



Horsham Rural City
Council urban rural balance



Horsham & District Early Years Plan

2014-2017

DRAFT

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Image on front cover by Claire aged seven. Sun, rainbows and family make her happy.

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Figure 1: Image by Jade aged six. Making new friends makes her happy.

1.0 Mayor's Comment



On behalf of Horsham Rural City Council, I am pleased to endorse the Municipal Early Years Plan (MEYP) as the strategic framework that will guide Council and the broader community to achieve even better outcomes for our children, our families and our community. This document has been a collaborative effort of Council staff and various agencies that work with children and families and is an excellent example of local planning. The relationship that has been developed during the course of the plan's development is certain to continue beyond the life of the plan and will have significant ongoing benefits in terms of children's health and wellbeing across the entire municipality and beyond. Each of the recommendations contained within the plan have been specifically devised to deal with local issues and opportunities. And each of these recommendations has been specifically formulated to make a difference.

We know that the experience and development of children in the early years has a critical impact on a child's life chances with significant social and economic cost to those who get left behind. We also know that early years services need to be configured in a way that maximizes access by parents of young children so that they form part of the pathway for early years learning and offer new opportunities for parents to engage with their local community and access a broader set of opportunities. As a Council, we believe that children and their families living in Horsham & District, and those who fall within our regional catchment, deserve the same access to quality services as their counterparts experience in metropolitan areas.

The MEYP focuses very much on providing quality services, programs and facilities which are more readily accessible to local families. It also focuses on the development of new infrastructure to support the integration of early years services and programs in the community. This is a major shift away from previous modes of operation, but the benefits of such a model can be significant.

Whilst this plan has been developed at a time of rapid change and in a context where there is likely to be ongoing fiscal constraints, it is important that this plan continues to build positive momentum for change. We believe that it has identified innovative practices and reform opportunities capable of providing positive and enduring outcomes for young people and their families in Horsham & District. To ensure that the MEYP meets the needs of the community, we will also commit to an ongoing process of monitoring and evaluation.

Cr David Grimble

Mayor

2.0 Executive Summary

Horsham Rural City Council and its partners are committed to strengthening and empowering early years providers and the local community so that collectively they are able to provide the best possible outcomes for children and families living in Horsham & District.

Early years services, programs and facilities typically consist of:

- Long day care
- Occasional care
- Family day care
- Kindergarten
- Primary school
- Outside school hours care
- Maternal and Child Health service
- Playgroup
- Parenting groups / classes / courses
- Support groups
- Early childhood intervention services
- Cultural activities, e.g. toy library, story time at the library
- Physical activities, e.g. learn to swim, modified sports, etc
- Playgrounds

Both Council and its partners recognise just how important investment in the early years is in terms of maximising children's health, social and emotional wellbeing, as well as their intellectual development. By investing in early years and addressing disadvantage, it is possible to break the cycle of disadvantage and end generations of disengagement for families and whole communities.

The Horsham Early Years Network, which has been established to help develop the Municipal Early Years Plan (MEYP), has identified a new model for delivery of early years services, programs and facilities locally. Instead of focusing on each individual service or agency providing their own services, programs or facilities in relative isolation from others, the new approach focuses on a holistic, collaborative and integrated early years model whereby agencies work in genuine partnership with one another, focusing specifically on the most effective way to collectively meet the needs of children and families. Underpinning this new model of integrated service delivery are the values of trust, respect, diversity, equity and excellence and the recognition that it takes a whole of community approach in order to achieve the best outcomes.

This new model will focus primarily on:

- increasing connections between families and agencies;
- increasing connections between agencies;
- improving the quality of service provision, programs and early years facilities;
- improving children's and families timely access to services, programs and facilities;
- improving children's and families participation in services, programs and facilities;
- increasing the skills and capacity of families
- increasing the skills of early years professionals; and
- improving opportunities for children and their families.

Whilst ensuring that all children regardless of their background or socio economic status have access to quality early years services, programs and facilities, this Municipal Early Years Plan will also have a specific focus on working with the most vulnerable families. Data released by Centre for Community Child Health (2012)¹ indicates that there are a higher percentage of developmentally vulnerable children living in Horsham than for Victoria as a percentage. These children are particularly vulnerable in terms of social competence, communication skills, general knowledge and emotional maturity. Local research undertaken as part of the development of the MEYP indicate that there is demand for additional places in early years programs such as long day care, occasional care and family day care. This research also indicated that many families who require early childhood intervention services need to travel to Ballarat or Melbourne due to limited accessibility locally. Inability to access places in early childhood services and the need to travel to other locations for services all have an impact on how soon children and families are able to get the type of support they need to thrive and flourish. Additional issues such as lack of transport, cost of services, lack of information about services and programs that exist, inflexible hours, cultural appropriateness of services all impact on the ability of families, particularly vulnerable families, to access early years services and programs in Horsham and District.

One of the key outcomes of the Municipal Early Years Plan is the progressive development of three early years centres throughout Horsham over the next 10 to 15 years. The first of these centres is to be located in Horsham North, the second in Horsham West and the third in Horsham South. The aim of these centres is to provide children and their families with an accessible, friendly and seamless 'one stop shop' where they are able to access a broad range of early years services, which may include long day child care, occasional care, kindergarten, Maternal and Child Health services, playgroup and other health and wellbeing related services such as early childhood intervention services, parenting classes, etc. The intention of these centres is not to have a range of services simply co-located with one another, but instead, to have them working together in an integrated manner whereby services have a shared philosophy and vision; has a focus on shared outcomes; and may pool funding; all of which results in families receiving support for all of their needs in a cohesive fashion. There will be some challenges in terms of implementing this new model, such as a strong emotional attachment of some families to

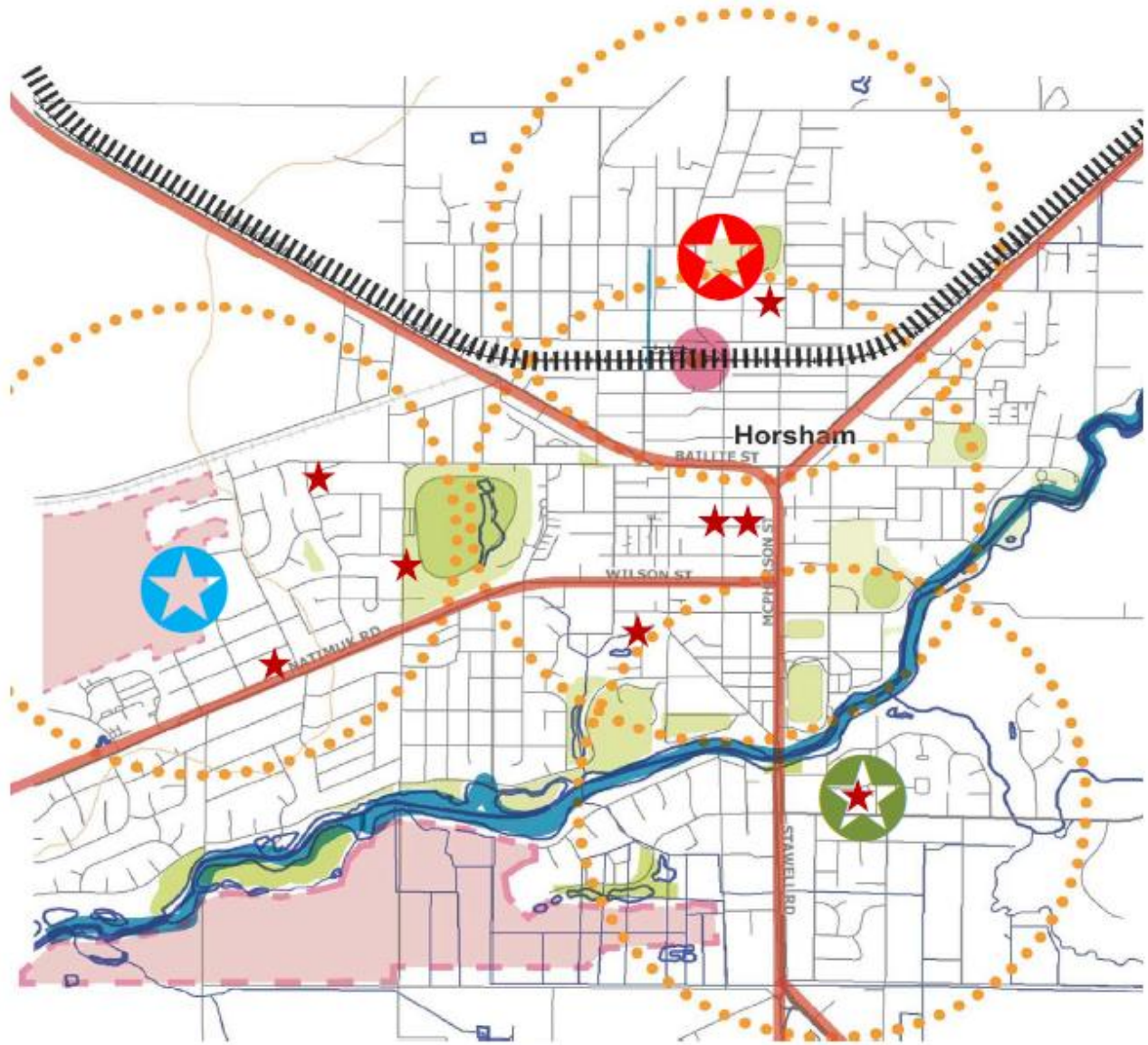
¹ Centre for Community Child Health (2012) Australian Early Development Index Community Profile 2012 – Horsham, Victoria

stand alone kindergartens, however, the benefits of an integrated system are likely to provide major short and long term benefits to the community. Horsham Rural City Council will take a key leadership role in the development of these hubs and in the transition from one service delivery model to another.

