



Education
and Training

Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan

Mitchell Shire

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Education
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. REFORM CONTEXT

In an Australian first, the Victorian Government has committed to implement Three-Year-Old Kindergarten for all children over a 10-year roll-out with a total investment of almost \$5 billion, including \$1.68 billion to support the infrastructure expansion required for the reform. This reform will add another year of universal funded kindergarten so that, by 2029, all children in Victoria will have access to two years of play-based learning through a funded kindergarten program.

1.2. PURPOSE OF KISPS

Three-Year-Old Kindergarten will require a large expansion of kindergarten across the State. The Government has invited all 79 Victorian Local Governments to discuss and agree upon a Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan (KISP) for their Local Government Area (LGA).

Each KISP has been jointly developed with Local Government and published to estimate the growth in demand for kindergarten within the LGA. The KISPs will help all kindergarten providers meet demand and provide a clear picture of infrastructure need across the State.

While a KISP is not a funding document and does not define required infrastructure projects or commit any party to funding specific projects, it is expected that future investment requests through Building Blocks and funding decisions about Local Government and not-for-profit projects would align with the relevant KISP.

1.3. HOW TO USE THE KISP

Each KISP contains estimates of future kindergarten supply of, and demand for, Three and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten places against existing enrolment capacity. Not-for-profit and for-profit providers can use these estimates to inform their plans to expand kindergarten programs, establish new services or invest in new or extended facilities.

For example, KISPs provide demand estimates in terms of where, when and how much demand for kindergarten places will grow in an LGA. KISPs also estimate where and how many kindergarten places providers can accommodate in existing facilities before an area needs new infrastructure to meet demand. The estimates can be used to inform decisions about where and when expansions of kindergarten program capacity and the construction of new or extended facilities are needed to meet demand growth.

Where there is an agreed KISP for the LGA, the Local Government and not-for-profit kindergarten providers seeking co-investments through the Building Blocks Capacity Building stream must refer to, and align their proposed project with, the infrastructure need identified in the KISP.

1.4. STRUCTURE OF THE KISP

Each KISP consists of the following sections:

- **Section 1:** A short introduction to the Three-Year-Old Kindergarten reform and the KISP.

- **Section 2:** A map of existing and planned Early Childhood Education and Care service locations.
- **Section 3:** Local knowledge and context relevant to the expansion of kindergarten services.
- **Section 4:** Funded kindergarten demand estimates.

1.5. DISCLAIMER

All data presented in this document are estimates only and are based on the best information available to the Department and Local Government at the time. They are published on an as-is basis and are for informational purposes only. They are subject to adjustment in response to market forces and as new data and other relevant information becomes available. The data may under- or over-estimate both total demand in a given location or year and the capacity for new demand to be met by providers. As a result, operational and business decisions should not be made solely based on this document. Any use of this data is solely at the risk of the user. The Department and Local Government accept no responsibility for any loss or damage, either direct or incidental, that may result from the use of the data.

2. MAP OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SERVICES IN SHIRE OF MITCHELL

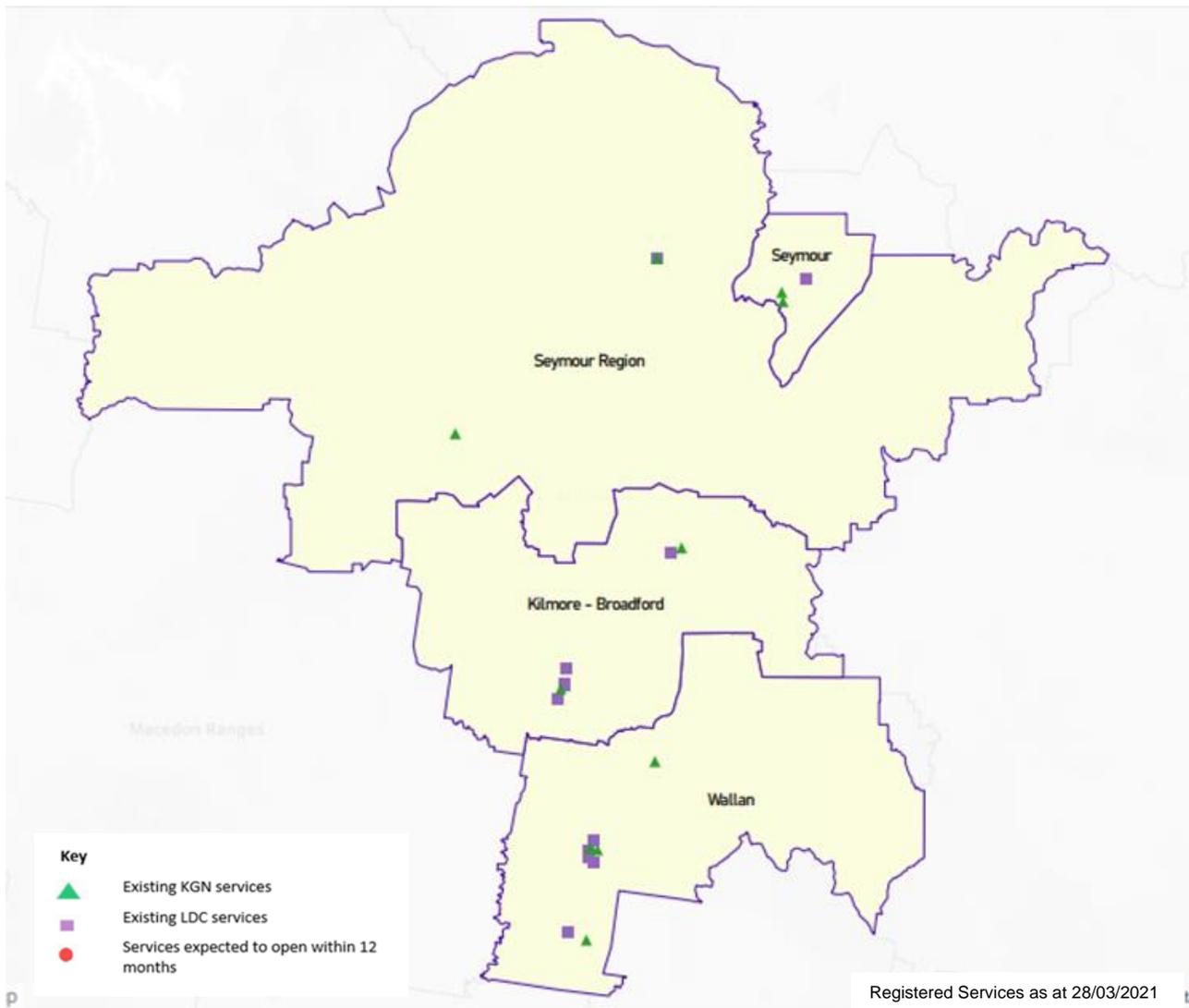
The map below shows the distribution of currently operating and new services that are planned to open in the future in the LGA and across its communities.

This map has been prepared using Departmental data, from both the National Quality Agenda IT System (NQAITS) and the Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA). Where applicable, this map has been refined by the Mitchell Shire Council and the Department to capture other services that are planned to open in the future.

Current Projects

There are two expansion projects underway in Mitchell Shire that will increase the number of places available for children and their families living in Wandong and Kilmore.

Table 1. Expansion Projects in Mitchell Shire Council			
Service Name	Project type	SA2 Area	Total licensed capacity
Wandong Kindergarten	Expansion	Wallan	66
Kilmore Family Centre	Expansion	Kilmore	116



Mitchell Shire Council is currently expanding its existing Kindergarten facilities in Kilmore and Wandong which have been funded through the Building Blocks Expansion Grant. New Kindergarten facilities are expected to be opening from 2024 in Mitchell Shire.

3. LOCAL CONTEXT

3.1 PURPOSE

Local, place-based knowledge and context play an important role in supporting the implementation of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten across Victoria. This section of the KISP documents this knowledge and context and has informed the funded kindergarten enrolment estimates in Section 4.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

Mitchell Shire Council is focused on ensuring the timely provision of required infrastructure and services in order to maintain the liveability of our communities. Our substantial growth presents many exciting opportunities and transformational projects to create a healthy, connected and sustainable community. However, we need the support and partnership of all levels of government to achieve the best possible outcomes for all of our residents. This Kindergarten and Infrastructure Service Plan represents a partnership between DET and Mitchell Shire Council to come together to ensure all children and their families living in Mitchell Shire have access to quality funded Kindergarten.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Mitchell Shire Council acknowledges the Taungurung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waterways in the area now known as Mitchell Shire. We pay our respects to their rich cultures and to Elders, past, present and emerging, as well as other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who live, work and play in the area.

COMMITMENT TO EQUAL ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY

We recognise and actively support equal access to resources and opportunities for everyone, regardless of gender, age, race, ethnicity, class, religion, disability, sexuality or membership of a minority group.

