Subsidy* is applied to fees for eligible families.

LFK does not charge **any** fees to families enrolled in the Sessional Four-Year-Old Kindergarten Program who are eligible for the *Kindergarten Fee Subsidy* – we meet the funding shortfall for these families.

- **Sessional Kindergarten Programs**

LFK is the only kindergarten providing Sessional Kindergarten Programs in Elwood.

- **Stability and familiarity**

We have a stable staffing team and children attend regularly throughout all programs creating a sense of place and belonging. Having the same children attending the program every day, consistently throughout the year (which is rare in most extended hours programs) promotes group cohesion and stability.

- **Good relationships**

Children feel safe and secure and flourish when we work with families, not just children, to help to break down barriers to inclusion. We believe that real inclusion means that children and families are able to participate in ALL aspects of the kindergarten program. We believe that providing a quality early childhood education experience for children and families will reduce social inequity and overcome disadvantage, leading to life-long attitudes towards learning and education.



Illustrative Scenarios of Inclusion and Equity

- **Families and domestic violence**

In recent years we had a single mother enrol a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder at our kindergarten. Part way into the year we learned that this family was fleeing domestic violence and that although there was an AVO in place, there were still ongoing threats and intimidation occurring, leading to anxiety and depression in the child and parent. Ongoing threats meant that the family had to relocate to a distant part of Melbourne for their own safety.

Despite the distance, this parent continued to bring this child to LFK every day, even though it meant a 1.5 hour drive every morning and afternoon with her child and young baby. She did this because she knew how settled and happy her child was at LFK and how important LFK was to this child's life and stability. LFK also worked with *Family Life* to help the mother and child to get the support they needed.

During this time, the LFK Committee resolved to write off fees owed by this family.

This prompted LFK to establish the *Lady Forster Kindergarten Inclusion Fund* whereby a budgeted amount is set aside each year to specifically ensure that cost will never be a barrier to vulnerable families attending LFK.

- **Children at risk of neglect:**

Similarly we were able to support a single mother with a disability who was also dealing with mental health issues. The family faced a major crisis during the year the child attended and LFK provided a safe place for this child to be from 7.30 am until 6.00 pm each day. Through the *Additional Child Care Subsidy* and the *Lady Forster Kindergarten Inclusion Fund*, the family's fees were covered and this meant one less issue for the family to deal with during this time.

- **Children with disabilities:**

LFK also went to great lengths to facilitate the inclusion of a child with a complex medical condition which impacted mobility, hearing, vision, communication, feeding, breathing and cognitive function. With thanks to the City of Port Phillip, we were able to modify our playground to ensure that this child could move from the indoor space to the outdoor space with a mobility aide safely and easily. This was a significant upgrade to the space at significant cost.

After considerable effort and time, we were able to secure an inclusion support assistant through the *Kindergarten Inclusion Support* package. In addition to this, our own educators were trained in emergency medical management of the child's tracheostomy tube and were also trained in PEG feeding.

This child was able to participate in all aspects of the kindergarten program (including our Coastal Curriculum) due to the advocacy of LFK, the commitment and determination of the educators and management, and the contribution made by the City of Port Phillip.

This child has now successfully transitioned on to a regular local primary school.

- **Children with challenging behaviours:**

LFK has always had a strong commitment to including children with disabilities and children that are deemed "difficult" by other centres. One example was a child on the Autism Spectrum who was previously in a private centre with limited access to outdoor play. On arrival at LFK the child would simply run in circles, barely stopping to look at anything or anyone. The child had about ten words of vocabulary and was not toilet trained. Through our indoor-outdoor program, where the child was able to move freely and not feel "trapped", the child began to slow down and notice ... notice things, notice other people, notice words and notice socially acceptable behaviours.

The parents of this child worried about our Coastal Curriculum Program as they were fearful of taking the child anywhere in public, in fear that the child might “run”. When we took this child onto the foreshore- the child did just that- the child ran. The child had the space to run and did- but the child learned to come back, the child learned where it was safe to run to and the child learned to follow instructions. After a while the child did not feel the need to “do a runner”. The child knew there was the opportunity to create personal space as the child was not confined to a room or even a playground.

What we began to notice was that the child was engaging with others and was also using mostly age appropriate language and communication. LFK worked with the family and *Noah’s Ark Intervention Services* on strategies and skills and in 2018, this child made the successful transition to a regular primary school, where in the past, only special development schools had been considered. The child is now doing very well in maths and literacy skills - but still loves going outside at recess.

- **Access to support specialists:**

LFK has made space and time available to support children with disabilities in the Extended Hours Kindergarten Program to access additional support during parents working hours. We have had occupational therapists work with a child with Cerebral Palsy at LFK. This would have been challenging for this family to access otherwise, as both parents were working full time. We also have two children accessing a speech pathologist during the week, onsite at LFK.

- **Children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds:**

Each year LFK has about 20 children enrolled from CALD backgrounds. Often the kindergarten is the first port of call for these families, newly arrived from overseas, and their first opportunity to make connections with the community. In the past we have helped newly arrived families to access local English language classes, helped them to negotiate transport to and from the kindergarten and also linked them to other families or services. We have had a long-term association with the *Free Kindergarten Association Multicultural Resources Centre (MRC)* and have used the services of MRC Bilingual workers to assist in the inclusion of children and families.

- **Indigenous Families:**

LFK currently has two children enrolled identified as being of Aboriginal descent. Educators and Management are in regular contact with these families to work out how to best support and include Indigenous culture within the programs. Both of these children have been able to access *Early Start Kindergarten* funding at LFK-ensuring that they have two years of quality early childhood education before they start school.

“Research demonstrates that early and sustained participation
in quality education and care is especially beneficial
for vulnerable children
and can improve lifelong social, learning and development
outcomes.”

-Victorian Department of Education and Training,
Early Start Kindergarten Information for Early Childhood Education and Care Services

Value 2: Quality

National Quality Framework and Standard

The National Quality Framework (NQF) provides a national approach to regulation, assessment and quality improvement for early childhood education across Australia. The National Quality Standard (NQS) sets a high national benchmark for early childhood education and care and outside school hours care services in Australia. The NQS includes 7 quality areas that are important outcomes for children. Services are assessed and rated by their regulatory authority against the NQS and given a rating for each of the 7 quality areas and an overall rating based on these results.



Lady Forster Kindergarten has been rated overall as 'Exceeding the National Average' by *The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)*

Lady Forster Kindergarten is the only kindergarten in Elwood rated as 'Exceeding'

From ACEQA website 11/05/19:

"Benefits for children and families (of Quality Education)

Research shows **quality** education and care early in life leads to better health, education and employment outcomes later in life. The early years are critical for establishing self-esteem, resilience, healthy growth and capacity to learn. Quality education and care shapes every child's future and lays the foundation for development and learning.

The major benefits for parents and children include:

- improved educator to child ratios, ensuring children have greater individual care and attention for children
- educators with increased skills and qualifications
- better support for children's learning and development through approved learning frameworks
- consistent, transparent information on educators, providers and services in the national registers."

Quality education is an important conversation that should take place in relation to early childhood education. LFK educators support children's first step into formal education and are responsible for expertly guiding children's early development and ongoing learning and ensuring their safe care and wellbeing.

They are responsible for translating the (sometimes complex) language of the sector, helping families better understand their child's potential and explaining how they work with them holistically for their child's physical, emotional, social, language and cognitive development that is appropriate for their age and interests.