Preliminary planning has been undertaken for the Early Years centre in Horsham North. This planning has enabled infrastructure requirements to be identified and prioritised. It has also allowed the development of a plan for staging of the centres in Horsham west and south as population levels grow and resources become available. The following diagram shows the location of existing kindergartens and childcare centres, and also identifies possible locations for integrated children's hubs to be developed in Horsham over the next ten plus years. The first of these hubs has been identified for Horsham North in the next 0-5 years; the second hub in Horsham West in the next 5-10 years; and the third in Horsham South in the next 10+ years.



Figure 2: Image by Asha aged seven. Playing with her dog in the park makes her happy.



Other key outcomes of the Municipal Early Years Plan are grouped under four key themes:

1. Connection and Collaboration
 - a. Collaborative governance
 - b. Linking services
 - c. Single point of entry and information.
2. Quality of Service
 - a. Improved use of technology
 - b. Building capacity in professionals
 - c. Improve recruitment and retention of staff
 - d. Improve early childhood outcomes and school readiness.
3. Timely Access to, and Participation in, Services
 - a. Co-ordinate transport with service provision
 - b. Ensure that facilities are located to enable access to all members of the community
 - c. Reduce the need for families to travel outside the district to access services
 - d. Increase availability of childcare
 - e. Provide inclusive environments for children and families.
4. Improved Opportunities for Families and Children
 - a. Provide a range of activities and opportunities for children
 - b. Provide information to maximise children's physical health
 - c. Encourage children's participation in planning.

As a key provider of early years services, programs and facilities in the local area, Horsham Rural City Council will drive the implementation of the Municipal Early Years Plan.

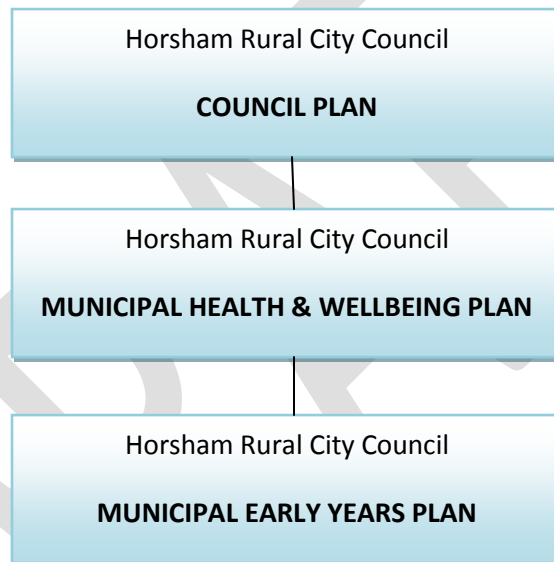


Figure 3: Image by Madison aged four. Drawing fish makes her happy.

3.0 Introduction

Horsham Rural City Council has prepared this Municipal Early Years Plan, in partnership with other community-based agencies and government departments, to provide a strategic direction in relation to the delivery of early years facility planning, service and program delivery and urban planning in Horsham & District over the next 10 -15 years. This plan details how local early years agencies will work together and with children and families to build upon and improve outcomes related to health, social and emotional wellbeing, as well as intellectual development.

The Municipal Early Years Plan is part of the local government planning process, as demonstrated in the diagram below:



In order to develop this plan, the project team, which comprised of Brand Architects, communityvibe and Williams Ross Architects undertook:

- a review of Horsham Rural City Council’s previous MEYP
- a review of existing early years services (including programs, services and facilities) to determine issues, capacity, condition, gaps, duplications and opportunities
- a demographic review to understand the existing and future make up of the Horsham & District community
- a review of relevant local, state and federal policies and documents to understand the context in which early years is being delivered and some of the potential directives that may impact on the future provision of early years in Horsham & District

The project team also undertook extensive community consultation which involved:

- a survey of existing and future users of early years services
- a survey of early years service providers
- key stakeholder interviews in person and via telephone
- listening post at Horsham Plaza Shopping Centre
- group consultations with Black Cockatoos Playgroup (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander play group) and ConnectEd young parent's group
- a drawing exercise with childcare, kinder and primary school aged children
- a visit to other integrated early years services in Melbourne.

To assist with the development of the plan, various local agencies who work with children and their families were invited to attend four workshops. Towards the end of the planning process, this group formed into the Horsham Early Years Network, and agreed to continue to work together to achieve the actions identified in the MEYP. Members of the Network intend to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which outlines their roles and responsibilities. A key outcome of the workshop series was much greater ongoing communication between service agencies. It is envisaged that a number of these service agencies will work collaboratively at, or at least have an interest in, some or all of the three early years hubs to be developed.



Figure 4: Image by Xavier aged eight. Football, family, friends and basketball make him happy.

4.0 A vision for our children

In order to provide the best outcomes for children, families and communities, there are many factors which need to be taken into consideration. This section describes some of the current thinking around children's rights, impacts on health, the rationale for investing in early years' services and the whole of community approach that is required to make a difference to the lives of children and their families.

4.1 Children's rights

The United Nations (UN) Convention of the Rights of the Child articulates 54 different articles which outline the rights of the child so that they are protected and cared for, able to grow and develop and able to learn and have fun. The UN Rights of the Child are guided by four key principles:

1. Every child, everywhere: children should neither benefit nor suffer because of their race, colour, gender, language, religion, national, social or ethnic origin, or because of any political or other opinion; because of their caste, property or birth status; or because they are disabled.
2. The best interests of the child: laws and actions affecting children should put their best interests first and benefit them in the best possible way.
3. Survival, development and protection: the authorities in each country must protect children and help ensure their full development — physically, spiritually, morally and socially.
4. A voice: children have a right to have their say in decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account."

4.2 Child Friendly Cities

In order to realise the Rights of the Child at the local level, UNICEF has developed a framework which describes the rights of every young citizen in his or her community. These rights include the ability to:

- Influence decisions about their city, town or area
- Express their opinion on the type of city, town or area that they want
- Participate in family, community and social life
- Receive basic services such as health care and education
- Drink safe water and have access to proper sanitation
- Be protected from exploitation, violence and abuse.

4.3 Impacts on children's health and wellbeing

Council and its partners also recognise that improvement in early years outcomes is intrinsically linked to the World Health Organisation's Social Determinants of Health. These determinants recognise that an individual or a family alone is not entirely responsible for their health and wellbeing, but rather, there are environmental, social and political factors which play a part too. These factors include:

- Early childhood development
- Globalisation
- Health systems
- Measurement and evidence
- Urbanisation
- Employment conditions
- Social exclusion
- Priority public health conditions
- Women and gender equity

A similar model, known as the 'Environments for Health' framework, identifies the following environments as having an effect on people's health and wellbeing:

- Economic environment
- Social environment
- Natural environment
- Built environment

Hence any early years initiatives developed need to take into consideration the broader social, economic and political environment in which we live.

4.4 Why it is important to invest in the early years

By investing in early years services, Local Government and the broader community can have a major impact on a child's future health, wellbeing and capacity to fully participate in the community:

"The past decade has seen an explosive growth in the scientific understanding of early childhood development. With overwhelming evidence that life chances are heavily influenced by what happens in the first years of life. The rapid pace of physical and particularly brain development in the early years creates both opportunity and risk".²

The plan also recognised the significant social and economic benefits which can be achieved through investing in the early years:

"There is growing evidence that economic investment in early childhood programmes has a demonstrably positive cost benefit outcome for the community. There are also significant social benefits of early intervention and investment in early childhood services. They include improved educational achievement, improved material circumstances, improved employment outcomes,

² Early Years Strategic Plan Improving Outcomes for all Victorian Children 2014 to 2020, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Melbourne March 2014

improved mental and overall health, improved parenting outcomes, reduced criminality, reduction in child abuse and neglect.”³

4.5 A whole of community approach to early years

Despite having a significant role, Horsham Rural City Council alone cannot be responsible for early years services, programs and facilities in the local area. There are many other local agencies which also have a role in service delivery, providing programs or in the development of public or private facilities. In order to achieve maximum effectiveness and the best results possible, these organisations need to work in an integrated manner. The Victorian Child and Adolescent Outcomes Framework⁴ describes the role of the family, community and society all working together in terms of helping a child develop to their fullest capacity. It specifically states that children need:

- a confident, nurturing and capable family
- access to good health services
- access to good educational and community support services,
- to live in a society that enables these to occur and recognises the importance of investing in children’s futures.

This following diagram recognises that families are a primary and important social structure, central to the healthy raising of children. It is critical that effective support is provided to families in the children’s early years particularly in periods of risk or vulnerability.

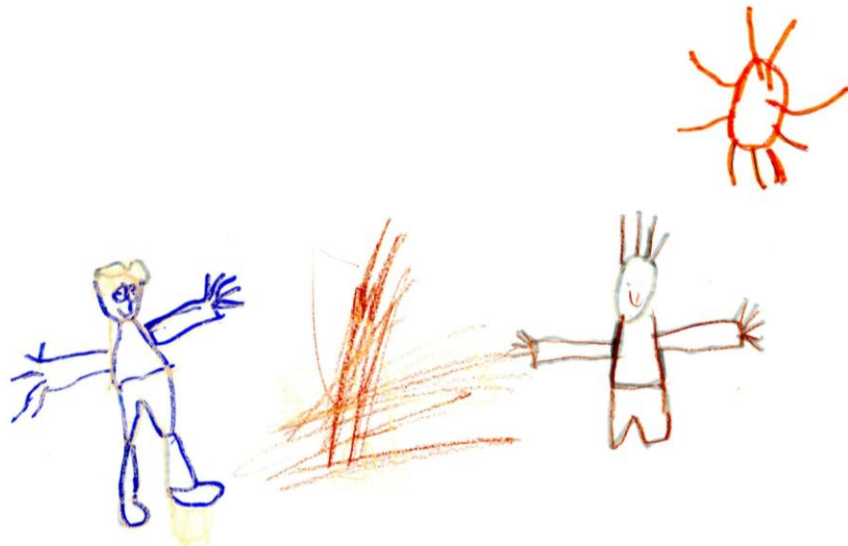


Figure 5: Image by Joel aged seven. Seeing his nanny makes him happy.