3.2 KEY CONSIDERATIONS

KEY DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS THAT INFLUENCE DEMAND FOR KINDERGARTEN

Mitchell Shire Council (Council) is Victoria's fastest growing municipality and home to Victoria's second fastest growing growth corridor. More than 48,969 people across 11 townships call Mitchell home¹. By 2041 Mitchell's population is estimated to increase to 170,830, approximately 349% of its current size. It is important to note that this growth will be experienced across the entire municipality.

In preparation for the delivery of two years of quality and accessible early education for all children living in Mitchell, Council has undertaken comprehensive data analyses, commissioned research and completed modelling concerning current and future early education, service delivery and infrastructure. The demographic profiles, geographical and growth planning considerations detailed within this local context have been compiled to inform the planning and delivery of critical kindergarten service and infrastructure across Mitchell Shire.

¹ As of 2021 i.d. forecast population figures, i.d. forecast (2021) Mitchell Shire Population growth. Accessible from: <https://forecast.id.com.au/mitchell>

The area known as Mitchell Shire is located on the custodial lands of the Taungurung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung People. Mitchell Shire's i.d. forecast population statistics show:

- 25.1% of the population was aged between 0 and 17 years
- 20.1% were aged 60 years and over
- 33.0% of households are made up of couples with children
- 1.6% of the population identify as having Aboriginal or Torres Striate Islander Heritage
- 11.5% of the population was born overseas and 7.1% of people speak a language other than English at home²

Mitchell Shire's population is projected to become younger as it grows. As a proportion of the population those aged 0 to 5 are projected to increase by 1.8%. This is particularly the case for Beveridge and Seymour. Currently (2021), 1,597 three and four-year-olds live in Mitchell and by 2029, this will grow to an estimated 3,274 three- and four-year-olds².

The number of births in Mitchell have steadily increased since 2016, a trend which is expected to continue, with projections of approximately 31,000 births between 2019 and 2039. Over the past 12 months (2021), Mitchell has experienced a baby boom with a 21% increase in births and a large proportion to first time mothers (40%), this stresses the importance of the next 5 years are critical for planning for quality early years education in Mitchell.

Melbourne's Northern Growth Corridor

Mitchell is recognised as one of ten Interface Council's representing more than one third of Melbourne's population³. Significant population growth is occurring in Wallan, Beveridge and Kilmore, as well as more broadly across the north of the municipality.

The Northern Growth Corridor is expected to accommodate approximately 27% of Melbourne's future residential growth over the next 30 years. It will be home to an additional 300,000+ people, a very significant part of Melbourne's growth and a major contributor to state economic growth. The Victorian Planning Authority's (VPA) Northern Growth Corridor Plan⁴ records that the region is one of the most important industrial regions in Australia, with road and rail links to metropolitan markets and to New South Wales, via the Sydney rail line and the Hume Freeway.

Importantly, the Mitchell component of the northern growth corridor is one of the largest undeveloped growth corridors in Australia, approximately 8,000 hectares, of which 3,000+ hectares is controlled by five key landowners. Most of this growth is bordering either side of the Hume

² As of 2021 i.d. forecast population figures, i.d. forecast (2021) Mitchell Shire Population growth. Accessible from: <https://forecast.id.com.au/mitchell>

³ Interface Council (2021) Mitchell Shire Council. Accessible from <https://www.interfacecouncils.com.au/about>

⁴ Victorian Planning Authority (2021) Northern Growth Corridor Plan. Accessible from: <https://vpa.vic.gov.au/greenfield/growth-corridor-plans/>

Highway to Wallan. Private sector investment developing the Corridor is ready to proceed, key infrastructure projects that will unlock and enable development to commence in the region include;

- Watson St / Hume Highway interchange and south bound ramps
- Northern Highway upgrade (Hume Freeway to Watsons St)
- Watsons St upgrade (Northern Highway to Hume Highway)
- Camerons Lane / Hume Highway interchange
- Gunns Gully Road / Hume Highway Interchange

It is expected that further development in the region will be enhanced through the Outer Metropolitan Ring (OMR)/E6 road reservation and the proposed Beveridge Interstate Freight Terminal (BIFT).

Together, these significant transport projects will unlock road and rail access for Melbourne’s North, Victoria and other parts of Australia.

: Map of Mitchell Shire



With Mitchell’s prime location 40kms to the CBD and good accessibility to regional hubs, opportunities for thriving employment precincts and logistics hubs, and highly developable residential land; the planning process must work hard to balance the priorities that unlock economic growth, provide affordable housing and adequate community infrastructure for thriving communities.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND LEADERSHIP

Mitchell Shire Councils approach to kindergarten provision is guided by the following Strategic Directions:

- Mitchell 2050 Community Vision: *“We are a healthy, vibrant, and connected community that values nature, diversity, and innovation.”*
- Council Plan 2021-2025
 - Built Environment, Priority 4 - *Plan, partner, and advocate for the timely delivery of infrastructure to meet the increasing service needs of all our communities including open spaces, community facilities, recreation and aquatics facilities where needed*
 - Community, Priority 6 - *Enhance health and wellbeing outcomes through collaboration with community and partners*
- Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025
 - 21. Support learning and access to education for all
 - 21.1 *Develop initiatives to reduce barriers to accessing all education opportunities in the community*
 - 21.3 *Work with the Department of Education and Training for the timely provision of new infrastructure*

- Mitchell Shire Life Stages Strategy 2019
 - Focus Area 2: Mitchell Shire Council aims to improve access and opportunities for local education, volunteering, employment pathways and business development.
 - Focus Area 3: Mitchell Shire Council aims to maintain strong partnerships and enhance the planning, integration and quality of services and infrastructure provision.

ABOUT KINDERGARTEN IN MITCHELL SHIRE

Mitchell Shire Council welcomes the introduction of universally funded Kindergarten for three-year-old children and is committed to the provision of high-quality, accessible and affordable early education for children and their families. Council's commitment to equal access and opportunity, at its core, seeks to break the cycle of vulnerability in new and emerging communities in growth areas that often experience disconnection, isolation from family and friends, financial stress, and limited access to local services.

Townships within Mitchell have their own demographic profile, town character, population growth trajectories and unique travel patterns. Council's extensive experience as an Early Years Manager and knowledge of families living in Mitchell emphasises that for many families the option of traveling outside of their township to access affordable kindergarten is not feasible. Families living in the Shire have very limited travel capacity to neighbouring towns due to vast regional distances, low car ownership and limited access to public transport options.

Council uses Id Forecast data to plan for population growth, service planning and provisioning of community infrastructure. Council plans for community infrastructure, including Kindergarten provision by township rather than Statistical Area 2 (SA2), which generally includes multiple suburbs and population sizes of up to 50,000. While Council acknowledges that planning by SA2 level considers a broader demand and supply scenario for Kindergarten service and infrastructure, Council considers there is a substantial risk that children who cannot enrol in affordable kindergarten locally within their township, will likely not attend any kindergarten.

Provision of Kindergarten in Mitchell Shire

Mitchell Shire Council uses population demographics from Id Forecast and assumptions on the provision of places delivered within a Sessional and Long Day Care setting to model estimates for future kindergarten supply and demand across the municipality. Councils approach to modelling for all community infrastructure, including Kindergarten occurs at a township level and takes a holistic approach assessing demographics, population forecasts, affordability and community outcomes.

Council acknowledges there is a significant difference in population figures between Id Forecast and Victoria in the Future (VIF) data used by the Department of Education and Training (DET). Due to this difference DET and Council assumptions and modelling differ, hence DET and Mitchell Shire Council have agreed to use a population midpoint data set for the SA2 level supply and demand scenarios included in this KISP in Section 4.2, Table 2 – 5.

The KISP estimates detailed in Section 4.2, Table 2 – 5 are based on assumptions that a certain number of kindergarten places will be available through Sessional and Long Day Care settings.

Should the actual provision of kindergarten places differ from the assumed supply, this would impact on estimates on unmet demand.

Population demographic data and township population growth will be reviewed with the release of Census Data and VIF data. Council foresees an annual review from 2023, considering the large growth corridors within the municipality and the potential impact of COVID-19 on population data. The timing of subsequent KISP reviews will be formally confirmed at the time of the first review in 2023.

Kindergarten Services

Across Victoria, Local Government plays a significant role as the backbone in providing kindergarten infrastructure and understanding the community's expectation for local, accessible and affordable Kindergarten for their children. Mitchell Shire Council is the Early Years Manager (EYM) for eight (8) sessional kindergarten services (including Flowerdale Kindergarten) and manages a centralised enrolment system for three and four-year-old participation in all sessional programs.

Mitchell Shire Council has entered into a lease and licence arrangement with Murrindindi Shire Council as the EYM for Flowerdale Kindergarten. Supply from Flowerdale Kindergarten has not been included in this KISP. The Puckapunyal Army Base facility is a standalone kindergarten which is not part of Mitchell Shire's central enrolment system.