Building close relationships with families and the community is what LFK does really well by engaging with families about their expectations, providing regular updates and sharing children's experiences. We deliver a quality practice within a high-quality service which in turn contributes to children's smooth transition to, and success, at school. Many children from LFK have gone on to hold leadership roles later on in their primary school years.

There is evidence to support "quality" care and education being the most important factor in reducing inequity, not just access to care and education.

At LFK we support our education team in delivering quality education through:

Education Frameworks

Our education program is grounded in the principles and practices of the national and state frameworks for early learning:

- (EYLF) Belonging, Being & Becoming—The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia
- (VEYLDF) Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework

Low educator to child ratios

The required minimum ratio of educator to child, under the NQF for centre-based services in Victoria is 1 educator to every 11 children.

At LFK our ratios when enrolments are at capacity, never exceed:

| | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Sessional Kindergarten | 1 educator to every 8.5 children |
| Extended Hours Kindergarten | 1 educator to every 10 children |

Professional Development and Engagement

Our teachers undertake extensive professional development each year and maintain networks and connection both within the profession and beyond. Our Director convenes the *City of Port Phillip Kindergarten Teacher's Network Group*.

Our educators maintain an ongoing conversation regarding best practice and innovation within the team which extends seamlessly to include the LFK parent committee and the children and families of the kindergarten. Across any day there are unstructured conversations about the well-being and development of children attending that day, staff program meetings and all-staff meetings to ensure this conversation is inclusive and maintained across the entire educator team and extended out to children and families.

Highly Qualified Staff

Our educators all meet minimum qualification requirements and several are degree-qualified, exceeding the minimum diploma level required for their role. All our educators have a wide range of experience and skills, bringing a variety of influences to the programs. Many of the staff have been with Lady Forster Kindergarten for a long time and the kindergarten benefits from a stable, dedicated and experienced team.

Innovation in education

Our educators and parent committee support innovation in our best practice, evidenced through our long-standing Coastal Curriculum and commitment to nature play and play-based learning. Our Coastal Curriculum delivered from our foreshore location, is unique in the City of Port Phillip and in this way LFK is a 'thought leader' for kindergarten services in the municipality.

Value 3: Community

Community Connection

As a community-based kindergarten, our connection to community is important and enables us to:

- make decisions which reflect the local community and its culture
- be well connected and responsive to our community
- adjust our service delivery quickly
- develop social capital by building connections, relationships and networks for families
- contribute to the development of a capable, healthy community.

We work in close collaboration with a wide variety of organisations and community groups developing mutually beneficial relationships. The connections within our community that we establish enable us to implement our curriculum and projects in a collective, informed and respectful manner which in turn provides our children with a wide array of authentic, inclusive ongoing learning experiences.

Our community relationships cover a diverse range of areas including:

- **Teaching and pedagogy** – our educators undertake extensive professional development and maintain professional connections that enhance their teaching practices.
- **Environment** – we are an active member of the Early Childhood Outdoor Learning Network, Port Phillip EcoCentre and 3184BeachPatrol. We have formed a partnership with the Council's Parks team to revegetate and create a community outdoor learning space in the native bush adjacent to the kindergarten this year.
- **Community Support/Outreach** – we connect vulnerable children/ families with local and government community support services. We connect vulnerable children ('at risk', indigenous, disabled and CALD) with education/learning support/specialist/referral services to ensure the best supported learning outcomes.
- **Culture** – Our connections with local Boonwurrung people – Jaeden Williams of *Bunjil's Bik*, and more recently, Lionel Lauch of *Living Culture* supports our educators in understanding indigenous ways so indigenous perspectives become embedded in our programs and environment. Jaeden and Lionel also provide indigenous leadership across relevant project initiatives in the kindergarten. Our children experience ceremonies and accompanied nature walks with Jaeden and Lionel as part of our curriculum. Our connection to the broader indigenous community will be enhanced as the kindergarten develops its *Reconciliation Action Plan* in coming months.
- **Local Council** – we ensure our local community is represented by actively participating in CoPP community consultation initiatives such as Elwood PlaySpace development and review of policies, most recently for Childrens Services, Property, Access and Ageing. Our Director, Allison Prasser, convenes the *Kindergarten Teachers Network* in Port Phillip.
- **LFK Alumni/families** – we maintain connections with older children that have attended our kindergarten in the past. Our Holiday Program enables siblings and families to return to LFK and participate in these programs where we include children up to 7 years of age.

- **International Community** – we have connected and formed a ‘sister kindergarten’ relationship with Jeongwon Kindergarten in Busan, South Korea following the visit by the delegation of educators earlier this year. Through this connections we can continue this sharing of Lady Forster’s nature play model and play-based practices, together with Australian and Victorian early learning models and frameworks. This also provides another opportunity for our kindergarten to explore cultural diversity.
- **Local Elwood Community** – we engage and have close relationships with local stakeholders and businesses which embeds the kindergarten as an effective participant in the local community. (36 local businesses participated in our 2018 Trivia Night Auction event)
Even at the simplest level our children are very visible in our community through our weekly foreshore visits and regular community outings; often connecting and conversing with members of the public (and dogs!) each week.
- **Schools and other early learning providers**
We maintain close relationships with local primary schools in Elwood and St Kilda to facilitate a smooth transition to school for our children.

Throughout each year we embrace opportunities to enhance that connection through direct participation with school children such as the recent ‘*Nature Play Week*’ gathering at the beach.

Along with other providers we work closely and collaboratively with *Elwood Play Group* and have worked together on a variety of initiatives such as grant applications and child safety programs that benefit early childhood families in Elwood.



Value 4: Culture

LFK has a strong culture of community and working together to achieve common goals. We have a long proud history of serving and reflecting the community in the work that we do.

- **Multicultural Community**

LFK is a truly multicultural community with Portuguese, Lithuanian, Czech, German, Filipino, Turkish, Thai, Greek and Polish as some of the many languages spoken at home by our children. We also have families listing their cultural background as Mauritian, Scottish, American, Canadian, Timorese and British.

- **Welcome and Inclusion**

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) children and families are warmly welcomed and LFK strives to learn about the many different cultural beliefs and family traditions. At LFK respecting diversity is not about tokenistic, once a year celebration or marking days of significance. At LFK every person and every culture is celebrated as part of our everyday program. LFK is careful to ensure that our resources reflect a range of cultures, abilities and families. Books, puzzles, posters and other learning materials are carefully screened to ensure that bias is not reflected.

- **Indigenous Initiatives:**

The LFK vision is to connect children to coast and country and having two Indigenous children enrolled this year has made this connection particularly important. Educators have sought to learn about and understand Indigenous ways of being and doing through; professional development with *Yarn Strong Sista* (who work to ensure Aboriginal pedagogies are reflected in the curriculum); reading and research; and through our connections to local Boonwurrung man Jaeden Williams and Lionel Lauch from *Living Culture*.

In 2019 LFK has committed to working on a *Reconciliation Action Plan* and has formed a sub-committee to address this. LFK continues to improve our knowledge and pass this learning on to the children we teach. Our aim is to help to keep Aboriginal culture alive and to imbed indigenous culture into our everyday programs and environment through; stories, art, language and local historical knowledge.

We have carefully considered what we bring in to the environment to ensure that indigenous culture is represented e.g. – signage, artwork, resources and other objects specifically of Boonwurrung origin that create cultural safety for our children, and to celebrate our indigenous heritage without being tokenistic. LFK is careful to prioritise locally relevant (Boonwurrung) culture where possible. We are approaching this learning slowly with lots of consultation, measured implementation and careful consideration. This is a process of continuing improvement, deepening ongoing understanding, not just for children but for educators and families too.