³ Acting Early Changing Lives, How Prevention and Early Action Saves Money and Improves Wellbeing, written for the Benevolence Society by the Centre for Community Child Health at The Murdoch Children’s Research Institute and the Royal Children’s Hospital Melbourne 2013

⁴ The Municipal Early Years Planning Framework and Practical Resource Guide, May 2011

Figure 1: The Victorian Child and Adolescent Outcomes Framework



The centrality of the immediate family and household in a child’s early years and their support is demonstrated by the Early Childhood Ecological Model in the following image:

⁵ The Municipal Early Years Planning Framework and Practical Resource Guide, May 2011



6

The importance of the family in the development of a child makes it imperative that early childhood services are delivered in a way that enables direct access to a diverse range of service providers by that family. This can be best achieved through an integrated service delivery. An integrated service delivery requires the effective co-operation and collaboration of multiple service providers working as a single team to achieve the best outcomes for the children and their families.

⁶ Municipal Early Years Planning Framework and Practical Resource Guide, produced by the Municipal Association of Victoria, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development – published by the Municipal Association of Victoria 2011

4.6 Our vision, mission and key themes

Based on feedback from the literature review and our consultation, we have developed the following vision, mission and key themes to help guide Horsham Rural City Council's MEYP:



Figure 6: Image by Christian aged six. His family makes him happy.

5.0 Policy Context

In order to understand the context in which early years services, programs and facilities are delivered and developed, a review of relevant local, state and national policies and literature has been undertaken.

The full literature review is available in the Appendix. A summary follows:

Local Context

At the local level, the following documents were reviewed:

- Horsham Rural City Council Plan (2014-2018)
- Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan (2013-2017)
- Draft Municipal Early Years Plan (2012)
- Horsham North Urban Design Framework (2013)
- Wimmera Southern Mallee Region Strategic Plan Summary (2012)
- Horsham District Kindergarten Association (HDKA) Strategic Plan (2014 – 2017)
- Delkaia Aboriginal Best Start Program

The Horsham North's Urban Design Framework highlights the need for investment in physical and social infrastructure in Horsham North, aiming to improve the image and perception of Horsham North, improving health and wellbeing through services, facilities and recreation opportunities.

Best Start aims to improve the health, development, learning and wellbeing of all Victorian children (0-8 years). It supports communities, parents and service providers to improve universal early years services so they are responsive to local needs. It has a strong emphasis on prevention and early childhood intervention. Delkia is the Aboriginal Best Start Program. The Horsham Best Start Program has the identified two objectives in their action plan: to improve literacy and numeracy in young children; and to improve parental education and support.

The HRCC Municipal Early Years Draft Plan identified its mission as: "a place with happy, healthy children and families." It includes an action plan with four priority areas, these are:

- Creating a quality service
- Providing safe environments
- Building collaborative partnerships
- Advocating for children and families.

The HDKA Policies states its purpose as: "to facilitate the effective and efficient operation of the Horsham and District kindergartens and other affiliated early childhood services and programs."

The Wimmera Southern Mallee Region Strategic Plan identifies 14 Strategic Directions. These are grouped under the following headings:

- A competitive and innovative economy
- A healthy and resilient environment
- Community wellbeing
- Regional settlements and land use planning.

State and National Context

From a State and National perspective, the policy context is established by the following documents:

- Municipal Early Years Planning Framework and Practical Resource Guide, The Municipal Association of Victoria, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, published by the Municipal Association of Victoria (2011)
- Acting Early Changing Lives How Prevention and Early Action Saves Money and Improves Wellbeing, Benevolence Society (2013)
- Early Years Strategic Plan Improving Outcomes for all Victorian Children (2014 to 2020)
- Evaluation of Victorian Children’s Centres (2010)
- The framework to support the establishment and operation of children’s centres, every child every opportunity, The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Murdoch Children’s Research Institute and The Royal Children’s Hospital, (2010)
- Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework for all Children from Birth to 8 Years, The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2011)
- Belonging, Being and Becoming the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, The Australian Government Department of Education and Employment and Workplace Relations (2009).

The principal messages emerging from all of these documents are:

- the importance of investment in early years of life to ensure the best outcome for a child
- focused and intense support to families in times of need
- a collaborative service delivery model
- ongoing professional development
- consultative and inclusive approach to service development.

Summary

Collectively the local, state and national policies and documents identify the following critical elements in the effective delivery of programs and services for families with children from birth to 8 years of age:

- The importance of the early years of a child’s life for enabling optimal learning, development and wellbeing.
- The need to focus on improving outcomes for vulnerable children and families by working with the family.
- The acknowledgement of unique contributions and needs of children and families from diverse backgrounds.

- The need to work collaboratively with families and professionals to promote responsive service provision.
- The need to ensure issues of access, quality, equity and inclusivity are adequately addressed.
- The importance of promoting strong and cohesive communities.
- Recognition that local councils must have a commitment to community and stakeholder consultation to identify and meet needs, aspirations and priorities of children, families and community.



Figure 7: Image by Camellia aged eight. Playing footy with her dad at the park makes her happy.

6.0 Demographics

Demographic data provides information which can be used by organisations to understand the current make-up of the community. Potential markets can be determined by examining the number of people in specific age groups. Other details such as household income may help decision making in terms of setting fees and languages spoken at home may indicate a need to have information translated into other languages for example.

A brief summary of the demographic make-up of the Rural City of Horsham follows⁷.

Population and Age

Horsham Rural City comprises 19,279 people – 9,410 males and 9,869 females. The median age is 40 (compared with a median age of 37 for both Victoria and Australia). The population of Horsham is expected to grow to 22,780 by 2031⁸.

There are 5,198 families in Horsham, with an average of 1.9 children. Compared with Victorian figures, Horsham has a higher percentage of people aged between zero and nineteen years and 50 to 85 years and older. It has a significantly lower percentage of people aged 20-34, and a somewhat lower percentage of adults aged 20-54. Those aged 15-19 comprise the greatest percentage of the population in Horsham, at 7.0% compared with 6.5% of the total population of Victoria.

Children in Horsham

In 2011, there were 290 children from the Rural City of Horsham registered as a pre-schooler. 1,134 children were enrolled in government primary schools, and a further 247 in Catholic primary schools and 218 in other non-government primary schools.

The number of children expected to live in the Rural City of Horsham over the next 17 years is likely to increase in number, but decrease as a percentage of the whole population. The following table indicates the approximate number of young people likely to be living in Horsham from 2011 to 2031:

Age group	2011	2016	2021	2026	2031
0-4	1,272	1,220	1,289	1,336	1,350
5-14	2,495	2,570	2,616	2,643	2,767

⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2011 QuickStats. Horsham (SSC). Website: http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2011/quickstat/UCL213006?opendocument&navpos=220 (Viewed 21 May 2014)

⁸ Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure. Victoria in Future. Website: http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/229267/Horsham-One-Page-Profile-VIF2014.pdf (Viewed 4 June 2014)

In terms of early years services, particularly childcare, kinder and family day care, by 2031, there is likely to be an additional 78 children between 0-4 years of age (based on the 2011 figure of 1,272 children in this age bracket and the 2031 estimate of 1,350). Assuming that approximately one fifth of this age group will be four years of age, this equates to an additional 16 children to cater for in four year old kindergarten (assuming 100% attendance).

In terms of childcare, the Australian Bureau of Statistics⁹ reports that 22% of children under two years of age and 54% of two and three year olds attend formal care. Approximately 40% of four year olds and around 20% of five year olds attend formal care. Of the children who attend formal care (aged 0-12 years of age), 40% of them attended for less than 10 hours per week, whilst 9% attended for 35 hours or more. Greatest demand in Australia for additional formal care is in the area of long day care (48%) and before or after school care (34%).

The following table shows the percentage of children who receive formal care in Australia, according to different age categories¹⁰, with the estimated number of children from Horsham Rural City transposed against these percentages in brackets to give an indication of the existing market:

Formal care type	Under 1	1 year olds	2 year olds	3 year olds	4 year olds	5 year olds	6-8 year olds	TOTAL
Total number of children in HRC in 2011	248	242	262	239	272	257	705	2,225
Long day care	6.6% (16)	30.1 (73)	46.1 (121)	45.8 (109)	32.1 (87)	6.9 (18)	1.0 (7)	431
Occasional care	0.0% (0)	1.7 (4)	2.5 (7)	1.9 (5)	1.2 (3)	0.0 (0)	0.1 (1)	20
Family day care	1.0% (2)	4.7 (11)	8.0 (21)	5.2 (12)	4.3 (12)	1.6 (4)	0.7 (5)	67
Outside school hours care	0.0% (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	1.8 (5)	13.7 (35)	17.0 (120)	160
TOTAL	18	88	149	126	107	57	133	678

According to the 2011 Census¹¹, the Haven community is predominantly made up of adults between 40-49 years of age (229) and young people from 10-19 years of age (217). There were 92 children aged 0-4 living in the Haven region and 94 5-9 year olds (186 children).

⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics 4402.0 – Childhood Education and Care, Australia, June 2011. Website: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Products/4402.0~June+2011~Main+Features~Main+features?OpenDocument> (viewed 13 August 2014)

¹⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics 4402.0 – Childhood Education and Care, Australia, June 2011. Website: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Products/4402.0~June+2011~Main+Features~Main+features?OpenDocument> (viewed 13 August 2014)

Based on the current population of children in Horsham Rural City, it is possible to estimate the number of current users of each type of formal care offered through early years programs – as indicated in the brackets in the table above. However, there will be variances according to a range of factors including local employment opportunities, hours of employment, availability of formal care places, availability of informal care, perceived quality of care, cost, personal beliefs and cultural practices. It is also possible to provide a rough estimate of future use of such services, given that the population in this age group is expected to increase by almost 7%, although this estimation would need to be used with caution and take into consideration the variable described above. Under this scenario, there may be an additional 30 children requiring long day care (for varying hours); one extra occasional care place required; five additional family day care places; and 11 additional before or after school care places needed.