Future kindergarten infrastructure that Council invests in will remain in Council ownership; however, the kindergarten services will be delivered through a lease and license agreement with partner organisations (such as a non-government organisation). This model of delivery endorsed by Council in 2019, ensures that Council continues to work closely with partners to plan and deliver community infrastructure that meets the design and use requirements of early years facilities as well as meeting the current and future needs of our communities across their diverse ages, genders, abilities, and accessibility needs.

Mitchell Shire will deliver 5 hours of funded Kindergarten to three-year-olds from 2022 and scale up to 15 hours for all three- and four-year-olds across the municipality from 2023 depending on demand, space requirements and the ability to staff groups.

Long Day Care Service Provision

The KISP estimates are based on an assumption that a certain number of existing licensed places will be available for kindergarten through a Sessional setting and the Long Day Care setting (Section 4.2 Methodology). There are 12 Long Day Care providers (as of 2021) across the municipality offering families flexible and diverse early learning opportunities for their children. DET regulate the broader early learning sector however, provisioning for Long Day Care is undertaken by the Private and Not-For-Profit sector.

This KISP process enables long-term planning for the delivery of kindergarten places across the sector within local government, private and not-for-profit infrastructure across the next decade. This period provides significant opportunity for further collaboration between DET, Council, and the broader sector to come together to share learnings to understand the impacts on supply and demand, family preference and cost structures in sessional and long day care settings, paving the way for children to access two years of quality early learning in Mitchell.

COVID-19 Service Impacts

Health and Community Services including Sessional Kindergarten and Maternal Child Health appointments have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Mitchell Shire Council area is classified as regional by the State Government, however significant COVID-19 outbreaks, inclusion of the southern part of our municipality in the urban growth boundary and proximity to the Melbourne metro border resulted in the municipality being subject to metro-level restrictions and stay at home orders. Council acknowledges that COVID-19 has exacerbated the effects of existing inequalities and vulnerabilities. People who are isolated, homeless, aged, dealing with health issues, or part of other marginalised groups, have been hit the hardest⁵. Across Mitchell the impacts of COVID-19 restrictions have seen an increase in waiting lists for allied and mental health services, alcohol and drug services, speech pathology and sleep and settling programs. For families, these gaps in service provision and access are being identified in the Kindergarten and Maternal Child Health (MCH) services, identifying families who fall between the gaps during this unprecedented time in our history.

Children enrolled in Kindergarten in 2021, and children commencing kindergarten in 2022 are, and may experience many challenges as they transition into their learning environment and separate from their primary carer/s. “COVID children” are often presenting with significant attachment challenges and have experienced long periods of limited socialisation with many children unable to interact with extended family such as grandparents. These social connections support children to establish secure positive relationships and to build the capacity to trust other adults such as kindergarten teachers and educators. As children return to the formal learning environments, they have required support to work through feelings of insecurity, anxiety, and poor socialisation skills.

Children develop their language and literacy skills through social interactions and cultural events where they are exposed to dialogue and meaning. Over the long periods of lockdown children have had increased periods of using electronic devices which can hinder their social and emotional development. Other areas of concern are fine motor skills i.e., holding crayons/pencils, gross motor skills i.e. outdoor physical development and negotiating skills often gained as children enjoy playgrounds, community groups or open spaces. These increased challenges may intensify the level of support required as children commence within service and will therefore, have flow on effects for staffing teams and group sizes adding pressure to workforce retention.

Resilience is a core concept of Mitchell Shire COVID Community Recovery Plan 2021. Key resilience principles have been embedded into this KISP to enable planning and delivery for future

⁵ Mitchell Shire Council (2021) Mitchell Shire Pandemic Wellbeing Recovery Strategies. Internal Report.

community infrastructure and a network of services that respond to the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 and existing chronic stresses, as well as future disruptions experienced in the community.

EQUITABLE ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL CHILDREN

The introduction of three-year-old reform presents many opportunities to address relative and systematic disadvantage across Mitchell over the next decade. It is known that between the ages of three and five, children experience a critical period in the development of their self-regulation. These are the most important years when children develop skills that help them to manage their emotions and behaviour, build resilience and persistence, form positive relationships and focus their attention⁶.

The levels of relative disadvantage vary by township across Mitchell Shire. Seymour's SEIFA score was recorded in the lowest 9% in Australia, and Broadford within the lowest 28% in Victoria⁷, indicating that families within these areas experience greater levels of disadvantage. Mitchell Shire is home to a higher proportion of one parent families with dependent children when compared to Greater Melbourne, many of whom living in Wallan and Beveridge.

Mitchell Shire Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community

The area known as Mitchell Shire is located on the custodial lands of the Taungurung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung People. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and families calling Mitchell home make up 1.6% of the Shire's population⁸. As the population grows and changes, Council is committed to working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to deliver culturally sensitive and inclusive learning experiences within early childhood education that celebrates our rich culture and heritage.

Mitchell Shire Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Community (CALD)

Mitchell Shire CALD population has grown with speakers of languages other than English at home growing by 50% from 2011–2016. The number of community members born outside Australia has grown rapidly by 24% from 2011–2016, family families from Indian, China and the Philippines bringing to Mitchell their rich and vibrant culture⁹. Mitchell Shire is committed to working with people in a manner that is respectful, accepting of differences and embraces the cultural richness our new communities bring.

Affordability and Family Preference

Based on historic enrolment patterns in Mitchell, there is high demand for low-cost sessional programs. Mitchell Shire EYM Kindergarten pricing structure is set yearly by Council. COVID has had some impact on the participation in Kindergarten over the past two years across the municipality. Four-year-old enrolments have remained high, and three-year-old participation in an unfunded program has increased. In 2021, EYM enrolment fees for 4-year-old sessional

⁶ Centre on the Developing Child at Harvard University. (2014). A Decade of Science Informing Policy: The Story of the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child.

⁷ i.d. forecast (2021) Mitchell Shire SEIFA. Accessible from: <https://profile.id.com.au/mitchell/seifa>

⁸ i.d. forecast (2021) Mitchell Shire Indigenous Profile. Accessible from: <https://profile.id.com.au/mitchell/indigenous-profile>

⁹ i.d. forecast (2021) Mitchell Shire, Birth place. Accessible from: <https://profile.id.com.au/mitchell/birthplace>

Kindergarten was set at \$395 per term¹⁰. The enrolment fee was further subsidised through the State Government’s free Kindergarten initiative for 2021. Mitchell Shire Kindergarten Services offer free kindergarten program under the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS) and to eligible families with a health care card. Food security has been identified as an emerging issue across the municipality, with the number of children attending Kindergarten with no lunch having notably increased.

Comparably, Long Day Care (LDC) providers determine their own service and pricing structures across the municipality. The cost of Kindergarten programs varies by township with an average fee of \$104 per day (2021 Average LDC Fees)¹¹. The cost to families varies depending on eligibility for the Commonwealth Government Child Care Subsidy. For some families in Mitchell on low-moderate household incomes enrolment in LDC may be unaffordable.

Travel

The vast geographical span of Mitchell Shire (2,864km²) brings challenges, particularly for connectivity and travel within and across the Shire. Families in Mitchell experience large travel distances within the Shire¹² and to employment outside of the Shire¹³. Coupled with limited public transport options and poor walkability, there is a heavy reliance on car ownership.

All major towns have at least one kindergarten within a 5-minute drive, with rural areas of the Shire within a 15 to 20-minute journey of kindergartens (illustration 1). Currently (as of 2021) there is good distribution of kindergartens across the municipality and no large geographic gaps in provision. Enrolment patterns of four-year-old in kindergarten indicate that travel distances between rural properties, location of kindergartens and location of families on the edges of the municipality may impact supply and demand¹⁴. As such, these KISP estimates assume that families will not travel beyond SA2 boundaries to access a kindergarten place.

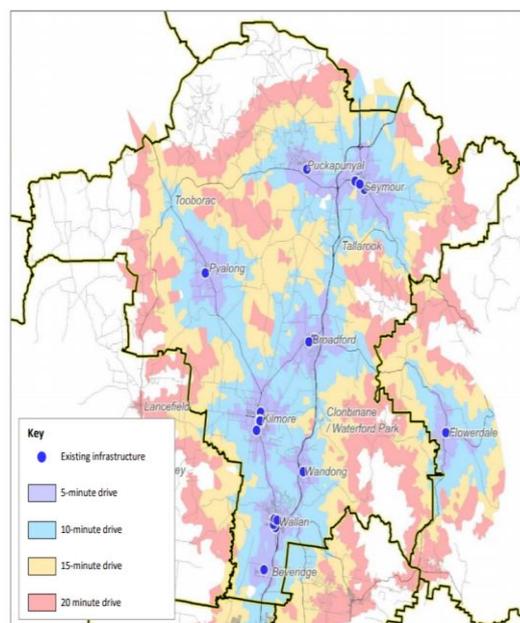


Illustration 1: Travel times to Kindergartens in Mitchell Shire

SUPPORTING FAMILIES IN MITCHELL

Kindergarten is a structured resource that supports the family unit and gives children the opportunity to interact and learn through everyday experiences and play with familiar people and places¹⁵. Two years of Kindergarten ensure that all families have access to the necessary supports and resources to enhance their children’s learning and development. The 2017 report *‘Interface Council Group Human Services Gap Analysis’* report identified that Interface communities face population growth pressures, increasing levels of vulnerability, lower education outcomes, lower

¹⁰ 2021 Mitchell Shire Kindergarten Service Pricing Structure

¹¹ 2021 LDC Pricing Structure

¹² Davern, M., Roberts, R. & Higgs, C. (2018). Neighbourhood Liveability Assessment of the Major Townships of Mitchell Shire: Beveridge; Broadford; Kilmore; Seymour; and Wallan. RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia.