- Each year LFK participates in the *Early Learning Languages Australia* (ELLA) program - an Australian Government initiative to introduce digital, play-based learning to pre-school children. This year LFK has elected to learn the Chinese language Mandarin as one of our educators speaks the language at home and is able to informally assist in the implementation of this program.



Value 5: Environment

Our coastal ties with Port Phillip Bay have always been a strong feature of the kindergarten from its early days. In Port Melbourne the children would visit the foreshore to explore and learn in the natural environment.

This practice continued in Elwood where our Coastal Curriculum has developed over time.

Through a process of continual improvement, these beach excursions have developed into our Coastal Curriculum - a unique and transformative immersion experience for children in our own 'back yard' location where Port Phillip Bay and nature takes over as key teachers.

Our Coastal Curriculum draws on principles of European forest kindergartens and 'Bush Kinder' programs but features the ever-changing coastline of Port Phillip and the unique native bush environment and eco-system of the foreshore habitat.

Through these experiences of play and discovery in all weathers – the children forge strong connections to the natural world and these connections are brought back into the kindergarten through shared experiences and discussion, use of natural objects for play and increased awareness.



The beach kindergarten experience positively influences the health and well-being of our children as well as encouraging an early understanding of the principles of sustainability, conservation and respect for our natural world.

Through the beach kindergarten our children have become change agents for environmental and sustainability issues, creating change in their local contexts, and taking on the role of educators to influence their family's and others' environmental behaviours. Many LFK parents speak of their children insisting on the crisp, salty-sweet flavour of *Ruby SaltBush* being added to most dishes they prepare!

Our Coastal Curriculum has developed and matured to a level where we can share our program with other educators and influence a broader community with our model.

The Kindergarten recently hosted 18 delegates from South Korea during late February as guests of the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET). The delegation came to see 'play based learning' principles in action. LFK was selected by DET to showcase their programs as a 'high performing kindergarten with a strong play-based learning program'

Hand in hand with our Coastal Curriculum are our sustainability practices which educate children to care for our environment.

- LFK is a member of *3184BeachPatrol* and the children regularly collect litter along the Elwood beach and foreshore. This helps address the marine litter crisis through direct local action.
- Within the kindergarten space we practice and teach recycling principles and bring 'green' initiatives to many aspects of the kindergarten's operation.
- Our grounds have been developed with planting of native species of trees and shrubs and installation of a creek bed, sandpit and bike path. Our outdoor spaces are modelled on the Elwood foreshore beyond our fences. The children engage daily with our gardens - growing vegetables & herbs, taking care of our plants/trees and composting.
- In 2016, LFK was ranked #1 for the lowest energy usage amongst 22 kindergartens surveyed by the CoPP 'Seedlings Program'
- We have been selected to participate in the 'Seedlings Program' this year which will further develop our sustainability goals and practices.
- We ensure we do not take anything from nature and do not leave anything behind.

Part Two: Our Responses

Lady Forster Kindergarten responses to:
Every Child Our Future: Policy Issues and Options Paper

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.

| | LFK Response |
|---|--|
| Policy recommendation 1.1 Create a new grant program to provide a financial subsidy for families experiencing ongoing and situational vulnerability and disadvantage. This subsidy will be available for all eligible City of Port Phillip community members accessing any Early Years' Service in the City. | Support |
| Policy recommendation 1.2 Support Child Safe Standards implementation across all early years' services (especially toy libraries and playgroups) through an education and capacity-building program. | Strongly Support |
| Policy recommendation 1.3 Fund an early intervention outreach role to work with relevant service providers in the City (child protection, homelessness, mental health, family violence) to increase participation of vulnerable children in early childhood education services, especially kindergarten services. | Strongly Support |
| Policy recommendation 1.4 Develop a Children's Services website that will provide information on all children's services in the City. This will include services provided, vacancies, specialist expertise, fee levels, educational approaches, target groups served and more. Participation in the website should be a condition for services to receive Council grants. | Support Should also include 'quality' assessment information on each service. Note: There is no recommendation that specifically addresses 'quality' in the proposed policy. |

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.

| | LFK Response |
|--|---|
| <p>Policy Recommendation 2.1</p> <p>Review and update the service model for toy libraries to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review funding model and operating subsidy to increase operating hours at current toy library sites to increase access and availability to services for residents now and into the future in existing Port Phillip areas. • Develop one new toy library site in Fishermans Bend to service the growing population, as part of an integrated hub. | <p>Support this proposal but feel that funds could be otherwise diverted into more essential early childhood services.</p> |
| <p>Policy recommendation 2.2</p> <p>Monitor, track, encourage and report on the market response to childcare demand.</p> | <p>Support this proposal but feel that the City of Port Phillip should do more than tracking demand – it should contribute to helping services with supply.</p> |
| <p>Policy Recommendation 2.3</p> <p>Review and update the service model for playgroups to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A dedicated, or several functional multipurpose, playgroup space/s to be considered in Fishermans Bend, as part of an integrated hub. • An additional playgroup or children's multipurpose space in the north end of Port Phillip to be considered (South Melbourne or Port Melbourne neighbourhoods). • Make available the playgroup rooms in Bubup Nairn Family and Children's Centre across five days of the week and transition other programs into other Family Services Rooms in the building to increase availability and capacity. | <p>Support</p> |
| <p>Policy recommendation 2.4</p> <p>With the addition of funded three-year-old Kindergarten, consider transitioning current Council assets into kindergarten facilities to meet future demand where relevant, especially where the private market is meeting the demand/need for childcare services in that area.</p> | <p>Somewhat support. The introduction of funded three-year-old kindergarten will certainly put a strain on some providers. Several childcare services already provide three-year-old kindergarten programs.</p> |

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.

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| <p>Policy recommendation 3.1</p> <p>Council to decide the future service model for childcare services from five policy options (A, B, C, D, E).</p> <p>A. Council continues operating and subsidising childcare services as is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This option is likely to be in non-compliant with the National Competition Policy. • It is unlikely Council will be able to maintain and renew all existing assets to meet current and future demand, functionality and compliance issues. • Council subsidies will continue to be untargeted and not based on need. • Some assets will not be fit-for-purpose or compliant with legislation. • Could explore co-funding or lease-to-own opportunities with tenants of council-owned facilities. <p>B. Council continues operating services, but at full cost recovery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This option is likely to meet National Competition Policy requirements. • Requires a review of infrastructure and maintenance levies to ensure they cover all renewal and utility costs. • Will require increased fees at Council-run childcare services to allow for cost recovery (\$5- \$15 per day). • Explore co-funding or lease-to-own opportunities with tenants of council-owned facilities. • <p>C. Council ceases operating Council-run childcare services and transition services to not- for-profit providers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This would include full cost recovery rental arrangements, and utilities at cost to new owner. • Meets all industrial obligations under relevant agreements and legislation. | <p>A. LFK would support a co-funding or lease to own option.</p> <p>B. LFK would support lease to own option. LFK fears that full cost recovery or fee increases would most likely impact on the most vulnerable and impede access to quality early childhood services in the City of Port Phillip.</p> <p>C. Support in part. Port Phillip needs a range of services to suit a range of families. Smaller centres in older facilities would most likely be forced out of the market.</p> |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This could include purchase, co-funding or lease-to-own opportunities with not-for-profit providers. • Operational savings to Council • Asset sales to support transition arrangements • Continued support for community managed centres. • <p>D. Council ceases operating Council-run services and sells or transitions assets for other Council purposes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This assumes that the market will meet current and future demand S • Uncertain as to how market failures will be overcome. • Operational savings to Council. • Asset sales to support transition arrangements • <p>E. Council chooses a hybrid model based on above options</p> | <p>D. Do not support. Market failures created the need for the City of Port Phillip to meet demand in the past. If Port Phillip is to deliver it's 2027 vision "to provide access to services that support the health and wellbeing of the growing community and to provide a liveable, caring and inviting city", they must invest in the early years.</p> <p>E. Support</p> |
| <p>Policy Recommendation 3.2</p> <p>Review all funding, subsidy and levy arrangements to ensure return on investment and KPI deliverables for acquittal purposes</p> | <p>Support. LFK would be amenable to a co-contribution to ensure longevity.</p> |

Policy Objective 4:
Council will encourage collaboration across all Early Years' services.