Figure 8: Image by Angela aged four. Roses and flowers make her happy.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 1.7% of the population compared with 0.7% for Victoria and 2.5% for Australia. Services in Horsham therefore need to be culturally appropriate and designed in such a way as to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and their families.

Birthplace and Languages Spoken

The majority of residents were born in Australia (89.5% compared with the national figure of 69.8% and a state figure of 68.6%), with a further 1.2% of residents born in England, 0.5% born in New Zealand, 0.4% born in India, 0.4% born in Italy and 0.4% born in Netherlands. The remaining 7.6% of residents were born in other countries.

¹¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2001) Census Quickstats. Haven SSC.
http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2011/quickstat/SSC20601?opendocument&navpos=220 (viewed 27 August 2014)

However, the arrival of family, humanitarian and skilled migrants to the Wimmera area in recent years¹² may have an impact on service provision in terms of interpreters and an understanding by workers of cultural issues. Services need to be culturally appropriate and inclusive too. Key countries of origin include:

- Burma
- Thailand
- China
- Turkey
- India
- Japan

The majority of residents only speak English at home (93.5%). Of those who speak languages other than English at home, the most common languages are Italian (0.5%), Malayalam (0.2%), Kirundi – Rundi (0.2%), Turkish (0.1%), and Tagalog (0.1%).

Employment and Income

30.2% of people over 15 years of age in Horsham carried out voluntary work for an organisation in the last 12 months, compared with 17.7% for Victoria, and 72.8% did unpaid domestic work compared with 69.3% for Victoria.

9,518 people were in the labour force at the time of the 2011 ABS Census. 58.6% of these people worked full-time; 31.4% worked part-time; 6.3% were away from work; and 3.6% were unemployed. Compared with Victorian and Australian statistics, there are slightly less people working full-time, more working part-time in Horsham and less people unemployed.

Key employment industry sectors are sheep, beef, cattle and grain farming (7.8%); hospitals (6.8%); school education (4.7%); cafes, restaurants and takeaway food services (4.1%); and other social assistance services (3.1%).

The highest category of occupational types in 2011 is professionals (17.7%) compared to (22.3%) in Victoria overall, followed by managers (16.9%); technicians and trade workers (14.8%); clerical and administrative workers (12.2%); and sales workers (10.9%).

The median weekly household income is \$946 compared with the Victorian median household income of \$1,216. 29.6% of Horsham households earn less than \$600 gross per week (compared with 23.8% of Victorian households) and 4.4% earn more than \$3,000 gross per week (compared with 10.4% of Victorian households). Fees for early childhood services need to take into account people's ability to pay.

Households

67.5% of households in Horsham are family households (compared with 71.2% for Victoria). The percentage of lone households in Horsham is significantly higher than for Victoria overall (29.7% compared with 24.5% for Victoria).

¹² Department of Immigration and Citizenship (2013) Settlement Arrivals Information – 1 July 2008 and 30 June 2013

The most common form of family household composition is a couple family without children (43.4% compared with 36.7% in Victoria), followed by a couple family with children (39.9% compared with Victorian figures of 46.0%). One parent families make up 15.4% of families, compared with the Victorian figure of 15.5%).

Home Ownership

There is slightly higher home ownership (i.e. owned outright, or owned with a mortgage) in Horsham (70.9% compared with 70.1% for Victoria) and marginally lower percentage of homes rented (25.6% compared with 26.5% for Victoria).

For those paying off homes, the median home loan repayment in Horsham is \$1,170 per month, compared with \$1,700 for Victoria overall, and for those who are renting homes, the median weekly rental amount is \$170 compared with the Victorian median of \$277.

Mobility

82.2% of people in Horsham lived at the same address on year prior to the 2011 Census, and only 58.1% of people lived at the same address five years prior to the 2011 Census. Mobility of potential clients may impact on changed level of demand for early years services in certain areas.

Transportation

There is an average of 1.9 vehicles per dwelling. Only 0.9% of employed people travelled to work by public transport on the day of the 2011 Census.

Internet Access

60.3% of Horsham households had broadband internet in 2011, 3.9% had dial-up and 3.8% had another type of internet connection. Twenty eight percent of Horsham households had no internet connection in 2011. Any promotion of early years services must consider alternatives to internet based activities given the high number of households that aren't connected.

Summary

There are pockets of disadvantage spread across the entire municipality, however the area considered to be most disadvantaged at present is Horsham North. Growth is primarily occurring in the western and southern parts of Horsham. Population levels may increase at a greater rate than originally estimated, due to the potential for additional mining operations in the region. This mining activity is likely to attract a larger workforce, many of whom may have children. Hence any projections around early years services and infrastructure must take this potential employment opportunity and its associated impacts into consideration.



Figure 9: Image by Tyson aged five. Flying his kite makes him happy.

7.0 Current situation

In Horsham Rural City, early years services are delivered by a plethora of different agencies, including Local Government, State Government, not-for-profit organisations and for-profit organisations. Whilst this provides a good array of services locally and spreads the cost of service and facility provision, greater communication is required between the agencies to ensure that resources are maximised, any potential gaps are addressed, duplication of services is avoided and most importantly, outcomes for children and families are enhanced. In order to build community capacity and ownership of services, a continued focus on involving community members in planning, programming, operation and management should occur. This activity needs to be built into any funding and service agreements.

Other than Horsham Rural City Council, two of the major providers of services for children and families in Horsham & District are Wimmera Uniting Care and Horsham District Kindergarten Association. It is critical that Council retains a good working relationship with each of these organisations to ensure that all parties have a role in service planning and that any infrastructure provided by Council is suitable and well used.

7.1 Horsham Rural City Council's role in early years provision

According to the Municipal Association of Victoria¹³, there has been an increased involvement and investment in kindergarten, long day care provision and playgroups by Local Government Authorities (LGAs) in recent years. It is believed that these changes have been primarily driven by shifts in

¹³ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and Municipal Association of Victoria (2011) Victorian Local Government Support for Children, Young People and Their Families

government policies, e.g. universal access to preschool and changed children’s services regulations. At the same time, there has been a reduced involvement and investment by some LGAs in outside-school-hours care, occasional care, family day care and early years programs operating at neighbourhood houses (although it’s not clear whether it was Local Government or neighbourhood houses who have initiated this lessening or withdrawal of support).

Many Victorian Local Government Authorities are involved in a much greater range of early years service delivery than Horsham Rural City Council. Horsham Rural City Council’s role in early years services, programs and facilities currently includes the following five areas:



7.2 2012 Draft Municipal Early Years Plan

Horsham Rural City Council's previous Municipal Early Years Plan (MEYP) was developed in 2012. This report was endorsed by Council as a draft plan and has proven to be a useful working document for staff. The key priority areas and objectives from this plan include:

- Creating a quality service
 - To promote programs and practices that are stimulating, engaging and meet the diverse needs of children and families
 - To support sustainable staffing arrangements
 - To promote affordable management and administrative systems
- Providing safe environments
 - To provide safe physical environments that offer a range of experiences for children and families
 - To ensure safe access to public spaces and places for children and families
- Building collaborative partnerships
 - To provide accurate and timely information about the early years to families
 - To improve the coordination of local services
- Advocating for children and families
 - To consult with children and families to identify relevant local needs, issues and challenges
 - To advocate on behalf of those children and families most at risk in the community

Although a detailed review of this plan has not been undertaken, a number of the recommendations contained within the plan have been achieved. Further, a number of recommendations that weren't achieved have been incorporated into the most recent MEYP due to their continued relevance.

7.3 Early years services, programs and facilities in Horsham & District

The provision of early years services, programs and facilities in Horsham & District is provided through many different organisations. The following table lists the type of service and who the key provider is:

Service / Program	Details	Comments
Long day care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wimmera Uniting Care offers long day care at Horsham Community Child Care Centre and University Early Learning Centre • Goodstart Early Learning offers long day care in Madden St, Horsham. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community feedback indicates that there is demand for additional long day care places.
Occasional care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wimmera Uniting Care offers occasional care at the rear of Horsham Uniting Church. • Horsham YMCA offers occasional care at the Horsham Aquatic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community feedback indicates that there is demand for additional occasional care places.

Service / Program	Details	Comments
	Centre.	
Kindergarten	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wimmera Uniting Care offers kindergarten at Garinja Pre-School, Kerri Baker Kindergarten and 3 year old kinder at the University Early Learning Centre. It also employs a pre-school field officer. Horsham and District Kindergarten Association (HKDA) manages seven kindergartens: Bennett Road (4yo), Green Park (3 and 4yo, Laharum (3 and 4yo), Natimuk (3 and 4yo), Natimuk Road (4yo) and Roberts Avenue (4yo) and Horsham North (3 and 4yo). DEECD owns the Laharum Kindergarten (4yo) Goodstart offers an integrated kindergarten program through its long day care program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDKA is the cluster manager and licensee of seven kindergartens. Fees for eligible concession card holders are covered by government subsidy. Green Park, Robin Street and Natimuk Kindergartens were all refurbished in 2013.
Primary schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are seven primary schools in Horsham: Horsham (298 and Rasmussen campuses), Horsham West (West and Haven campuses), St Michaels, Holy Trinity Lutheran, Laharum and Natimuk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infrastructure planning for primary schools is to be reviewed by DEECD.
Special School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is one special school in Horsham catering for children from prep to year 12. 	
Education support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DEECD provides a Koorie Education Team and specialist children's services. 	
Outside school hours care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wimmera Uniting Care offers outside of school hours care and vacation care at Horsham Primary School Baillie St Campus. Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Cooperative offers a homework club at its service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community feedback suggests that there may be some demand for before school care.