¹³ i.d. forecast (2021) Mitchell Shire, Journey to work. Accessible from: <https://profile.id.com.au/mitchell/journey-to-work>

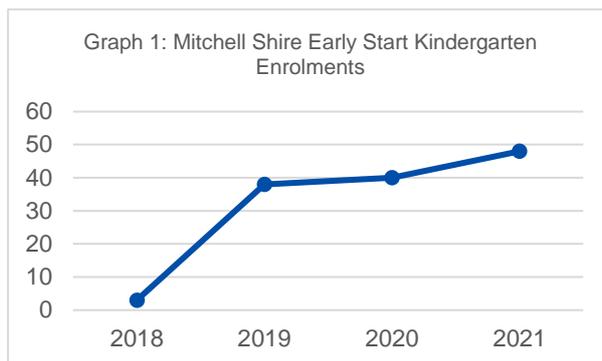
¹⁴ Mitchell Shire Council (2019) Integrated Community Service and Infrastructure Plan

¹⁵ Early Childhood Intervention Australia(N.D.) *National Guidelines: Best Practice in Early Childhood Intervention* accessible: <https://www.eciavic.org.au/documents/item/1419>

health status, higher levels of disability, lower socio-economic status and increasing financial and economic stress¹⁶.

Family Stress and Mental Health

The 2017 report ‘*Interface Council Group Human Services Gap Analysis*’ report detailed that Mitchell has significantly higher reported rates of family stress (13.2%) compared to Victoria (8.3%). In the area of mental health, 14.8% of Mitchell Shire reported high/very high levels of psychological distress, which is 2.2% higher than the Victorian average.



Family Violence

Mitchell Shire has a current family violence incident rate of 2,443.3 incidents per 100,000 people. By comparison, the incident rate for Victoria in the same period was 1,389.1. The incident rate in Mitchell Shire was 176% of the rate state-wide¹⁷.

Table 1: Comparison of Family Violence across Interface Council’s

	Interface Councils	Rate
1	Mitchell*	2,443.4
2	Melton*	1,744.2
3	Hume*	1,710.3
4	Casey*	1,480.4
5	Whittlesea*	1,388.7
6	Mornington Peninsula	1,312.0
7	Wyndham*	1,302.5
8	Cardinia*	1,294.2
9	Yarra Ranges	1,084.2
10	Nillumbik	790.3

Mitchell Shire’s incident rate was the 11th highest for an LGA in Victoria. However, for comparative LGA’s Mitchell has the highest incident rate. For Mitchell’s geography and demographics its rate is anomalous and far higher than what would be expected. Whilst state-wide, Mitchell has the 11th highest incident rate, when compared to similar LGAs Mitchell experiences the highest rate of family violence. There is no evidence that Mitchell’s family violence rate has been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

Child Protection

Mitchell Shire has substantially higher rates per 1,000 population than metropolitan Melbourne when it comes to: child protection reports (43% higher), child protection investigations (60.25% higher), child protection substantiations (97.99% higher) and child protection applications issued (92.93% higher). Data collected from our EYM services shows that this trend is increasing, with the number of children known to child protection growing each year.

Early Start Kindergarten

Mitchell Shire Council works collaboratively with early intervention services to identify children and families who experience some vulnerabilities and prioritise their enrolment into the Early Start Kindergarten (ESK). There has been sustained growth from 2016 in enrolment figures in the Early

¹⁶ Interface Council Group Human Service Gap Analysis (2017). Accessible from: <https://cdn.mitchellshire.vic.gov.au/general-downloads/Advocacy/Interface-Councils-Human-Services-gap-analysis-2017.pdf>

¹⁷ Vic Pol (2021) Mitchell Shire Family Violence Rates 2020/21. Internal report.

Start program to 48 enrolments in 2021. Both Seymour and Wallan had the highest number of ESK in 2021.

CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

A significant proportion of families in Mitchell require additional and specialised support for their children who have mild to severe disabilities, development delays or learning disabilities. Parents in Mitchell reported higher rates of childhood intellectual disabilities, developmental delays or learning disabilities, 7.9% compared to 4.7% for Victoria. There are also higher rates of children at high or moderate risk of developmental (14.2% compared to 12.2%) or behavioural problems (38.1% compared to 32.0%) for Victoria¹⁸. Many families have reported they are having to travel considerable distances outside of the municipality to access appropriate services and face long waitlists to access NDIS services. As such, there is opportunity for partnership with DET and the broader sector for specialised early years innovative infrastructure and services to be located within the municipality.

EARLY DELIVERY

Mitchell Shire is committed to supporting a network of services that focus on early intervention and prevention, of which Kindergarten is an essential part of this service mix. Council recognises that parenting children and young people is a complex and stressful task for many families (particularly in growth areas) with more families presenting with diverse complex needs. Working with families to address their complex needs takes a considered, integrated and pro-active approach.

Community Infrastructure Planning

Mitchell Shire Council takes a strategic and integrated network approach to the planning and delivery of community services and infrastructure. With significant and sustained population growth across the municipality, the delivery of a variety of community services and infrastructure for residents across the life stages is essential. Planning for community infrastructure is a balancing act managing competing pressures to meet diverse needs of the community across all life stages including; social support services, health services, kindergarten, sport and recreational facilities, passive open spaces, flexible coworking spaces, social enterprise opportunities. Not all community infrastructure sites will include Kindergarten and thus, competing demands for space within Council community infrastructure are likely to influence the supply of early childhood infrastructure.

Within the Victorian Governments urban growth area planning framework, the provision for community infrastructure, including kindergarten is considered as part the Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) guidelines. This current (as of 2021) pipeline of new community infrastructure in PSP areas was planned as a requirement to meet the demand for four-year-old kindergarten alone and did not consider additional demand from the three-year-old reform. It is known that developer contributions towards community infrastructure, fall short of what is required to adequately fund infrastructure to meet the higher density and community needs within these new and emerging communities. The scale and resources required to deliver expanded Kindergarten capacity across the municipality is

¹⁸ Interface Council Group Human Service Gap Analysis (2017). Accessible from: <https://cdn.mitchellshire.vic.gov.au/general-downloads/Advocacy/Interface-Councils-Human-Services-gap-analysis-2017.pdf>

considerable and Council will need to carefully address its' financial sustainability capacity to ensure that its commitment is sustainable in the long term.

Partnerships

A partnership approach is central to all aspects of community infrastructure and services from planning through to design, delivery, activation and ongoing operation. Mitchell Shire has a demonstrated commitment to creating a healthy, connected and sustainable communities and addressing equitable access to health and human services and infrastructure. This commitment is based on significant investment into partnerships and commissioning of sound research and evidence concerning gaps in liveability and the need to enhance health and human service delivery and infrastructure.

Mitchell Shire Council's vision and preference for community hubs is for an integrated service model. This recognises that parenting children and young people is a complex and stressful task for many families (particularly in growth areas) with more families identifying with diverse complex needs. Addressing these needs takes a considered, integrated and pro-active approach.

An integrated service model recognises the need to take a holistic partnership approach to community well-being, support, engagement and connection and providing a range services to support parents, caregivers, individuals and ageing members of the community. The aim of the integrated model is to have a coordinated, targeted and locally responsive range of services across the age spectrum within community, that:

- Prioritises early intervention options for children and their families
- Encourages intergenerational connection and learnings
- Facilitates collaboration between universal and secondary services
- Promotes a holistic response to individual, family and community needs

Forming partnerships early on helps to build effective working relationships and achieve positive outcomes. Council recognises the need to support partnerships at all levels of government, with service providers and the private sector to achieve the best possible outcomes for all of our residents now and into the future. Overcoming complex issue in growth area planning for example, limited land take for community hubs, out of sequenced development and higher densities will take a partnership approach. Together, DET and Mitchell Shire Council and the broader sector must come together to consider the long-term planning needs for Kindergarten across Mitchell and consider alternative delivery options e.g. double story facilities, Kindergarten on School Sites and diversification of community infrastructure.

Resilience

Resilience is the ability of people and the environment to absorb and positively advance in the face of significant changes, shock, stress and/or uncertainty. Achieving resilience is a greater challenge in new and emerging growth area communities compared to inner and middle metropolitan areas. Importantly, the prevalence of socio-factors and complexity of issues is increasing across the municipality and are not isolated to suburb boundaries or traditionally identified high-risk groups.