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| <p>Policy recommendation 4.1</p> <p>Facilitate collaborative and collegiate relationships with early years' networks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify professional development needs for educators (including assistance in sourcing bulk discounts for training and providing free training room space). • Childcare staff to visit and learn from centres in the municipality or within Melbourne that are consistently receiving an 'Exceeding' or 'Excellent' NQS rating, encouraging a 'community of practice'. • These recommendations to apply to all providers, including independent and private providers. • Support of Educational Leaders and networking across services. | <p>Support</p> |
| <p>Policy recommendation 4.2</p> <p>Support the development of a kindergarten network to provide collaborative practice and integrated services that inform pedagogy and practice, for example approved provider responsibilities, professional development, quality referrals and transition to school programs.</p> | <p>Support- although there is already a strong kindergarten network, any assistance in collaborative partnerships and practice would be supported.</p> |

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.

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| Policy Recommendation 5.1 Proactively create and promote opportunities for families with children to meet other families and develop social connections through such things as community events and parents' workshops. | Support |
| Policy recommendation 5.2 Improve communications about the availability of, and access to, all early years' services, especially kindergarten to culturally and linguistically diverse communities. | Support |
| Policy Recommendation 5.3 Utilise approved state funding to scope the creation of an effective and centralised municipal-wide enrolment system for community-run and independent kindergartens in Port Phillip. This will require significant consultation with service providers. | Do not support. Kindergartens do not want to be a part of the centralised waiting list. We want to allocate places based upon our own policies and discretion (eg. For children at risk) and be responsive directly to our community. |
| Policy recommendation 5.4 Develop a Memorandum of Understanding for playgroups with guidelines regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size and inclusion • Available support for volunteers, committees and parents • Sustainability, including sharing of resources between groups and recycling | Support |
| Policy recommendation 5.5 Develop a centralised portal and communication strategy as part of the Customer Experience and Technology Transformation project, and work with children's service providers and families to establish the best way for families to receive the information they need, in the way they need it, when they need it. | Support |

| | |
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| <p>Policy recommendation 5.6</p> <p>Improve the current childcare waitlist and investigate expanding it to include private and independent centres in order to provide families with better information about places for children under the age of three, as well as to inform short- and medium-term planning for childcare.</p> | <p>Do not support. The current council childcare waiting list is not working and is not user friendly for vulnerable families (who may not have access to the internet or phone). The waiting list does need improvement but I'm not sure that it would be ethical to help private providers to fill their places if they were to be included on this list. For-profit providers do not need council support (which equates to taxpayer dollars) When funds could be better used elsewhere.</p> |
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Policy Objective 6:

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

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| <p>Policy Recommendation 6.1</p> <p>Develop an Early Year's Services Facility Framework that will deliver the following outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All assets to meet legislative and building compliance over the life of the strategy.• All assets able to receive co-contribution funding from state government. This will require all assets to meet a minimum of 66 places. | <p>Somewhat support. Larger centres are not necessarily better centres. Contemporary is not necessarily better than older facilities. If the City of Port Phillip were to support and make a co-contribution to expansion, LFK would be open to the possibility. It is unlikely that "all" assets will meet building compliance.</p> <p>Length of lease terms in future arrangements should also be addressed in any proposed framework. Short leases do not enable community kindergartens to plan with certainty into the future.</p> |
| <p>Policy recommendation 6.2</p> <p>Work with all community-managed services over time to implement the framework outlined above.</p> | <p>Somewhat support. LFK would be open to working with the City of Port Phillip to look at options to expand.</p> |
| <p>Policy Recommendation 6.3</p> <p>Ensure additional facilities for services and consolidate existing services if required to meet functionality and compliance are incorporated into integrated facility hubs to address multiple service demands. Council will optimise opportunities for Major Capital Works grant applications available from Department of Education and Training for the building of integrated service hubs, especially on any new school sites, such as in Fishermans Bend.</p> | <p>Do not support. The City of Port Phillip is already home to three children's "hubs" and already has more than enough facilities to address multiple service demands. The City of Port Phillip needs a range of service models not a one size fits all approach.</p> |

Policy 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.

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| Policy Recommendation 7.1 Develop model for optimising access to existing assets in the city such as parks, beaches, and adventure playgrounds. | Support |
| Policy recommendation 7.2 Advocate for the promotion of outdoor learning environments and programs that promote children's connection to nature and environmental sustainability practices, for example Clean up Port Phillip Day, Be Out There, Let's G.O (Get outside), and Indigenous nature-based cultural programs | Strongly Support. LFK is one of the only kindergartens in Victoria on the foreshore and we use it as part of our coastal curriculum. We would really appreciate the support of Council to promote our specialised, one-of-a-kind, outdoor program. |
| Policy Recommendation 7.3 Develop a minimum design guideline for future playground works/upgrades at childcare centres that can be tailored for each site and implemented in stages, including investigating the development or suitability of nature and sensory play environments within open space settings for excursion purposes, for example developing bush kindergarten setting/s in the municipality. | Support. LFK is known for its outdoor learning programs and is partnering with CoPP/Citywide to upgrade an area of the foreshore as an outdoor community space for teaching and learning purposes. LFK is already a model for "beach and bush" kindergarten, having recently hosted a delegation of South Korean educators and officials to learn about "bush kinder". LFK would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the development of this policy item and to showcase its knowledge and expertise to services and educators within the municipality and those from far and wide- establishing Port Phillip as a leader in the field. |
| Policy recommendation 7.4 Work with early years' networks to consult and promote the range of opportunities to incorporate nature and sensory play into their service settings with supported funding opportunities. | Strongly support. (See above) |

Summary Comments:

1. Future Demand (Kindergarten places in South Eastern neighbourhoods)

Extract: Appendix 6 – Early Years Services Current and Future Demand Analysis

1.1 Current Supply:

There are only two kindergarten services in the 3 x south eastern neighbourhoods of the municipality, both currently with 100% utilisation.

Table 1:

| Neighbourhood | Service Name | Service Type | Licensed Places |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|--|
| Elwood/Ripponlea | Lady Forster Kindergarten | Community-managed | 49 |
| Balaclava/East St Kilda | St Kilda & Balaclava Kindergarten | Community-managed | 55 (**utilisation is 52 as 3 places reserved for emergency needs) |
| St Kilda/St Kilda West | NIL | | NIL |

1.2 Future Demand

Predicted demand for kindergarten places in 3 x south eastern neighbourhoods:

Table 2:

| Neighbourhood | Licensed Places | 2018 Capacity Available | 2021 Demand | 2026 Demand | 2031 Demand |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Elwood/Ripponlea | 49 | 0 | 4 | 5 | 19 |
| Balaclava/East St Kilda | 55 | ** -3 | -1 | 2 | 4 |
| St Kilda/St Kilda West | 0 | 0 | 34 | 40 | 43 |
| TOTAL | 104 | -3 | 37 | 47 | 66 |

In Elwood, demand for kindergarten places will increase 39% by 2031 (an additional 19 places required)

Across the combined 3 x south eastern neighbourhoods, demand will increase by 62% (an additional 66 places required)

2. Please note the following to give context to the Lady Forster Kindergarten responses to each of the seven proposed policies:

1. Lady Forster Kindergarten is the only provider of sessional kindergarten programs in the neighbourhood of Elwood specifically, and more widely across the south eastern neighbourhoods of Ripponlea/Balaclava/St Kilda. It is imperative that this provision of sessional kindergarten service is maintained in the southern neighbourhoods of the municipality and not relocated out of the south.