Service / Program	Details	Comments
Family day care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wimmera Uniting Care offers family day care in private homes across Horsham Rural City. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community feedback indicates that there is demand for increased family day care services.
Maternal and Child Health service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Horsham Rural City Council provides a Maternal and Child Health Service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two nurses currently operate out of Bennett Road MCHC and one from Robin Street MCHC.
Playgroup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Horsham Rural City Council delivers the Horsham North Supported Parents Playgroup, the Multiple Births Playgroup, Jelly Beans Playgroup for Migrant Families and the Black Cockatoos Playgroup (in partnership with Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Cooperative) Various community groups operate playgroups, e.g. St Michael's, Salvation Army, Harvest Christian Church, Church of Christ, and Lutheran Church and Haven Hall. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community feedback indicates strong support for playgroups, including supported playgroups.
Early childhood intervention services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noah's Ark offers early childhood intervention services for children with special needs. SCOPE offers early childhood intervention services for children with special needs. Vision Australia offers early childhood intervention services. Wimmera Health Care Group offers some early childhood intervention services, e.g. physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech pathology, social work. DEECD provides some early childhood intervention services. Private operators provide some early childhood intervention services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many local families have to travel to Ballarat or Melbourne to access early childhood intervention services. Where early childhood intervention services are available locally, there may be waiting lists.

Service / Program	Details	Comments
Support groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wimmera Uniting Care offers Wimmera Parents Support Network (for families of children with disabilities). 	
Child protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Human Services is responsible for the child protection program in Horsham. 	
Family support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wimmera Uniting Care offers family counselling, family support, Child First program, Delkaia Aboriginal Best Start program (in partnership with Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Cooperative), Tuning in to Kids program; Mother Goose program, Families and School Together program and Disability Respite. Wimmera Health Care Group offers ante-natal education, ante-natal care and post-natal health care Ballarat Health Services offers post natal depression support Horsham Rural City Council offers post natal depression support and parenting support Grampians Community Health offers parenting support Salvation Army offers parenting support ConnectEd offers teenage parenting support Australian Breastfeeding Association provides breastfeeding education and support Wimmera Health Care Group provides breastfeeding education and support. 	
Cultural activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Horsham Library offers Rhyme Time and Story Time sessions each week for children. Wimmera Toy Library offers families the opportunity to borrow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library programs are free, Toy Library has an annual membership fee and aquatic lessons are on fee for service basis.

Service / Program	Details	Comments
	<p>toys from Horsham Library</p> <p>Horsham Aquatic Centre offers swimming classes for children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Avenue Dance Studio, Horsham School of Dance, The Dancers Zone, Horsham Calisthenics Club and Movement to Music program offer dance and movement classes • Music Time program is offered through the Music Academy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dance and music programs are all privately operated. Participation fees apply.
Physical Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various sports offer programs and competitions for children under 8 years of age, e.g. learn to swim programs, FunNet, Auskick, Aussie Hoops, Blast Ball, Calisthenics, Karate, Little Athletics, Milo Cricket, Gymnastics and Trampolining, Feel Good Kids program, Hot Shots, Soccer, Pony Club, Joeys, Kindergym, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These programs are primarily run by sport and recreation clubs, although some are privately operated. Participation fees apply.
Playgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horsham Rural City Council provides a number of playgrounds distributed throughout the municipality. • Kids Capers Play Cafe is a privately operated indoor playground. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks and playgrounds are free of charge. • All abilities play space is available at May Park. • Gap in play provision in Horsham South. • Community feedback indicates that location and cost can be prohibitive for private indoor playground.

7.4 Children's development in Horsham

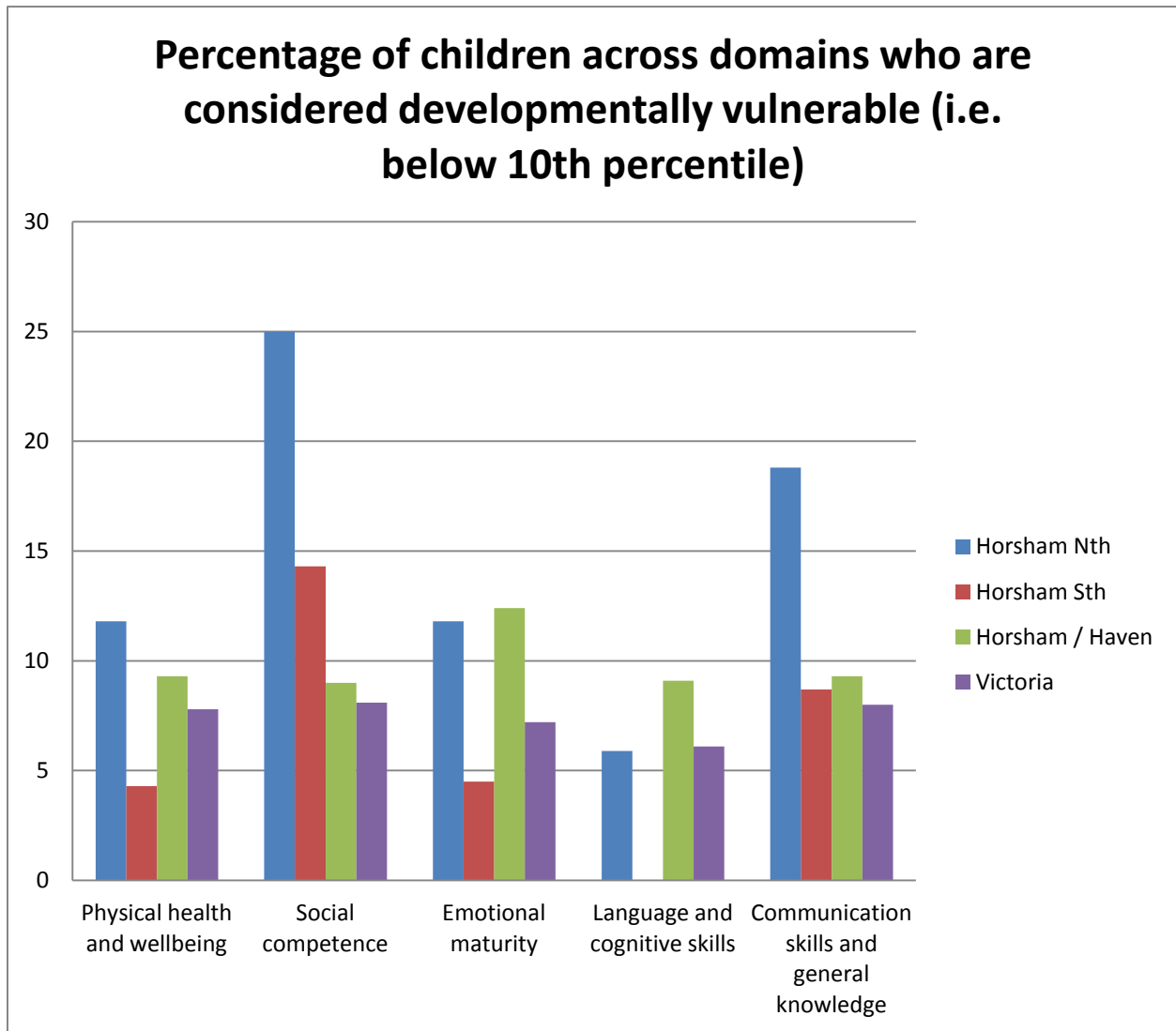
7.4.1 Developmental Vulnerability

According to the Australian Early Development Index¹⁴, 241 children aged five years of age in Horsham were assessed by their teacher in 2012 to determine their developmental vulnerability. 18 of these

¹⁴ Centre for Community Child Health (2012) Australian Early Development Index Community Profile 2012 – Horsham, Victoria

children came from Horsham North, 23 from Horsham South and 228 from Horsham / Haven. These children were assessed against 67,931 Victorian children.

Of the children from Horsham and District who were assessed, the following proportion was considered to be ‘developmentally vulnerable’, compared with Victorian children of the same age:



Based on the graph above, there is a high level of developmental vulnerability for children in various parts of Horsham and District, but particularly in Horsham North.

The following table provides further details of vulnerability. Note that the figures in red indicate a score higher than the Victorian average in terms of developmental vulnerability.

Domain	Percentage of children across domains who are considered developmentally vulnerable (i.e. below the 10 th percentile)			
	Horsham Nth	Horsham Sth	Horsham / Haven	Victoria
Physical health and wellbeing	11.8	4.3	9.3	7.8
Social competence	25.0	14.3	9.0	8.1
Emotional maturity	11.8	4.5	12.4	7.2
Language and cognitive skills	5.9	0.0	9.1	6.1
Communication skills and general knowledge	18.8	8.7	9.3	8.0
Vulnerable on one or more domains	31.3	14.3	23.3	19.5
Vulnerable on two or more domains	18.8	9.1	14.1	9.5

According to the SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSED Score), Horsham North rates at 1,023.5, Horsham South rates at 1,058.2 and Horsham / Haven rates at 975.6 (NB: the higher the score, the greater level of disadvantage).