The impact of bushfires, floods and the COVID-19 pandemic further highlights and reinforces the challenges and vulnerabilities many communities face. The medium and long impacts of COVID-19 for residents across Mitchell are still being felt and understood. The uptake of the Federal Government's JobKeeper support package increased in Mitchell Shire from 5.5% in March to 10.5% in November 2020¹⁹. These rates are comparable to regional Victoria but are greater than the Victoria average.

Building community resilience, particularly in new and emerging communities, is important for the liveability and connectedness of communities. Mitchell Shire Council is and will be home to new and emerging communities, such as those found in growth areas, the foundations of daily life are either not or only partially in place. While there may be a vision and a plan for the structure and composition of the new community in the short to medium term, that vision will be incompletely delivered, the 'community' will still be arriving, and there is likely to be varying degrees of stress associated with 'getting by' and becoming fully established. At an individual or household level this stress is likely to be experienced as a sense of personal or household vulnerability and threat, reflected in the mental and physical wellbeing of the community.

For the new and emerging community, however, the new home starts with an absence of prior features of a community. Most of the physical, social and economic facilities, infrastructure services, social contacts, relationships and informal supports and networks are non-existent in new growth areas. There may be no or minimal:

- Shops, jobs, community, health and education facilities or services;
- Recreation spaces, clubs, trails or other leisure activities;
- Public transport services;
- Neighbours, immediate family, kin or cultural groups.

This absence of community supports and structures presents specific challenges for building community resilience in growth areas. This KISP is underpinned by an understanding of the importance of the early years in shaping life outcomes and acknowledging the pivotal role of the family and community in shaping these early experiences. It is therefore critical, early delivery of community infrastructure and activation of services through our partners is achieved in growth and interface Councils like Mitchell, to ensure that families and children are supported to manage trauma and complex needs in the community that are being experienced now and into the future.

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

SHARED OPPORTUNITIES AND PROBLEMS FOR GROWTH COUNCILS

Mitchell Shire Council is at a critical position in its growth planning, creating opportunities to bring to life the Community Vision **"We are a healthy, vibrant and connected community that values nature, diversity and innovation."** The municipality is transitioning from a predominantly rural landscape; to a peri-urban region with significant growth in the urban growth boundary.

This change is occurring within a planning environment that prioritises faster planning timeframes, higher housing density, smaller lot sizes, limited resources and a diversifying of community

¹⁹ i.d. forecast (2021) Mitchell Shire COVID-19. Accessible from: <https://forecast.id.com.au/mitchell/forecast-covid19-impact>

infrastructure to meet community needs and State Government priorities (eg. Mental Health, Family Violence, Affordable Housing, Kindergarten Reform). In growth areas like Mitchell, the new home starts with an absence of most of the physical, social and economic facilities, including infrastructure, services, informal supports and networks that are readily available in more established areas.

The Victoria in the Future 2019 report states that Mitchell Shire Council is Victoria's fastest growing municipality²⁰. March quarter 2021 house sales data confirms the fast growth that is occurring and may indicate that it may be occurring even faster than current estimates.

Over this quarter Mitchell had two new development fronts enter the market, taking the number of active development fronts to 15. When compared to other growth Councils in our Region, this is greater than Hume which has 10 development fronts. Purchasers in the corridor were also in lower income brackets, with 36% of purchasers had household incomes between \$60,000 to \$100,000.²¹

Fast-Track PSPs and Greenfield Sites

Mitchell Shire is home to more fast-tracked Precinct Structure Plans (PSPs) than any other municipality, current planning (2021) of PSP includes:

1. Beveridge North West PSP
2. Wallan South PSP
3. Wallan East PSP (Part 1)

Another two PSPs, Beveridge South West and Wallan East (Part 2) may also be considered as part of the fast-track process within the reform roll-out period.

Growth planning brings about significant opportunities for the Mitchell community. However, the fast-track PSP environment has expedited the planning process impacting the timeframes to consider Kindergarten infrastructure, acquisition of land and integration of services. Through this KISP process it is critical DET, Victoria School Building Authority (VSBA) and Council work in partnership to consider the flow on effects of fast-tracked PSPs on timing of land availability, sequencing of community infrastructure and early delivery of Kindergarten infrastructure.

Out of sequence Developments

As the municipality continues to grow and change, there may be areas where the timing of new growth and delivery of early education infrastructure may not be in sync. Development is moving faster than predicted which is driving the need for early land acquisition, specifically for north facing land options and co-location to future School sites.

In existing PSP and Structure Plan areas, provisioning for community infrastructure did not consider the additional demand of three-year-olds, and thus land allocated to Council for Community Infrastructure may be undersized for the additional services that were planned for that community. A significant proportion of land within PSP areas is allocated for residential

²⁰ Victoria in the Future 2019, Population projections 2016-2056 (2019). Accessible from: https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0032/332996/Victoria_in_Future_2019.pdf

²¹ RPM Real Estate Group (2021), *Q1 Residential Market Review, March Quarter 2021*. Accessible from: <https://www.rpmrealestate.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/RPM-Q1-Report-2020.pdf>

development, meaning there is limited commercial / employment / industrial zoned in these areas for private industry investment.

Development is occurring across multiple fronts and is further impacted by road construction (e.g. Cameron’s Lane) and vehicle caps on major transport nodes. Multiple individual landowners and buffer zones (eg. Gas pipelines) impact town planning amenity and elements, resulting in delays to provisioning community infrastructure. Active and public transport infrastructure are typically delivered much later after residents have moved in following extensive community advocacy.

Without new infrastructure being delivered early in new communities, it is possible that waiting lists for existing Kindergarten services may result in localised unmet demand in new development areas which are isolated. Early delivery of services, infrastructure and early access to Kindergarten and delivery on School sites is imperative in alleviating pressure and supports positive social outcomes.

Scale of Housing Density

Mitchell’s growth area has the capacity for an estimated 234,744 people in roughly 86km². By comparison, this is a similar population of Geelong of 252,271 in 2016. The closest relative comparison on both markers is the City of Monash which in 2018 had a population of 200,077 people in an area of 82km². If this area were an LGA it would be the 12th most dense LGA in Victoria.

Rank	Area	Density	Population
9	City of Moonee Valley	2,974	127,883
10	City of Maribyrnong	2,947	91,387
11	City of Bayside	2,857	105,718
	Mitchell Growth Corridor	2,730	234,744
12	City of Whitehorse	2,753	176,196
13	City of Monash	2,440	200,007

Provisioning for community infrastructure has changed significantly from 15 dwellings per hectare. Council is currently seeing above 20 dwellings per hectare in PSPs (e.g. 21 to 23/h in Beveridge Central PSP). Persons per dwelling for the Shire is comparable to that of other growth Councils, particularly Hume corridor at 3.1 persons per dwelling. For active open space, provisioning in the PSP is not adequate for the local population and fails to reflect the increase of density of both dwellings per hectare and person per dwelling.

With these challenges, it is important that community infrastructure in these fast-tracked PSPs are carefully considered, planned and the additional costs attributed to delivering diverse community infrastructure (i.e. two-story buildings, additional car parking, incorporating affordable housing apartments above community infrastructure) are adequately reflected.

Homes for All

As part of the State Governments, Big Housing Build investment, the Victorian Government announced a minimum guaranteed investment of \$25,000,000 for Mitchell Shire for the delivery of affordable housing within the municipality. A portion of this investment will contribute to providing housing for young and vulnerable families, increasing people moving to the area and increased birth rates.

KEY LOCAL GEOGRAPHIC CONSIDERATIONS OR INFORMATION RELEVANT TO THREE-YEAR-OLD KINDERGARTEN

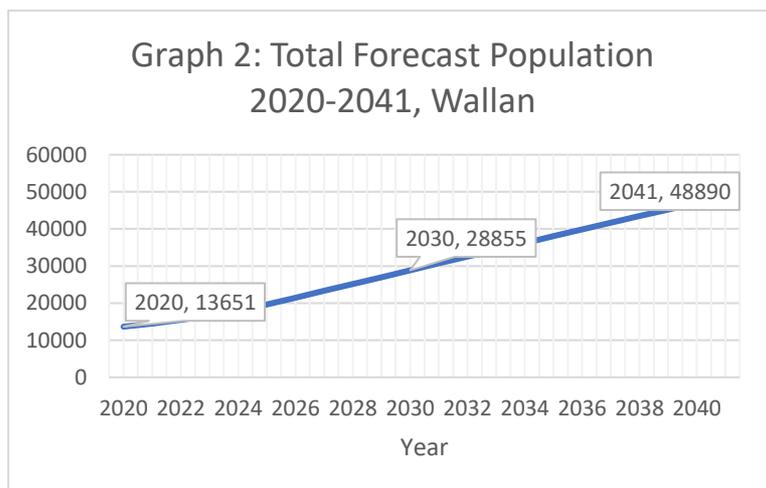
WALLAN SA2

Wallan SA2 is made up of the townships of Wallan, Beveridge and Wandong. The Wallan-Beveridge corridor is extolled as Australia's largest un-planned, un-developed corridor, however this statement requires some interrogation.