(Not: *St Kilda & Balaclava Kindergarten* offers long day, not sessional kindergarten services, even though it has been included in the tables above)

2. In recent years we have turned away between one and three children for every sessional kindergarten place we have been able to provide. Our sessional kindergarten programs particularly, are at capacity each year and waiting lists in 2020 indicate the demand for places consistently exceeds our ability to provide. It would be beneficial to explore the potential expansion of LFK to a 66+ place service to attract co-contribution funding for works from state government, to meet the current and future demand for kindergarten places in Elwood and neighbouring communities.

This taken together with the future projections of some 37 places in demand from as early as 2021, reaching 66 places needed by 2034 (Table 2) illustrates the growing need for additional kindergarten capacity in the southern end of the municipality.

3. LFK has the lowest fees for Extended Hours Kindergarten in the City of Port Phillip at around \$67-80 per day as compared to \$143 per day as the average for the area (Source: *Care For Kids*) This \$67-\$80 fee is then reduced substantially when the *Child Care Subsidy* is applied to fees for eligible families. This is highly significant in the provision of affordable access to early years education to vulnerable/disadvantaged children/families.
4. Our financial budgets and results are robust due to the capacity enrolments we are able to maintain. To ensure our longevity we would consider some form of contribution to Council costs or investment in the building/current location, but this would be contingent on the support of Council in relation to our lease/longevity.
5. Finally, as Council would be aware, Lady Forster Kindergarten is in a unique situation compared to other community kindergartens, due to its occupation of a building on coastal Crown Land.

This complicates considerations around our future service location which in turn impacts heavily on our ability to plan with any certainty into the future. This planning includes further development of our kindergarten and Coastal Curriculum, management of 2-year waiting lists and management of future family expectations of enrolment at our kindergarten.

We are aware of the difficulties facing CoPP in navigating these issues whilst the *Childrens Services and Community Buildings policies* are under review. In light of what could be widespread changes arising, we'd like to highlight specifically how LFK and Council can collaborate to continue LFK's quality service provision. These may include opportunities to reduce the financial and administrative burdens on Council.

6. We would like to collaborate with Council and would appreciate any advocacy and support Council can provide in the following ways:
- Recognise how closely LFK delivers on Policy Recommendation #7
 - Recognise the tightness currently in the market at the southern end of the municipality and the forecast pressure to come for kindergarten places in the south – a further 66 places will be needed over time.
 - Recognise that there is space to expand at Lady Forster Kindergarten where few if any, other alternatives exist in the south.
 - Explore the potential to provide the local community with a multi-use area within any expanded design.
 - Celebrate the kindergarten's location; drawing children and families directly to the coastline of Port Phillip Bay every day. This promotes engagement of our families in the Elwood coastal recreational spaces and activities, supporting the development of healthy, active children. This delivers on the health and wellbeing objectives in the City of Port Phillip Council Plan 2012-27 of *"a long-term commitment to improve and protect the health and wellbeing of our people and our places"*
 - Explore the potential for more children to access a unique beach kindergarten program where Port Phillip Bay and nature become key teachers and where sustainability practices are taught through a nature program. The benefits of beach/bush/forest outdoor learning programs are recognised and celebrated internationally.
 - Leverage the potential for LFK to become a teaching model of the 'Coastal Curriculum' and celebrate this as a feature of early years education models in the City of Port Phillip.
 - Ensure that no impact of any approved new Children's Policy prevents access to quality, affordable early years education across all our communities.
 - Ensure that the policy upholds the quality of the education delivered in the municipality, regardless of the frameworks for delivery adopted.
 - Know that LFK is prepared to co-contribute to a solution that ensures its longevity in its current location.
 - Acknowledge the history of our kindergarten and the legacy of nearly 100 years of quality early education delivery.
 - Notice the popularity of the services offered and our extensive waiting lists.
 - Note how the committee-managed, not-for-profit governance model in a kindergarten environment works particularly well enabling the kindergarten to be responsive and provide organic, local solutions to community needs.
 - Assist the kindergarten in gaining certainty around its future.

In the meantime, thank you for receiving and considering our submission on this draft policy on behalf of all members of Lady Forster Kindergarten Inc.

The Committee of Management
Lady Forster Kindergarten

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Eildon Road Childcare Centre
17 Eildon, 3182 St Kilda
T: (03) 9534 7442

Attention: Teresa Parsons, Program Manager Service Transformation

RE: EILDON ROAD CHILDRENS CENTRE (ERCC) FEEDBACK ON COPP POLICY ISSUES AND OPTIONS PAPER

Dear Teresa,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the City of Port Philip Every Child Our Future: Policy Issues and Options Paper.

We would like thank the Council for all the work and consultation that has been put into the future policy.

We have summarised the view of ERCC committee of management below and we are looking forward to participate in the special council meeting.

ERCC Committee of Management

ERCC FEEDBACK

Executive Summary:

- **Council to ensure the current mix of non-for-profit (community-managed, council-managed) and private continues. This is critical to meet the affordability objective, quality standards and offer choice to meet the various needs of the community.**
- **Council should have a role in monitoring market response to childcare demand – this should include informing the community on current and future projects (e.g. Church Square in Eildon Road) and ensuring smooth integration in the current offer and collaborative approach with existing centres to ensure positive outcome for the community.**
- **Consult community-managed centres on Buildings. A pragmatic approach seeking cost-effective solutions to achieve compliance with the Building Code is our preference. We don't think it's realistic for community-managed centre to own the building they operate in. Relocation may provide positive outcome option provided it doesn't increase significantly the distance for families and centres are consulted.**

DETAILED FEEDBACK

Recommendation 1.1 to 1.4

ERCC is generally supportive of recommendations 1.1 to 1.4.

We think that recommendation 1.4 to create a comprehensive website that will provide information on all children's services in the City will be very useful for new families accessing these services for the first time.

Recommendation 2.1 to 2.4

ERCC is generally supportive of recommendations 2.1 to 2.4. However recommendation 2.4 to consider transitioning current Council assets into kindergarten facilities seems somewhat contradictory to recommendation 3.1. (given this means more assets for Council to renew and maintain).

Recommendation 3.1

It is surprising that supporting childcare services (either through operating services or supporting community-managed ones) would be seen as a "policy for which a public benefit cannot be demonstrated" and therefore the National Competition Policy argument doesn't appear strong. We would like to understand what analysis supports this conclusion and what specialist advice has been received on this point.

We don't support Option D (Council disengagement). We believe the existing mix of non-for-profit (NFP) and private ensures that the fees do not soar across the board (the information package highlights a \$20 per day difference between NFP and private). With council disengaging and therefore with a smaller proportion of NFP, the fees are likely to increase significantly which will defeat the affordability objective.