7.4.2 Participation in Maternal and Child Health assessments

Children across Victoria are eligible to receive ten assessments from Maternal and Child Health nurses at key stages of development. The final visit generally occurs at 3.5 years of age. 71.6% of children living in Horsham Rural City attended their final 3.5 year old assessment in 2011-12, compared with only 64.4% of Victorians.¹⁵

7.4.3 Reported family incidents

The number of family incidents per 1,000 people reported in Horsham Rural City is considerably higher than the Victorian average, i.e. 18.6 compared with 9.1 for Victoria. Consequently Horsham Rural City is currently ranked as the 5th highest municipality in Victoria when it comes to reported family incidents.¹⁶

7.4.4 Food insecurity

Food insecurity affects 4.1% of the population; however, this is still somewhat lower than the Victorian average of 5.6%.¹⁷

¹⁵ Community Indicators Victoria website: http://www.communityindicators.net.au/wellbeing_reports/horsham (viewed 10 August 2014)

¹⁶ Department of Health website: [http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/28036E2D71891B58CA2578660015B03F/\\$FILE/Horsham_2012-v02.pdf](http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/28036E2D71891B58CA2578660015B03F/$FILE/Horsham_2012-v02.pdf) (viewed 10 August 2014)

¹⁷ Department of Health website: [http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/28036E2D71891B58CA2578660015B03F/\\$FILE/Horsham_2012-v02.pdf](http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/28036E2D71891B58CA2578660015B03F/$FILE/Horsham_2012-v02.pdf) (viewed 10 August 2014)

7.4.5 Low birth weight

Whilst 5.7% of babies are born with a low birth weight, this is still lower than the Victorian average of 6.6% of babies.¹⁸

7.4.6 Breastfeeding rates

Horsham Rural City Council is currently ranked at number 19 for the percentage of children who are fully breastfed at three months of age. 59.4% of babies in the municipality are still exclusively breastfed at three months of age compared with 51.8% of Victorians.¹⁹

7.4.7 Child immunisation rates

Immunisation rates amongst children aged 24-27 months of age is very high in Horsham Rural City. 98.1% of children are up to date with their vaccinations compared with 93.4% of Victorians, thereby ranking the municipality at number six across the state.²⁰

7.4.8 Need for assistance with core activities

Although the statistic is not age-specific, the percentage of Horsham Rural City residents who require assistance with core activities is marginally higher than the Victorian average, i.e. 5.7% compared with 5.0%. Horsham Rural City Council therefore rates at number 37 across the state.²¹



Figure 10: Image by Ria aged three. Butterflies make her happy.

¹⁸ Department of Health website:
[http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/28036E2D71891B58CA2578660015B03F/\\$FILE/Horsham_2012-v02.pdf](http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/28036E2D71891B58CA2578660015B03F/$FILE/Horsham_2012-v02.pdf)
(viewed 10 August 2014)

¹⁹ Department of Health website:
[http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/28036E2D71891B58CA2578660015B03F/\\$FILE/Horsham_2012-v02.pdf](http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/28036E2D71891B58CA2578660015B03F/$FILE/Horsham_2012-v02.pdf)
(viewed 10 August 2014)

²⁰ Department of Health website:
[http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/28036E2D71891B58CA2578660015B03F/\\$FILE/Horsham_2012-v02.pdf](http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/28036E2D71891B58CA2578660015B03F/$FILE/Horsham_2012-v02.pdf)
(viewed 10 August 2014)

²¹ Department of Health website:
[http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/28036E2D71891B58CA2578660015B03F/\\$FILE/Horsham_2012-v02.pdf](http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/28036E2D71891B58CA2578660015B03F/$FILE/Horsham_2012-v02.pdf)
(viewed 10 August 2014)

7.5 Regional, state, national and international trends in the early years sector

7.5.1 Policy and frameworks

Both State and Federal Government has released various policies and frameworks in recent years in an effort to increase the professionalism and improve outcomes of the early years sector, e.g. the Victorian Government's Early Years Learning Framework, Victorian Government's Early Years Strategic Plan and the National Quality Framework.

7.5.2 Expenditure by State and Federal Government in the early years sector

Early years expenditure in Australia is higher than the average of OECD countries, but a much greater proportion of this expenditure is spent on "cash transfers to parents rather than on early care and education"²².

7.5.3 Integration of early years services

At a State and Federal Government level, there is a policy to encourage the development of integrated early years services and facilities and to make accessing of services as seamless as possible for families. Stand alone single services are less likely to receive funding for development.

7.5.4 Early years service providers

Whilst Local Government and not for profit agencies were traditionally responsible for many early years services such as kindergartens and childcare centres, over the past few decades, there has been a much greater shift towards private operators entering this arena, including 'child care chains'. This trend is common in both Australia and internationally. Up until around 2004, almost all of the childcare services in the Netherlands were provided by non-profit organisations whereas almost all are provided by for profit organisations now²³.

7.5.5 Childcare as a key component of economic growth

In the Netherlands, the government views childcare as a key component of economic growth. It believes that if mothers are able to be a part of the workforce, "the economic wealth of the nation and their own emancipation" will be increased, particularly given that a large part of the working population is middle aged²⁴.

7.5.6 Increasing level of professionalism and training of staff

There has been an increasing level of professionalism of early years workers across Australia and internationally in countries such as Canada²⁵. In Australia, legislation that was brought in at the start of 2012 requires that all employees in the industry will need Certificate Three level qualifications and at least one teacher in each child care centre who has university qualifications in early childhood by 2017²⁶. This increase in professionalism leads to better programming and improved outcomes for children. The

²² Katz, Olan and Redmond, Gerry. Investment in early childhood in Australia: International comparisons and recent trends. Health Sociology Review June 2009, Vol. 18, No. 1: 94-107

²³ Neugebauer, Roger and Goodeve, Emily. Global Trends in Early Childhood Education: 2009

²⁴ Neugebauer, Roger (2007) Early childhood trends around the world.

²⁵ Neugebauer, Roger (2007) Early childhood trends around the world.

²⁶ Gardner, Jessica. Financial Review. 29 February 2012.

increased educational requirements have, however, led to a shortage of qualified staff in some areas. Some of these shortages are to do with low wages that are associated with the sector.

7.5.7 Technology

From a technology perspective, some privately operated childcare centres in Melbourne are providing regular photographs and written updates of children's days, which are emailed to parents. This level of monitoring and reporting may become more commonplace in the future. Other technological changes that have occurred in Melbourne based childcare centres include the use of ipads and computers by children and fingerprint security systems to enter the building.

7.5.8 Kindergartens

At a regional level, there has been a shift away from kindergartens being directly managed by a parent-led committee of management, to a cluster management system whereby one organisation holds the licence for many kindergartens. This model has been adopted in Horsham and is working well. There has also been a growth in childcare centres offering kindergarten programs within their structure. Whilst there is still resistance to this scenario at a local and regional level by some families, there is increasing demand for a venue where children can be cared for for longer hours when both parents are working.

The introduction of the Universal Access to Early Childhood Education Program has also meant that kindergartens and childcare centres across Victoria have invested heavily in renovations of existing facilities to cater for an increase in the number of hours of pre-school children and changes to care ratios.

There has also been a trend, particularly in metropolitan settings, towards the development of bush kindergartens, where part, or all, of the curriculum occurs outdoors in a bush environment. The increasing use of nature in early years services is also a major focus of the curriculum in countries such as Denmark²⁷.

7.5.9 Working parents

The growth in the percentage of both parents working in recent years is also having an impact on early years services both locally and further afield. Whilst many working parents use a combination of long day care, occasional care and family day care services (if available and affordable), a considerable number also use their own parents to look after their children during working hours. There is also demand by shift workers for early years services to offer more flexible hours to take their needs into consideration.

7.5.10 Playgroups

Many working parents want the opportunity to engage socially with other families through children's activities, such as playgroups. Hence there is growing demand for playgroups to operate on weekends. Similarly, different types of playgroups are emerging in places such as Bendigo where a dad's playgroup has been recently established, and a playgroup for grandparents and their grandchildren has also been

²⁷ Neugebauer, Roger (2007) Early childhood trends around the world.

planned. According to local community consultation, vulnerable families have also been observed to increase their skills and capacity through attendance at supported playgroups where good parenting skills are modelled by the facilitator.

7.5.11 Recognition of whole of community approach to early years

There has been a much greater recognition in recent years of the role that the entire community has to play in early years services to achieve the best outcomes for children and their families. Working in partnership with families is viewed by the majority of early years providers as critical. Improving the skills and capacities of families is also a priority of many services.

7.5.12 National Disability Scheme

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is a new initiative by the Federal Government which aims to “deliver a life-long approach to support people with disability through individualised planning processes to identify the reasonable and necessary supports”²⁸ that they may need to enable them to achieve their goals. Early intervention support may be available for children aged under six years of age who have a developmental delay that results in “substantially reduced functional capacity in one or more of the areas of self-care, receptive and expressive language, cognitive development or motor development **and** results in the need for a combination and sequence of special interdisciplinary or generic care, treatment or other services which are of extended duration, and are individually planned and coordinated”²⁹; and there is evidence that getting early intervention will reduce how much help is needed in the future by mitigating, alleviating, or preventing deterioration of functional capacity or improving such functional capacity **or** helping family and carers to keep helping the child.



Figure 11: Image by Thomas aged seven. Football, family and friends make him happy.

²⁸ National Disability Insurance Scheme Website: <http://www.ndis.gov.au/document/242> (viewed 25 September 2014)

²⁹ National Disability Insurance Scheme Website: <http://www.ndis.gov.au/document/242> (viewed 25 September 2014)

8.0 Key Themes Emerging from Consultation

A variety of different community engagement tools were used to identify the key needs of children and families in relation to the early years. Each of these tools is listed below, with the number of people who participated in each method and the key themes that emerged from each engagement activity. In total, 346 people were consulted with in some format to help inform the direction of the MEYP.