Wallan

Wallan SA2 includes both the townships of Wallan and Beveridge, the final suburbs of the urban growth boundary. By 2041, 67% of the Shire's population will live in Wallan SA2.

Wallan is projected to grow to 48,890 by 2041²², comparable population to Shepperton. At full build out it is projected that Wallan could be home to near 70,000 residents. Wallan will have growth in both the existing and emerging areas and across all life stages, expecting an average annual growth rate over this period of 6.26%.



The rate of growth in Wallan SA2 has exceeded predictions. There were 621 ABS Building Approvals in Wallan SA2 for the 2020/21, a difference of +188 (+43%) on what was predicted for this period.

Wallan East PSP (Part 1) and Wallan South PSP, both subject to the VPA's fast-track program are in the process of development, heading towards finalisation. The development of these areas requires considered community infrastructure provision planning.

Beveridge

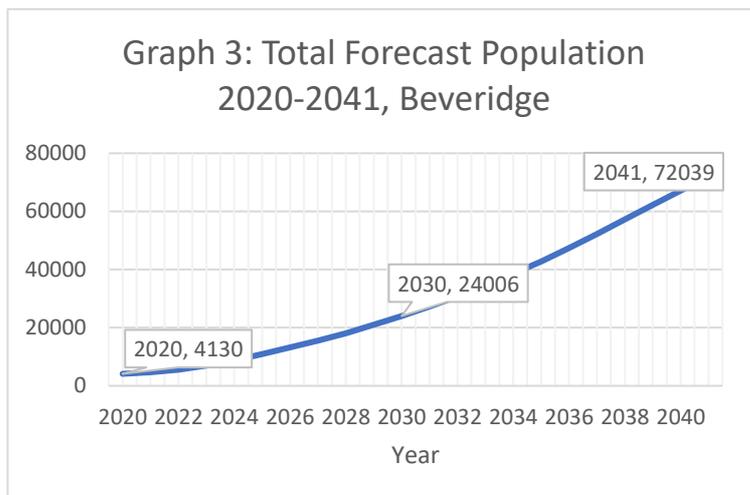
Beveridge is projected to grow to 72,039 by 2041²³. Beveridge will experience growth primarily in the greenfield area, expecting an average annual growth rate over this period of 14.59%. At full build out it is projected that Beveridge could be home to over 145,000 residents (there is currently only just over 4,000), roughly the same size as Geelong.

²² i.d. forecast (2021) Mitchell Shire Population growth. Accessible from: <https://forecast.id.com.au/mitchell>

²³ i.d. forecast (2021) Mitchell Shire Population growth. Accessible from: <https://forecast.id.com.au/mitchell>

2020/21 ABS data predictions suggested that there would be 152 additional dwellings built in Beveridge. There have been 260 lots constructed in 2020/21, a difference of +108 lots (+71%). There are now currently 1,700 lots under construction in Beveridge.

Within the Beveridge North West PSP a quarry has been proposed. This proposed quarry and its buffer areas would impact community infrastructure and active open space within both the Beveridge North West and Wallan South PSP.



Lockerbie PSP, a new housing development shares Local Government boundaries with Hume and Whittlesea Councils. The portion in Mitchell Shire is predominately zoned for residential development, with inadequate land provisioned for community infrastructure for an estimated 16,000 future residents. A significant portion of community infrastructure is within neighbouring Council boundaries that may have an access criterion for local residents living within the LGA.

Mitchell Shire Council anticipates that Wallan SA2 will be split into two separate SA2 areas between townships of Wallan and Beveridge, within the decade.

Wandong – Heathcote Junction

Wandong population is included in supply and demand calculations for Wallan SA2 in Section 4.5, Tables 3 to 5. The population growth is projected to stay relatively steady in Wandong, with three and four-year-old population (2021) is forecast to increase by 22% from 84 to 106. There is one stand a long sessional Kindergarten in Wandong which was upgraded in 2021 to deliver additional capacity for three and four year olds.

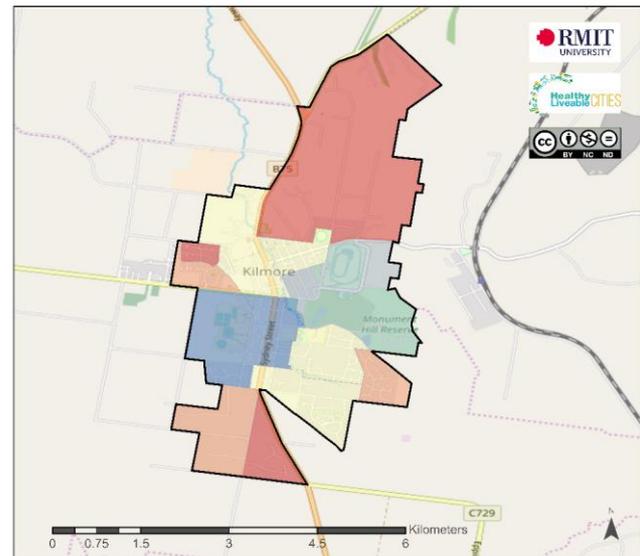
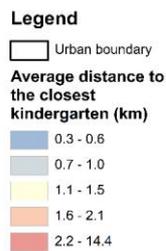
KILMORE SA2

Kilmore

The township of Kilmore is experiencing significant population growth and is expected to grow to 25,000 residents. The development front located in Kilmore is the largest development front in Mitchell outside of the urban growth boundary. Recent sales force data indicates that Kilmore is in front of the population growth projections, with more young families are moving into Kilmore sooner

than previously predicted. Data predictions suggested that there would be 82 additional dwellings in 2020/21, with actual lots constructed 176, a difference of +94 lots (+114%). There are now more than 1,300 lots currently under construction in Kilmore.

The three and four-year-old population will be living in Kilmore is forecast to more than double with from 292 in 2021 to 798 by 2041. Kilmore is currently experiencing a baby boom with the number of births for 2020/21 increasing by 34% alone.



Source: ACECQA 2018

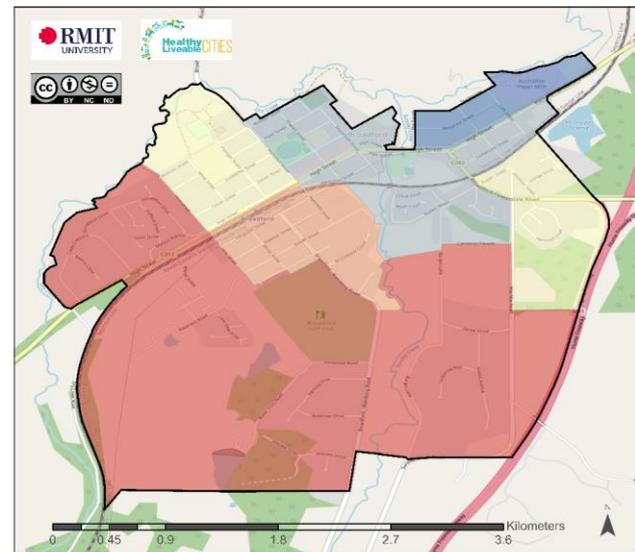
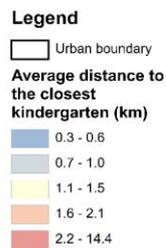
Illustration 2: Walkability in Kilmore, Early Education Centres

Compared to other towns within the Shire, Kilmore is slightly less disadvantaged, however the substantial forecast population growth is anticipated to moderately increase the level of disadvantage in the future. Four of the five centres in Kilmore that provide kindergarten are not Council owned or operated, but Council’s Marie Williams Kindergarten provides the most kindergarten places. Access to early childhood education within Kilmore is reliant on car ownership, with poor walkability across the township.

Neighbourhoods shaded in blue in Illustration 2 are within walking distance to a kindergarten service while neighbourhoods shaded in yellow, orange, yellow and red are over a kilometre and up to several kilometres in distance from an early childhood service.

Broadford

Broadford's current (2021) three and four-year-old population is forecast to increase by 134% from 149 to 348, with the township project to grow to 15,000 residents by 2041. Broadford includes a number of neighbourhoods that are classified as the most disadvantaged quintile compared to other neighbourhoods (SA1s) across Victoria. These residential areas are located across the centre of the town and the northern areas of the railway line. A large proportion of residents living within Broadford must travel distances greater than 1.5km to access early childhood education services provided by kindergartens. Families within Broadford have very limited travel capacity to neighbouring towns due to low car ownership, vast regional distances and limited or nil access to public transport options.