On ownership and management of buildings/assets for Council Owned – Community Managed:

Our understanding is that it is unlikely that Council will receive co contribution from State government (min 66 places) and therefore we are questioning the recommendation to systematically pursue the co contribution for Council Owned – Community Managed centres. We are supportive of the development of a *facilities framework* that will ensure buildings comply with Disability Discrimination Act and Buildings comply with building codes, provided there is on-going consultation with the community-managed centres. We support a pragmatic approach that will seek cost-effective solutions to achieve compliance.

We would like to understand more about a "co-funding (co-ownership) or lease to own" model would work and the additional financial pressure this may add to community-managed centres.

Policy recommendation 4.1 and 4.2

ERCC is generally supportive of these recommendations. In our view, develop Kindergarten programs in existing childcare is a practical solution for families with several children and we encourage it.

Policy recommendation 5.1 to 5.6

ERCC is generally supportive of these recommendations provided they are cost effective.

Policy recommendation 6.1 to 6.3

Refer to feedback on 3.1 above

Policy recommendation 7.1 to 7.4

ERCC is generally supportive of these recommendations.



MIDDLE PARK
Kindergarten Inc

131 Mills Street
Middle Park VIC 3206

TONY KEENAN
General Manager
Community & Economic Development
City of Port Phillip

Dear Mr Keenan

Re: Middle Park Kindergarten's Comments on the Council's New Children's Services Policy

Thank you very much for attending our meeting on Monday 29 April to discuss the Council's new children's services policy. We appreciate your interest in sharing the Council's vision for children's services with us, and explaining how it might impact Middle Park Kindergarten.

We have outlined our comments on some of the recommendations, especially where they impact Middle Park Kindergarten. Where we have not commented on a recommendation, it does not mean we do or do not endorse the recommendation, but reflects that we are not best placed to provide comments due to a more limited impact on MPK.

Policy recommendation 1.4

Develop a Children's Services website that will provide information on all children's services in the City. This will include services provided, vacancies, specialist expertise, fee levels, educational approaches, target groups served and more. Participation in the website should be a condition for services to receive Council grants.

MPK Comment: We endorse this recommendation and would be happy to provide information on a quarterly basis.

Policy recommendation 2.4

With the addition of funded three-year-old Kindergarten, consider transitioning current Council assets into kindergarten facilities to meet future demand where relevant, especially where the private market is meeting the demand/need for childcare services in that area.

MPK Comment: The ability of current services in the City of Port Phillip to absorb additional services needs to be considered before such a recommendation can be made.

Policy recommendation 4.2

Support the development of a kindergarten network to provide collaborative practice and integrated services that inform pedagogy and practice, for example approved provider responsibilities, professional development, quality referrals and transition to school programs.

MPK Comment: The Committee considers that it would need to understand more about how this would work in practice before we could endorse to ensure that it does not create homogeneity for the sake of efficiency, when it may be appropriate to have a differentiated approach to pedagogy (due, for example, to parent demand).

Policy recommendation 5.3

Utilise approved state funding to scope the creation of an effective and centralised municipal-wide enrolment system for community-run and independent kindergartens in Port Phillip. This will require significant consultation with service providers.

MPK Comment: We do not support this approach as this may dilute MPK's ability to provide places for people within close proximity to Middle Park Kindergarten, therefore allowing more seamless transition to Middle Park Primary School. Also, the cost of administering our waitlist is already factored into our administration funding arrangement. Middle Park Kindergarten has a transparent and well publicised waiting list methodology which meets the needs of prospective parents.

Policy recommendation 6.1

Develop an Early Year's Services Facility Framework that will deliver the following outcomes:

- All assets to meet legislative and building compliance over the life of the strategy.
- All assets able to receive co-contribution funding from state government. This will require all assets to meet a minimum of 66 places.

Policy recommendation 6.2

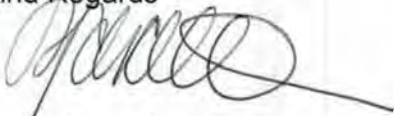
Work with all community-managed services over time to implement the framework outlined above.

MPK Comment: We do not support the above recommendations as they do not cater for community expectations about a range of different service types including location, number of hours and philosophy. Implementation of these policies may create adverse impacts about reducing the availability and diversity of services available in the City of Port Phillip and provide a disincentive against innovation in small centres. Caution should be taken in correlating centre size with efficiency as many small providers such as Middle Park Kindergarten operate with minimal government funding, yet still providing competitive fees for parents.

As discussed at the meeting on the 29 April 2019, Middle Park Kindergarten does not receive much in the way of funding from the City of Port Phillip and the majority of its expenditure (other than for teaching) is derived from fundraising. Any assistance we can get from the Council in kind, for example through hard waste rubbish collections twice a year, would be greatly appreciated.

If you would like to discuss our comments further, please do not hesitate to contact me

Kind Regards



Sarah Lowndes

President, Middle Park Kindergarten

RoPP Submission on Childcare Policy

27 May 2019

The Ratepayer of Port Phillip, Incorporated (RoPP) present the following submission on the Childcare Services Policy tabled at the Council Meeting of 20 March 2019. Our submission only addresses 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".

Council says it cannot sustainably continue funding Childcare under the current model of operating Council run childcare centres. Whilst RoPP support childcare, the cost is not sustainable and it is not a proper responsibility of local government. Council presents five options (A, B, C, D, E) on the future service model for childcare services (Q9 Policy recommendation 3.1). RoPP supports "*Option C Council ceases operating Council run childcare services and transition services to not-for-profit providers*". We believe this option will reduce the burden of cost to ratepayers while maintaining or improving the quality of service.

Background:

The Childcare Services Policy paper was tabled for community consultation at the Council Meeting of 20 March 2019. The Council Meeting Agenda paper (page 8) states "Financial and asset sustainability - 59% of the children's services buildings are over 50 years old. 41% of buildings were purpose-built for children's services. The increasing cost of providing services is not sustainable under the current service model, including: meeting NCP requirements; maintaining and renewing assets; and meeting increasing demand for children's services stemming from population growth". The policy outlines the issues and options and the Council is receiving community feedback on the policy between 25 March and end of April (page 72).

Childcare is a massive cost for the Council as it employs nearly 100 childcare workers, requires capital funding and increasing cost of providing services is not sustainable. Consequently, is considering five options Policy 3 Early years' services will be financially sustainable and consistently aligned with relevant policies and legislation at the local, state and federal level (page 45-46):

- A. Council continues operating and subsidising childcare services as is.
- B. Council continues operating services but at full cost recovery.
- C. Council ceases operating Council run childcare services and transition services to not-for-profit providers
- D. Council ceases operating Council run services and sells or transitions assets for other Council purposes
- E. Council chooses a hybrid model based on above options

Financial Sustainability:

Mayor Gross gave a considered response to the City of Port Phillip's draft policy statement on Child care at the Council Meeting on 20 March 2019. This is a summary of the Mayor's comments.

- 1. Council has no statutory requirement to fund childcare and many other councils don't;
- 2. Council has spent over \$21.3 million on childcare over the last 10 years and the cost is growing (page 24);
- 3. Council spent \$2 million on CoPP operated services and an additional \$1 million on community run centres, nil funding to not-for-profits and privately-operated centres in 2017-18 (page 24);
- 4. Council-run childcare services shows that Council subsidised these centres (before making an allowance for competitive disadvantage) to the sum of \$2.04 million in 2017/18. Under the Nation Competitive Policy, Council would be required to reduce level of subsidies and/or increase fees to cover the subsidised amount (page 25);
- 5. Council directly subsidises childcare services (\$1.08 million) to make them affordable and accessible to the whole community. Council indirectly subsidises childcare services through its partnerships with external organisations (community-managed centres) by way of leasing Council facilities at a discounted rate;
- 6. Infrastructure is aging and requires capital investment: 59% of the assets are >50 years old with 4 building being over 100 years old; only 41% were purpose built as early years services facilities;
- 7. Capital investment is required because many of the assets do not comply with the National Construction Code and other National Quality Standards. Capital funding of

- \$2.6 million is required to ensure ageing Council owned facilities at Eildon Road (St Kilda), The Avenue (Balaclava) and Tennyson Street (Elwood) are upgraded (page 36);
8. Council is providing middle-class welfare and Council should prioritise support for low-income families.