Type of consultation	Key themes
Service user survey (50 surveys)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong support for MCH program • Need more MCH centres, e.g. Horsham South • Need longer childcare hours and more places available for both long day care and occasional care • Need more well trained passionate staff at childcare centres • Need to keep services affordable • Need playgroup on weekends or after hours so working parents can benefit • Need more information about services • Need better quality and better functioning facilities • Need to reduce waiting lists for services and for appointments to see early childhood intervention professionals.
Service provider survey (23 surveys)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to professional services by families is impacted by cost, transport, parenting capacity and waiting lists • Need an autism assessment team and a paediatrician based in Horsham • Transport is an issue for a vulnerable families – may need to consider using existing community transport assets more effectively • Need for before school hours care • There is additional demand for childcare places in some services • Limited number of family day care workers available • Families need more information about services, provided by a range of different tools, including social media and SMS • A one stop shop for children’s and family services would be beneficial • More parenting support and mentoring is needed • A more effective referral system is required, which involves all services working together to benefit children and their families.
Key stakeholder interviews (16 interviews with 29 participants)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If facilities are developed in Horsham North, there will need to be a strong focus on branding and positive promotion to alleviate any perceived stigma • Difficult to find trained staff or flexible staff • Services need to be more flexible in their hours of operation • Some concern over Federal Government funding of Universal Access to Early Childhood Education Program • Services need to be culturally appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and CALD families • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families may be unlikely to attend mainstream programs / services • Public transport is a barrier for some • Children’s Services Award is quite inflexible

Type of consultation	Key themes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a perception by some people that kinder in a childcare centre is inferior to a stand-alone kinder program. • The cost of childcare is a major barrier for some people • Vulnerable families need extra support • Funding and support of children once they reach school age can be difficult to access • Need more supported playgroups • Difficult to find places in three year old kinder, long day care and family day care • Specialists are generally located in Ballarat or Melbourne, or if located locally, have long waiting lists. • There are likely to be significant benefits of co-locating services for both families and workers • Need to promote early years more as a career for staff, rather than just a job • Programs, services and facilities must be child centred and child friendly.
Graffiti tree at childcare centres (4 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a bush kinder • Develop after kinder care • Improve literacy and numeracy.
Horsham Plaza Listening Post (6 interviews)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide publically accessible change facilities, particularly for people coming in to Horsham from out of town • Utilise Horsham Buy Swap and Sell to promote early years services • Shade needed in playgrounds.
Black Cockatoos Playgroup (6 one-on-one interviews)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to provide places for women to breastfeed and change babies • Need to reduce waiting lists for surgery, e.g. 12-18 months wait • Maternal and child health service and playgroups are well supported • Some Koori mothers are resistant to attending combined playgroups with non-Koori families, and believe that they need to have their own playgroup and own dedicated time. • Nurse and medical clinic at Goolum Goolum have been successful in identifying potential health issues in children • Bus provided by Goolum Goolum has greatly reduced transport as a barrier for playgroup families. • Recognition that MCH service is a great source of information • Need to ensure that children’s activities across the municipality are coordinated so that clashes don’t occur • Lack of spaces available in YMCA crèche • Walking distances, limited parking and undercover waiting areas are considered barriers to accessing services
Salvation Army lunch (8 one-on-one interviews)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No play equipment that is suitable for infants and toddlers at the park in Horsham North • Swimming pool is too expensive for children’s activities • Buses only run at certain times of the day – there need to be more services and they need to continue until 5.30pm • Difficult to access early childhood intervention services if have to travel

Type of consultation	Key themes
	<p>to Ballarat or Melbourne</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dental van, MCH, libraries, playgroups and district nurses are all excellent services • Kinder (both three and four year old groups) are expensive for families on low incomes • There is additional demand for places in some early years services • Non-working parents also want access to childcare to allow their children to socialise with others • Need more flexibility and longer hours for occasional care and kinder for rural families who have to travel into town
Connect Ed Young Parents Group (5 people)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport is a challenge for young parents without a licence • There are waiting lists for childcare and family day care • Need family change room in central location in Horsham • Services need to be affordable as the single parent pension is limited • Need to reduce the stigma of young parents in Horsham • Need to explore housing options for young single parents
Children's drawings (215)	<p>The following make children happy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family / extended family (26) • Animals / pets, e.g. dog, cat, mouse, tiger, horse, cow, unicorn, butterflies (23) • Friends (16) • Art / craft activities, e.g. drawing, painting, loom bands (16) • Rainbows / colour (15) • Playing or being active outdoors, e.g. playground, skate park, walking, camping (14) • Electronics, e.g. computer, ipod, TV, DS (13) • Swimming / water play (11) • Playing football (10) • Community / family celebrations (9) • Gardens and flowers (7) • Outings, e.g. zoo, city, etc (5) • Playing with toys (5)

Summary

The key issues that have emerged from the consultation are:

- There is demand for additional places in long day care, occasional child care and family day care services
- Lack of early childhood intervention specialists available in Horsham, and waiting lists for those who do have a presence
- Transport difficulties for some families, including public transport timetables that don't necessarily meet the needs of residents

- Cost of services and programs
- Need for more flexible hours of operations for early years services
- Need for a publically accessible children’s change and feeding area
- Need for more information for families about early years services in a variety of different formats
- Services need to be culturally appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and CALD families
- Well trained, experienced and passionate staff are required in early years services
- Vulnerable families need extra support



Figure 12: Image by Alannah aged seven. Lots of company makes her happy.

9.0 Needs assessment

Based on, the existing and projected demographics of the Horsham community, key research, trends across the early years sector, various policies and reports and extensive community consultation, a picture of what is required in Horsham to specifically address local needs and issues has been developed. Each of the key needs is detailed below.



Figure 13: Image by Chelsea aged five. Picking flowers makes her happy.

9.1 Integration of early years services

Although excellent relationships have been established between a number of children's and family services in Horsham & District, some services are still operating in relative isolation from others. Many of these services are operating from stand alone single service buildings. Staff at these centres may not necessarily know what other services are available to assist children and their families, and families may be unaware of options available to them. As part of the MEYP planning process, a number of early years services have come together regularly to take part in discussions leading to the development of the plan. By participating in this process, these agencies are now much more aware of each other's role and recognise the value of a whole of community approach which is needed to most effectively influence positive outcomes for children and their families. The ongoing relationship of this core group of agencies is the key to better, coordinated and integrated service delivery in Horsham & District. It is therefore recommended that this group be formed into a network known as the Horsham Early Years Network. Membership of this group may include some or all of the following:

- Delkaia Aboriginal Best Start
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
- Department of Human Services
- Federation University
- Good Start Early Learning
- Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Cooperative
- Grampians Community Health
- Horsham & District Kindergarten Association
- Horsham Primary School
- Horsham Rural City Council
- Horsham Special School
- Horsham West Primary School
- Lutheran Primary School
- Medicare Local Grampians
- Noah's Ark
- Salvo Connect
- Scope
- St Michael's and St John's Primary School
- Wimmera Health Care Group
- Wimmera Uniting Care

A draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which outlines the roles and responsibilities of each party has been developed and is included in the Appendix of this report.

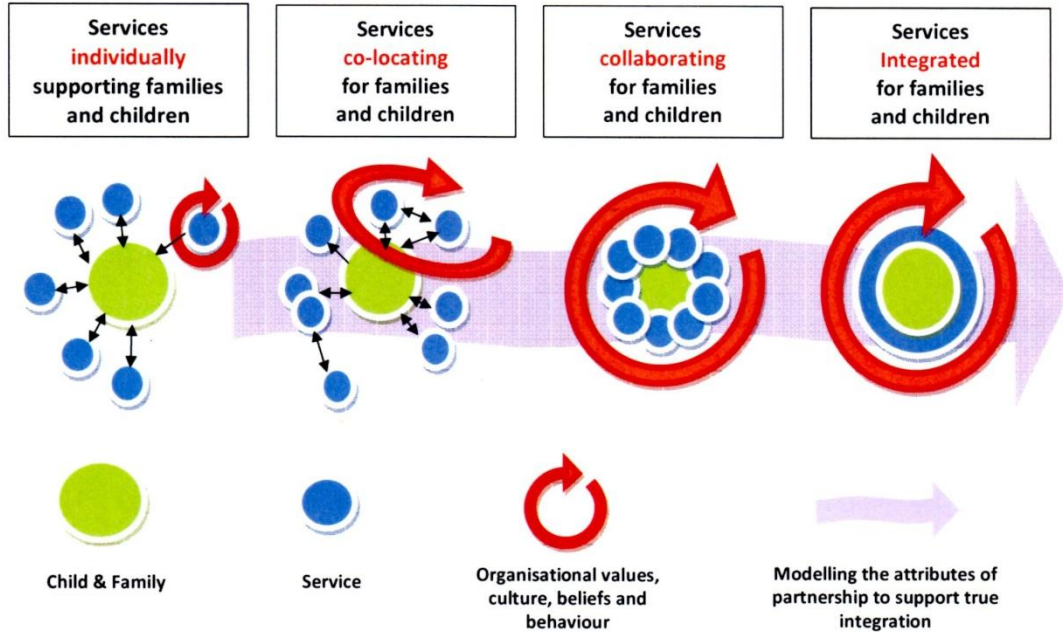
For early years services to be truly integrated, they must move from individual or co-located services, which typically work in isolation from one another and maintain their own philosophy, vision and values. They need to move even beyond collaboration whereby there is some joint programming and shared funding requirements; a common culture and shared vision; and open dialogue between all agencies. A truly integrated service will have a shared and agreed philosophy; a focus on shared outcomes; and pooled funding. Most importantly, families who are engaged in integrated services “will receive support that addresses all aspects of their needs in a cohesive fashion.”³⁰

The following diagram³¹ shows the difference between each of these scenarios:

³⁰ Prichard, Paul (Centre for Community Child Health, Vic), Purdon, Suzanne (Centre for Community Child Health, Vic), Chaplyn, Jennifer (Same Page Organisational Development Consultancy, WA) (2010) Moving Forward Together. Murdoch Children's Research Institute, The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne and Tasmanian Early Years Foundation.