Source: ACECOA 2018

Illustration 3: Walkability in Broadford, Early Education Centres

Mitchell Shire is the Early Years Manager of Mt Piper Kindergarten. Mt Piper is currently the only Council owned land available in Broadford appropriate for expansion of kindergarten capacity. At this stage in development, there are no further opportunities with Broadford for Council to acquire land within the decade to deliver a new community Hub which may include Kindergarten.

Our extensive experience and knowledge of our families in Broadford highlights that the option of traveling outside of the township to access affordable kindergarten is not feasible. While there may be further capacity within the Kilmore SA2, Council considers that children who cannot enrol in kindergarten locally in Broadford are unlikely to attend any kindergarten.

SEYMOUR SA2

Seymour's current (2021) three and four-year-old population is forecast to increase by 61% from 168 to 316, with the township projected to grow to 10,000 residents by 2041. Seymour was identified in the Hume Regional Growth Plan (2014) as a town that has the potential to accommodate significant change and develop into a major employment centre over the next 30 years. The Structure Plan will help identify what types of changes are required to strategically position Seymour in the region over the next 10 – 20 years. It will build on Seymour's existing strengths and address challenges to facilitate positive change. The Structure Plan will manage the future development of the town, meeting the needs of residents, businesses and visitors²⁴.

²⁴ Seymour Structure Plan (2018) accessible here: <https://engagingmitchellshire.com/seymour3660>

Seymour is a highly disadvantaged community. This disadvantage is entrenched, multi-factor and inter-generational. Seymour has SEIFA IRSD of 897, which is substantially below average, and was identified within the *Dropping Off The Edge* report as being one of Victoria's 40 most disadvantaged communities. On a range of measures Seymour is a highly disadvantaged community, with:

- 18% of children are developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains
- A family violence incidence rate of 4,018 per 100,000
- Over a third of school leavers are not finishing year 12
- Almost 8% of all dwellings are social housing
- 16% of people aged 15 to 24 years are disengaged from work or education
- 1 in 5 homes in Seymour have no internet connection
- 7% of people in Seymour require assistance with core activities

There is evidence that children in Seymour are in general more developmentally vulnerable than children in Mitchell Shire as a whole, and more vulnerable than children in Victoria as a whole. The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)²⁵ measures five childhood development indicators before children start school: physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills, and communication skills and general knowledge. Across all five developmental domains, a higher percentage of children surveyed in Seymour were vulnerable compared with children surveyed in Mitchell Shire and Victoria (Table 3).

Table 3: AEDC results for Seymour Community 2018

Geography	# of children	Percentage of children developmentally vulnerable (%)							SEIFA score ‡
		Physical health and wellbeing †	Social competence	Emotional maturity	Language and cognitive skills (school-based)	Communication skills and general knowledge	Vulnerable on one or more domains of the AEDC	Vulnerable on two or more domains of the AEDC	
Victoria	76,245	8.2	8.8	8.1	6.4	7.4	19.9	10.1	N/A
Mitchell community	515	6.5	8.4	8.8	8.6	5.4	20.1	10.4	N/A
Seymour	81	11.5	11.5	12.8	16.7	11.5	26.9	17.9	896

† Results for children with chronic special needs are not included in the results. If there are a certain number of questions not answered by teachers, these children do not contribute to the domain analysis.

Source: 2018 Community results table, AEDC Mitchell community, Victoria, Australian Early Development Census

²⁵ <https://www.aedc.gov.au/>

SEYMOUR REGION SA2

Seymour Region SA2 includes the townships of Pyalong and Rural North East (Puckapunyal, Tooborac and Tallarook). Rural North East excludes the locality of Seymour. These townships are rural population growth is projected to stay relatively steady, with three and four-year-old population (2021) is forecast to increase by 25% from 122 to 145. Most rural areas of the municipality are within a 15 to 20-minute journey of kindergartens.

OTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE EXPANSION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES KINDERGARTEN SERVICE PLANNING

Mitchell Shire Council is well placed to undertake integrated planning of community infrastructure and incorporate lessons learnt from growth LGAs. This strategic and integrated network approach to the planning and delivery of community infrastructure, emphasises that communities need a breadth and depth of social infrastructure and build forms to foster connection, build social cohesion, identity, and foster community resilience.

The early delivery of new kindergarten infrastructure in Mitchell Shire is critical to ensure that existing services aren't reliant on a wait list system to manage capacity issues. In areas that have long-term development plans there will be limited opportunity for Council to facilitate new community infrastructure. For our existing facilities that are landlocked there will be limited opportunity to expand capacity and implementing changes to the timetable to account for additional hours.

There is community expectation that kindergarten services within the municipality provide flexibility and choice for families in timetabling, quality and sustainable group sizes, and culturally and diverse learning experiences for their children. Family preferences, shortage of Bachelor qualified teachers and the resistance of existing educators to upskill, move services or to work longer session hours is a challenge for the municipality.

Rate capping presents a challenging environment for Council to balance the investment for Kindergarten infrastructure and broader Council priorities identified in Mitchell Shires Community Vision 2050. Mitchell Shire Council will actively work towards supporting a balance of quality educational outcomes for children living in Mitchell, supporting the complex needs of our community, and the implementation of larger group sizes. Consideration will also be given to integrated service delivery, team development, and manageable caseloads for teaching staff.

NEXT STEPS

With exponential growth occurring at a faster rate and across multiple development fronts in the Shire, Council cannot predict the rate and timing of growth and/or the priorities for emerging communities across the municipality over multiple years. As such, it is Mitchell Shire Council and DET will review the KISP with the release of Census data. Council foresees an annual review from 2023 with the exponential growth in the corridors within the municipality, noting that the timing of future reviews will be formally confirmed at the time of the first review in 2023.

4. FUNDED KINDERGARTEN ENROLMENT ESTIMATES BETWEEN 2021-29 FOR SHIRE OF MITCHELL

4.1 PURPOSE

As Three-Year-Old Kindergarten is rolled-out and Victoria's population grows, demand for both Three and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten places will increase significantly. While additional capacity will be needed to meet this demand, this will vary across the State and over time, due to differences in the capacity of existing services, growth trends and sector composition.

To identify where, when and how many additional kindergarten places are expected over the roll-out in Shire of Mitchell, Mitchell Shire Council and the Department have developed:

1. A summary of the current provision of kindergarten within the LGA (**Section 4.3**).
2. An approach to optimising the utilisation of existing services and infrastructure through 'change management' strategies that Mitchell Shire Council and the Department will support to help meet additional demand in the LGA (**Section 4.4**).
3. An estimate of the Three and Four-Year-Old kindergarten places that cannot be met through existing services for the 2021-29 period, taking into account the additional demand that can be accommodated by optimising utilisation of existing services and infrastructure through point 2, above (**Section 4.5**).

Local Government and providers can use these published estimates to inform reform implementation activities such as service planning, kindergarten program expansion, infrastructure investments and Building Blocks funding applications in alignment with future demand over the 10-year roll-out.

4.2 METHODOLOGY

The estimated Three and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten places used in the following sections have been agreed between Mitchell Shire Council and the Department, and were informed by:

- Estimates developed by the Department which draw on a range of inputs, including population forecasts, current enrolments and results from the Kindergarten Capacity Assessment Program (KCAP), conducted in 2019.
- The estimated capacity of new services that are planned to open in the LGA (Section 2)
- Local knowledge and context provided by the Local Government (Section 3) that explains particular issues and trends in their area.
- The approach to optimising utilisation of existing services in the LGA (Section 4.4), and
- Other sources, such as modelling undertaken by Local Governments and local data.

The KISP measures a service's capacity to deliver funded kindergarten in terms of the number of children it could enrol in Three and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten. The number of funded kindergarten places is different from a service's licensed or approved places, which count the number of children permitted to attend the service at any one time under the license. Many services can enrol more children in their funded kindergarten program(s) than they have licensed places for because they can run more than one kindergarten program per week. Kindergarten places are therefore a more accurate measure of service kindergarten capacity than licensed places.

Three-Year-Old Kindergarten places have been presented as 15-hour places so they can be easily compared to Four-Year-Old Kindergarten places. Moreover, when Three-Year-Old Kindergarten is fully rolled-out in 2029, every three-year-old child will have access to 15-hours of kindergarten.

From 2023 all providers will have flexibility to determine how many hours of funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten they deliver per week, with a minimum of five hours and a maximum of 15-hours funded pro-rata. It is expected that hours offered will vary. Given this variation, it is important to be aware that during the transition to all three-year-old children receiving 15-hours of funded kindergarten per week in 2029, the 15-hour places presented in this report may represent multiple three-year-old places that individually receive less than 15-hours of kindergarten per week.

These estimates have been developed at an LGA and community level to show the overall forecast and variation within an area. The KISP defines community at the Statistical Area Level 2, which is medium-sized areas which represent a community that interacts socially and economically, with a population range of 3,000 to 25,000 people, and an average population of about 10,000 people.