One-sided Debate:

RoPP is concerned that the debate is one sided with many submissions coming from vested interests that completely ignore the cost to the ratepayers. We agree that childcare is important and acknowledge research from the Murdoch Institute about the importance of early learning on the development of children and how lack of quality learning results in poor outcome for the community. While early learning is important, it is not the responsibility of local government.

Conclusion:

RoPP supports Option C, a transition from Council run childcare services to community managed if the transition does not reduce the quality of services or number of places in childcare. We expect that Option C will result in will assist in the financial sustainability of childcare services. The solution may involve selling Council owned assets, removing middle-class welfare, targeting subsidies to disadvantaged families and enabling non-Council providers to replace Council services.

Prepared by

Campbell Spence

On Behalf of the Ratepayers of Port Phillip, Incorporated

PO Box 2043

South Melbourne VIC 3205

Stage 2 engagement report - Appendices

Appendix 4: Copy of survey questions

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 recommendation 1.1

Create a new grant program to provide a financial subsidy for families experiencing ongoing and situational vulnerability and disadvantage. This subsidy will be available for all eligible City of Port Phillip community members accessing any Early Years' Service in the City.

Strongly support

☐

Somewhat Support

☐

Neutral

☐

Somewhat against

☐

Strongly against

☐

Not applicable

☐

Policy recommendation 1.2

Support Child Safe Standards implementation across all early years' services (especially toy libraries and playgroups) through an education and capacity-building program.

Strongly support

☐

Somewhat Support

☐

Neutral

☐

Somewhat against

☐

Strongly against

☐

Not applicable

☐

Policy recommendation 1.3

Fund an early intervention outreach role to work with relevant service providers in the City (child protection, homelessness, mental health, family violence) to increase participation of vulnerable children in early childhood education services, especially kindergarten services.

Strongly support

☐

Somewhat Support

☐

Neutral

☐

Somewhat against

☐

Strongly against

☐

Not applicable

☐

Policy recommendation 1.4

Develop a Children's Services website that will provide information on all children's services in the City. This will include services provided, vacancies, specialist expertise, fee levels, educational approaches, target groups served and more. Participation in the website should be a condition for services to receive Council grants.

Stage 2 engagement report - Appendices

Strongly support

☐

Somewhat Support

☐

Neutral

☐

Somewhat against

☐

Strongly against

☐

Not applicable

☐

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 recommendation 2.1

Review and update the service model for toy libraries to include:

Review funding model and operating subsidy to increase operating hours at current toy library sites to increase access and availability to services for residents now and into the future in existing Port Phillip areas.

Develop one new toy library site in Fishermans Bend to service the growing population, as part of an integrated hub.

Strongly support

☐

Somewhat Support

☐

Neutral

☐

Somewhat against

☐

Strongly against

☐

Not applicable

☐

Policy recommendation 2.2

Monitor, track, encourage and report on the market response to childcare demand.

Strongly support

☐

Somewhat Support

☐

Neutral

☐

Somewhat against

☐

Strongly against

☐

Not applicable

☐

Policy recommendation 2.3

Review and update the service model for playgroups to include:

A dedicated, or several functional multipurpose, playgroup space/s to be considered in Fishermans Bend, as part of an integrated hub.

An additional playgroup or children's multipurpose space in the north end of Port Phillip to be considered (South Melbourne or Port Melbourne neighbourhoods).

Make available the playgroup rooms in Bubup Nairn Family and Children's Centre across five days of the week and transition other programs into other Family Services Rooms in the building to increase availability and capacity.

Strongly support

☐

Somewhat Support

☐

Neutral

☐

Somewhat against

☐

Strongly against

☐

Not applicable

☐

Policy recommendation 2.4

With the addition of funded three-year-old Kindergarten, consider transitioning current Council assets into kindergarten facilities to meet future demand where relevant, especially where the private market is meeting the demand/need for childcare services in that area.

Stage 2 engagement report - Appendices

Strongly
support

☐

Somewhat
Support

☐

Neutral

☐

Somewhat
against

☐

Strongly
against

☐

Not
applicable

☐

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 recommendation 3.1

Council to decide the future service model for childcare services from five policy options (A, B, C, D, E).

Please rank the 5 options below from 1 to 5, where 1 is your most preferred option and 5 is your least preferred option

A. Council continues operating and subsidising childcare services as is

☐

This option is likely to be in non-compliant with the National Competition Policy.

It is unlikely Council will be able to maintain and renew all existing assets to meet current and future demand, functionality and compliance issues.

Council subsidies will continue to be untargeted and not based on need.

Some assets will not be fit-for-purpose or compliant with legislation.

Could explore co-funding or lease-to-own opportunities with tenants of council-owned facilities.

B. Council continues operating services, but at full cost recovery

☐

- This option is likely to meet National Competition Policy requirements.

Requires a review of infrastructure and maintenance levies to ensure they cover all renewal and utility costs.

Will require increased fees at Council-run childcare services to allow for cost recovery (\$5-\$15 per day).

Explore co-funding or lease-to-own opportunities with tenants of council-owned facilities.

Continued support for community managed centres.

C. Council ceases operating Council-run childcare services and transition services to not-for-profit providers

☐

This would include full cost recovery rental arrangements, and utilities at cost to new owner.

Meets all industrial obligations under relevant agreements and legislation.

This could include purchase, co-funding or lease-to-own opportunities with not-for-profit providers.

Operational savings to Council

Asset sales to support transition arrangements

D. Council ceases operating Council-run services and sells or transitions assets for other Council purposes

☐

This assumes that the market will meet current and future demand.

Uncertain as to how market failures will be overcome.

Operational savings to Council.

Stage 2 engagement report - Appendices

Asset sales to support transition arrangements

E. Council chooses a hybrid model based on above options ☐

Policy recommendation 3.2

Review all funding, subsidy and levy arrangements to ensure return on investment and KPI deliverables for acquittal purposes.

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Strongly support | Somewhat Support | Neutral | Somewhat against | Strongly against | Not applicable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Stage 2 engagement report - Appendices

Policy objective 4:

Council will encourage collaboration across all Early Years' services.

Policy recommendation 4.1

Facilitate collaborative and collegiate relationships with early years' networks.

Identify professional development needs for educators (including assistance in sourcing bulk discounts for training and providing free training room space).

Childcare staff to visit and learn from centres in the municipality or within Melbourne that are consistently receiving an 'Exceeding' or 'Excellent' NQS rating, encouraging a 'community of practice'.

These recommendations to apply to all providers, including independent and private providers.

Support of Educational Leaders and networking across services.

**Strongly
support**

☐

**Somewhat
Support**

☐

Neutral

☐

**Somewhat
against**

☐

**Strongly
against**

☐

**Not
applicable**

☐

Policy recommendation 4.2

Support the development of a kindergarten network to provide collaborative practice and integrated services that inform pedagogy and practice, for example approved provider responsibilities, professional development, quality referrals and transition to school programs.