4.3 SUMMARY OF CURRENT KINDERGARTEN PROVISION

The figures below provide a summary of current kindergarten provision within the LGA and provide relevant context for the estimates of demand for funded kindergarten places included in Section 4.5. The data included in this section are largely drawn from:

- The Kindergarten Capacity Assessment Program (KCAP), collected between June and October 2019.
- The Department's Kindergarten Information Management System (KIMS), as at 2019.
- The Department's Quality and Regulatory Division (QARD) monitoring data, as at 2019.
- The National Quality Agenda IT System (NQAITS), as at March 2021.
- The Victorian Child and Adolescent Monitoring System (VCAMS), as at 2018.

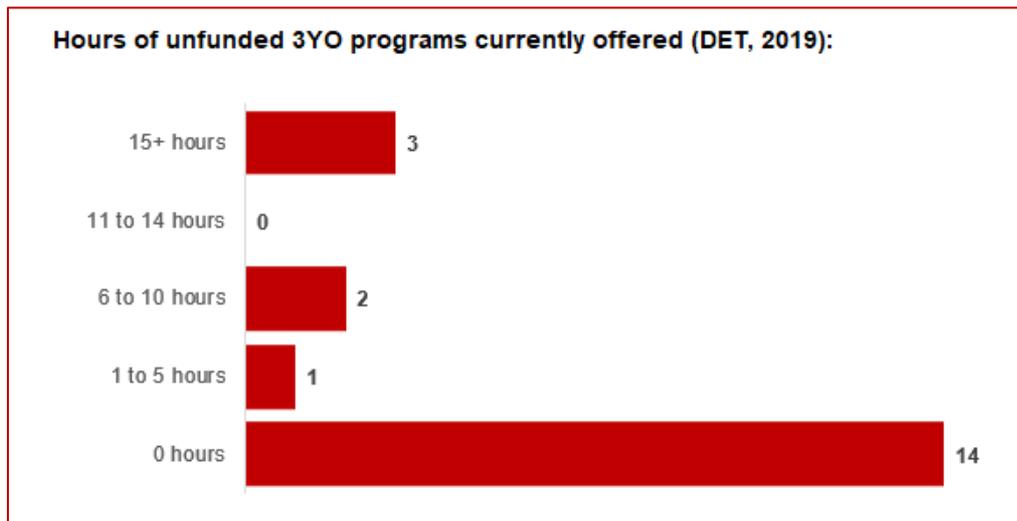
Please note that, because these sources were collected at different points, this may result in slightly different totals appearing in the below data.

Number of services by service type (NQAITS, 2021)

Stand-alone kindergartens	11
Long day care centres	12

Percentage of services by management type, LGA level (NQAITS, 2021)	
Type	Percentage
Local Government	30%
Private not for profit	26%
Private for profit	43%
Other	0%

Current kindergarten offering	
Four-Year-Old Kindergarten participation rate (VCAMS, 2018):	98%
Number of services that offer a funded kindergarten program (DET, 2019):	20
Number of services that offer an unfunded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program (DET, 2019):	6



4.4 APPROACH TO OPTIMISING THE USE OF EXISTING SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Change management strategies to optimise existing services and infrastructure

Children can often be accommodated through existing spare places and by services ‘unlocking’ unused capacity. As the experience of providers in the 2020 Three-Year-Old Kindergarten roll-out LGAs shows, while the optimisation of existing services can be challenging, it is highly time- and cost-effective compared to building new capacity through infrastructure projects. It also helps target infrastructure investment to the places that need it most and avoids over-supplying the local market.

Mitchell Shire Council and the Department will support providers and services to maximise their kindergarten places through the following change management activities and practices:

- Increasing the capacity of any Local Government operated services by:
 - Running additional programs.
 - Using different timetables, including running 7.5-hour days.
 - Changing the delivery model, such as introducing rotational models or mixed-age groups.
 - Having degree-qualified kindergarten teachers leading integrated kindergarten programs in long day care settings.
- Encouraging and supporting other providers and services in the LGA to undertake change management.

Mitchell Shire Council and the Department have estimated how many Three and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten places can be accommodated through existing services in the LGA (**Table 1**). Both parties are committed to helping providers and services offer these kindergarten places before progressing to funded infrastructure solutions to meet demand. This commitment is reflected in the LGA and community level estimates below (**Table 2** onwards), which assume that demand will be met first through existing services and second through additional infrastructure. Note that in some cases the number of kindergarten places that can be offered through existing services may exceed demand for kindergarten places.

Table 1: Total estimated funded kindergarten places that can be offered by optimising existing services and infrastructure across the LGA, between 2021-29 (presented in 15-hour equivalent places)

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Estimated existing supply of kindergarten places*	1701	1802	1802	1802	1802	1802	1802	1802	1802

*This may be higher than current three and four-year-old enrolments as it includes any spare places that are currently available or could be generated by making some minor adjustments to programming approaches.

4.5 AGREED ESTIMATES OF DEMAND FOR FUNDED KINDERGARTEN PLACES THAT CANNOT BE MET THROUGH EXISTING SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The below estimates (**Table 2** onwards) have been developed by Mitchell Shire Council and the Department to illustrate the estimated:

1. Total number of Three and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten places expected over the roll-out period.
2. Three and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten places that cannot be accommodated by optimising existing services and infrastructure over the roll-out period.

These estimates have been developed to reflect that the increase in demand for Three-Year-Old Kindergarten places will be gradual.

In estimating how many Three and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten places cannot be accommodated by existing services and infrastructure, Mitchell Shire Council and the Department have taken into account any new places that will be made available through planned expansions of existing services or new services, into estimates of existing supply, where this information is available. This may include Local Government owned services being developed and planned Kindergartens on School Sites.

These estimates do not, however, estimate how and when the broader sector will expand to meet the additional demand for kindergarten places that are estimated over the roll-out period.

Infrastructure need in the LGA and its local communities is indicated by the bottom rows of the tables in this section (**Table 2** onwards): 'Total kindergarten places that cannot be accommodated by existing services'. For example, if the number of kindergarten places for the LGA or a community is above zero in this row, it means that the area is estimated to need additional infrastructure (noting that further optimisation which avoids the need for additional infrastructure may be possible). Any type of provider – Local Government, not-for-profit or for-profit – can build this additional infrastructure. If this row shows all zeros, it means that there is no estimated need for additional infrastructure in the area.

Local Government and not-for-profit kindergarten providers must refer to the estimates in this section when applying through the Building Blocks Capacity Building Grants stream for Government funding. Under this stream, projects must be in a community where there is infrastructure need as shown in the community's table of estimated demand for kindergarten places (i.e. there are numbers in the bottom row above zero). Projects in LGAs or communities where demand can be met through existing services (i.e. the bottom row shows all zeros) are not eligible for funding under this stream.

LGA estimates

Table 2: Total estimated three and four-year-old kindergarten places between 2021-29 (presented in 15-hour equivalent places)

LGA level estimates	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Total estimated demand for kindergarten places (three and four-year-old children)	729	971	1179	1393	1620	1954	2222	2513	2868
Total kindergarten places that cannot be accommodated by existing services	0	0	0	0	42	292	514	759	1106

Community estimates

Table 3-6: Total estimated three and four-year-old kindergarten places between 2021-29 (presented in 15-hour equivalent places)

Kilmore - Broadford estimates	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Total estimated demand for kindergarten places (three and four-year-old children)	220	277	322	362	399	453	491	533	585
Total kindergarten places that cannot be accommodated by existing services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	54

Seymour estimates	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Total estimated demand for kindergarten places (three and four-year-old children)	95	118	136	150	162	181	192	202	214
Total kindergarten places that cannot be accommodated by existing services	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	20	32

Seymour Region estimates	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Total estimated demand for kindergarten places (three and four-year-old children)	42	57	66	72	78	89	95	102	110
Total kindergarten places that cannot be accommodated by existing services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Wallan estimates	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Total estimated demand for kindergarten places (three and four-year-old children)	371	519	657	809	981	1231	1443	1676	1960
Total kindergarten places that cannot be accommodated by existing services	0	0	0	0	42	292	504	738	1021

5. AUTHORISATION

The Area Executive Director, Goulburn Area of the Department of Education and Training and the Chief Executive of Mitchell Shire Council endorse this Kindergarten Services and Infrastructure Plan (KISP) for Shire of Mitchell by signing on12/04.. / ..2022.

This KISP is not intended to create legal relations or constitute a legally binding contractual agreement between the parties. The parties may review this KISP in 2024 to publish a new version that will replace the previous version.

Signed for and on behalf and with the authority of Mitchell Shire Council



.....
Signature



.....
Witness Signature

Name: **Brett Luxford**

Title: **CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

Address: 113 High Street, Broadford 3658

Signed by Area Executive Director, Goulburn Area, Department of Education and Training



.....
Signature



.....
Witness Signature

Name: Scott Watson

Title: Acting Area Executive Director - Goulburn

Address: 180 High Street, Shepparton 3630