**Strongly
support**

☐

**Somewhat
Support**

☐

Neutral

☐

**Somewhat
against**

☐

**Strongly
against**

☐

**Not
applicable**

☐

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 recommendation 5.1

Proactively create and promote opportunities for families with children to meet other families and develop social connections through such things as community events and parents' workshops.

**Strongly
support**

☐

**Somewhat
Support**

☐

Neutral

☐

**Somewhat
against**

☐

**Strongly
against**

☐

**Not
applicable**

☐

Policy recommendation 5.2

Stage 2 engagement report - Appendices

Improve communications about the availability of, and access to, all early years' services, especially kindergarten to culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Strongly support

☐

Somewhat Support

☐

Neutral

☐

Somewhat against

☐

Strongly against

☐

Not applicable

☐

Policy recommendation 5.3

Utilise approved state funding to scope the creation of an effective and centralised municipal-wide enrolment system for community-run and independent kindergartens in Port Phillip. This will require significant consultation with service providers.

Strongly support

☐

Somewhat Support

☐

Neutral

☐

Somewhat against

☐

Strongly against

☐

Not applicable

☐

Policy recommendation 5.4

Develop a Memorandum of Understanding for playgroups with guidelines regarding:

Size and inclusion

Available support for volunteers, committees and parents

Sustainability, including sharing of resources between groups and recycling

Strongly support

☐

Somewhat Support

☐

Neutral

☐

Somewhat against

☐

Strongly against

☐

Not applicable

☐

Stage 2 engagement report - Appendices

Policy recommendation 5.5

Develop a centralised portal and communication strategy as part of the Customer Experience and Technology Transformation project, and work with children's service providers and families to establish the best way for families to receive the information they need, in the way they need it, when they need it.

Strongly
support

☐

Somewhat
Support

☐

Neutral

☐

Somewhat
against

☐

Strongly
against

☐

Not
applicable

☐

Policy recommendation 5.6

Improve the current childcare waitlist and investigate expanding it to include private and independent centres in order to provide families with better information about places for children under the age of three, as well as to inform short- and medium-term planning for childcare.

Strongly
support

☐

Somewhat
Support

☐

Neutral

☐

Somewhat
against

☐

Strongly
against

☐

Not
applicable

☐

Policy Objective 6:

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

Policy Recommendation 6.1

Develop an Early Year's Services Facility Framework that will deliver the following outcomes:

All assets to meet legislative and building compliance over the life of the strategy.

All assets able to receive co-contribution funding from state government. This will require all assets to meet a minimum of 66 places.

Strongly
support

☐

Somewhat
Support

☐

Neutral

☐

Somewhat
against

☐

Strongly
against

☐

Not
applicable

☐

Policy recommendation 6.2

Work with all community-managed services over time to implement the framework outlined above.

Strongly
support

☐

Somewhat
Support

☐

Neutral

☐

Somewhat
against

☐

Strongly
against

☐

Not
applicable

☐

Stage 2 engagement report - Appendices

Policy Recommendation 6.3

Ensure additional facilities for services and consolidate existing services if required to meet functionality and compliance are incorporated into integrated facility hubs to address multiple service demands. Council will optimise opportunities for Major Capital Works grant applications available from Department of Education and Training for the building of integrated service hubs, especially on any new school sites, such as in Fishermans Bend.

Strongly support

☐

Somewhat Support

☐

Neutral

☐

Somewhat against

☐

Strongly against

☐

Not applicable

☐

Policy 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.

Policy recommendation 7.1

Develop model for optimising access to existing assets in the city such as parks, beaches, and adventure playgrounds.

Strongly support

☐

Somewhat Support

☐

Neutral

☐

Somewhat against

☐

Strongly against

☐

Not applicable

☐

Policy recommendation 7.2

Advocate for the promotion of outdoor learning environments and programs that promote children's connection to nature and environmental sustainability practices, for example Clean up Port Phillip Day, Be Out There, Let's G.O (Get outside), and Indigenous nature-based cultural programs.

Strongly support

☐

Somewhat Support

☐

Neutral

☐

Somewhat against

☐

Strongly against

☐

Not applicable

☐

Policy recommendation 7.3

Develop a minimum design guideline for future playground works/upgrades at childcare centres that can be tailored for each site and implemented in stages, including investigating the development or suitability of nature and sensory play environments within open space settings for excursion purposes, for example developing bush kindergarten setting/s in the municipality.

Strongly support

☐

Somewhat Support

☐

Neutral

☐

Somewhat against

☐

Strongly against

☐

Not applicable

☐

Policy recommendation 7.4

Stage 2 engagement report - Appendices

Work with early years’ networks to consult and promote the range of opportunities to incorporate nature and sensory play into their service settings with supported funding opportunities.

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Strongly support | Somewhat Support | Neutral | Somewhat against | Strongly against | Not applicable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Stage 2 engagement report - Appendices

We'd like to understand which policy objectives you consider to be the most important.

Please rank the 7 Policy Objectives from 1 to 7, where 1 is your highest priority and 7 is your lowest priority, by numbering the boxes next to each Policy Objective.

| | |
|--|--|
| 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 which allow them to learn about and experience play in nature. This includes natural environments within early years services. | |

Stage 2 engagement report - Appendices

Do you have any other comments or feedback?

Demographic questions

The following questions are about which part of the community you represent. This information will help us understand if we heard from a diverse range of people in the community and be able to report on what different groups in the community told us during the consultation.

Tick the box if any of these categories apply to you.

Are you a:

- ☐ User
- ☐ Provider of community-run children's services
- ☐ Provider of independent children's services
- ☐ A Council employee
- ☐ Resident or ratepayer in the City of Port Phillip
- ☐ Other

Services you use

- ☐ None
- ☐ Council childcare
- ☐ Community-run childcare

Stage 2 engagement report - Appendices

- ☐ Independent childcare
- ☐ Sessional kindergarten
- ☐ Toy libraries
- ☐ Playgroups
- ☐ Other

Postcode

Did the information provided during the consultation help you to provide feedback?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No
- ☐ Other – Please provide details below

If you would like to receive updates from the City of Port Phillip regarding the Children's Services policy, please enter your email address below

Stage 2 engagement report - Appendices

Appendix 6: Promotion of consultation

Examples of promotion at Council childcare centres, poster, social media posts



Figure 1 Display at Bubup Nairn Children's Centre to promote consultation



Figure 2 Poster to promote consultation

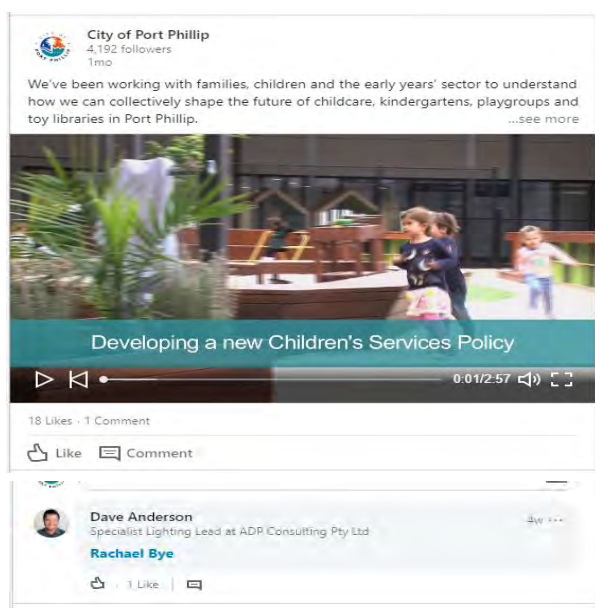


Figure 3: Example of social media post



Figure 4: Example of social media post