³¹ Prichard, Paul (Centre for Community Child Health, Vic), Purdon, Suzanne (Centre for Community Child Health, Vic), Chaplyn, Jennifer (Same Page Organisational Development Consultancy, WA) (2010) Moving Forward Together. Murdoch Children's Research Institute, The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne and Tasmanian Early Years Foundation.

A Journey Towards Early Childhood Service Integration



Child and Family Centres exhibit the attributes of ...

INDIVIDUALLY	CO-LOCATION	COLLABORATION	INTEGRATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each program/service has developed their individual philosophy, vision and values • Each program/service has separate funding arrangements • Little communication occurs between each program/service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some joint planning has taken place but each service maintains their individual philosophy, vision and values • Services have engaged the community and are responding to community need separately. • Each program/service has separate funding arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A common culture, values and actions between multiple organisations sharing the same vision • All organisations have an open dialogue, have engaged the community and are responding collectively. • Some joint programming has required shared funding arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A shared philosophy and vision has been developed and formally agreed by all • Primary focus is the shared outcomes responding in a way that is meaningful to the community and reflective of partnership. • Pooled funding is administered for common early learning and care programs.
<div style="background-color: yellow; padding: 2px;">Many children miss out on access to services.</div>	<div style="background-color: yellow; padding: 2px;">Families have improved access to services but little enhanced benefit for children due to poor inter-service collaboration.</div>	<div style="background-color: yellow; padding: 2px;">Children benefit through increased inter-service collaboration</div>	<div style="background-color: yellow; padding: 2px;">Families will receive support that addresses all aspects of their needs in a cohesive fashion.</div>

True integration is hard to achieve and requires commitment from many agencies, a change in thinking and often a change in policy and funding arrangements. It may be preferable to begin with a collaborative approach with the aim of moving towards an integrated approach.

Integrated early years services have great potential to work with families in a holistic manner. Ideally when a family first approaches or is referred to an integrated service, they will complete one universal enrolment form which will be used by all other agencies (subject to privacy issues). Once enrolled in one of the services at an early years centre, for example, Maternal and Child Health, ideally families will have timely access to each and every service that they need within that centre or within the broader community, e.g. speech pathology. Through this single point of entry and information style of operation, workers should have the knowledge to easily refer families from one service to another and families should feel that they are being supported in a seamless and cohesive manner, with their needs at the core.



Figure 14: Image by Charlotte aged four. Her Mum and Dad make her happy.

9.2 Early Years Service Needs

Based on the demographic projections, community demand and the availability of early years facilities, the following service provision will need to be made.

9.2.1 Kindergarten

Demographic data indicates that on current rates of growth there will be approximately 16 additional children of kinder age in Horsham by 2031. On this basis, the current number of kindergarten places in

Horsham is adequate; however, greater opportunities for collaboration and integration could be achieved through integrating kinder programs into early childhood centres. The focus of Council should therefore be on redeveloping kinder spaces within an integrated service delivery structure. In addition to this over the next 15 years a planned incremental growth of places should occur in line with general population growth. Potential mining operations in the region, however, could result in increased demand for kindergarten services than the demographic data currently predicts.

9.2.2 Long Day Care

The provision of long day care places is influenced by economic, social and work participation characteristics more than population growth. One of the key findings emerging from the consultation for this plan is that the provision of long day care places within Horsham is currently inadequate with most centres experiencing waiting lists. Further to this, there are issues with the flexibility of service provision in relation to working hours and accessibility. Limited local data has been available but based on normal standards; we would anticipate that a reasonable provision for long day care within a new integrated hub could be supported. Demand for spaces is particularly apparent in the under 3 age group. This is generally the area of highest demand; however, consideration should also be given to further places for over 3's.

9.2.3 Occasional Care

There is currently limited occasional care availability within the Horsham District. This is an important service provision, particularly when placed in an integrated setting with kindergarten provision. If well planned and programmed, the combination of sessional kindergarten and occasional care can provide a low cost and flexible adjunct to long day care. The provision of a space for occasional care should be an important part of any integrated service hub.

9.2.4 Playgroup/Supported Playgroups

Various forms of playgroup are currently provided throughout Horsham. These sessions are operated by a range of providers. Supported playgroup is a particularly important inclusion within an integrated setting as it allows service providers to connect with families who would otherwise not attend more formalised children services.

9.2.5 Community Multipurpose Space

An integrated service aims to address the needs of children through wrap around service but it also attends to the needs of family and the wider community. This could involve a range of allied services including parent education, parent groups, individual or group counselling and social and recreational activities for families. Suitable space needs to be provided to cater for these activities, ideally in an integrated setting where service providers and families can come together in the most effective way.

9.2.6 Maternal & Child Health

As with kinder, it was found that the number of MCH consulting rooms in the local area is adequate for current needs, however, they are all stand alone facilities. Provision should be made within an integrated setting for at least two MCH consulting rooms in order to provide a collaborative service.

9.2.7 Allied Health Consulting

One of the biggest issues to come out of the consultation and planning process has been the access to allied health services such as speech pathology, paediatrics, physiotherapy and early childhood intervention. While these services are available in a limited way in Horsham they are currently dispersed and can be difficult for families to access. To address this issue, it is important to provide additional consulting rooms within the integrated hub or within the integrated service to increase the effectiveness and accessibility of these services. It is believed that a high quality integrated consulting facility of this type could provide incentive for visiting practitioners, which is currently a major issue within the Horsham district.

9.2.8 Integrated Staff Offices

Early years and allied service provision in the Horsham area is currently undertaken by a wide range of service providers. At present, each of these providers occupies their own premises and has limited contact with other people working in the field. One of the major recognised benefits of an integrated service is the ability of staff to collaborate and build professional networks and achieve soft referrals for families in need. As such the provision of office and planning space for service providers within an integrated service hub would be an important part of the facility.



Figure 15: Image by Thomas aged four. He doesn't know what makes him happy.

9.3 Access to early childhood intervention services

One of the major issues reported by both families and early years service workers in Horsham is the need to improve access to early childhood intervention professionals such as pediatricians, medical specialists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, psychologists and social workers. Many local families requiring this type of specialist assistance need to travel to either Ballarat or Melbourne. Such a trip may involve one or both parents taking between one and three days off work, paying for fuel and possibly accommodation for one or two nights, and perhaps even taking other children from the family

out of school or care to accompany them to the appointment. Some early childhood intervention specialists visit Horsham on a scheduled basis, but there are often waiting lists. There are some early childhood intervention specialists working in Horsham on a permanent basis, but they also have waiting lists. Incentives to attract more early childhood intervention specialists to either visit Horsham on a more regular basis or relocate would be extremely beneficial for local children and their families. Other suggestions include skilling up local early years workers to work across different areas, introducing virtual appointments via video conference links and developing a parenting volunteer program whereby local residents with an interest in supporting families are trained up to assist with basic nutrition, caring for children and sleep training.

9.4 Transport

Lack of private transport and a public transport system that does not adequately meet the needs of local families have also been identified as barriers to further participation in early years services and programs in Horsham & District. Young parents in particular reported that lack of suitable transportation limited their ability to take their children places. Recently arrived migrants and people on low incomes are also likely to be hard hit by lack of transportation. A review of the local bus service may be in order to provide greater access to local buses around school drop off and pick up times, and an improved route which stops at or near a variety of early years services and facilities.

Horsham Special School uses buses to pick up its students from their door and return them to their door at the end of the day. This model of transportation can be highly effective when targeted at traditionally disadvantaged groups. It is therefore suggested that funding is sought to seek funding to purchase or lease transportation, or develop a volunteer transportation scheme, to pick vulnerable families up from their homes and drive them to relevant early years services.



Figure 16: Image by Holly aged six. Playing with her sister makes her happy.

10.0 Monitoring and evaluation

In order to ensure that the MEYP achieves its objectives; that resources are used efficiently; and that it delivers the social outcomes required by the community within available resources, it is important that it is closely monitored and evaluated. Monitoring should occur as part of the quarterly meetings held by the Horsham Early Years Network. Ideally the MEYP will remain as a permanent fixture on the agenda and any progress made against the actions duly reported. Similarly, actions that need to be implemented or further explored should also be listed as an agenda item. It will be the role of the chairperson of the network to ensure that this ongoing monitoring occurs.

In terms of evaluation, it is recommended that a more detailed review of the plan occurs annually. It will be the role of the chairperson of the network to ensure that sufficient time is made available at one of the meetings of the network each year to discuss each recommendation in detail, and alter where required (depending on changed circumstances), given that the plan will be a living document. A written report should be provided by the Network to Council to report on achievements to date and any specific issues. The key performance indicators that have been developed against each goal will help to guide the evaluation process. A full review of the MEYP should be conducted after three years and a new plan prepared.

In order to guide the evaluation of the plan at the end of the three year period, the following questions should be considered (as identified in the Municipal Early Years Planning Framework and Practical Resource Guide³²):

- How well did the previous MEYP document what needed to be achieved and how success would be measured?
- How effectively were the actions in the plan implemented and what factors strengthened or impeded the process of implementation?
- What impact has implementation of the actions had in the local community? Was this what the plan anticipated?
- What influence is implementation of the actions in the plan potentially having on longer term community health and wellbeing outcomes?

³² Municipal Association of Victoria and Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2011) Municipal Early Years Planning Framework and Practical Resource Guide

11.0 Action plan

Our Vision is:

A community with positive outcomes for children and families.

Our mission is:

To strengthen the community via a holistic, collaborative integrated service based on the values of trust, respect, diversity, equity and excellence.

We will focus on:

Increased connection, access, capacity and opportunities.

Key Themes:

- Connection and Collaboration
- Quality of Service
- Improving timely access to, and participation in services,
- Improving opportunities for children and their families.

This action plan identifies the four key themes, as described above, along with specific objectives and actions. For each action, relevant partners have been identified, along with key performance indicators to help determine if the action has been achieved, and if so, what the outcomes have been. These actions have been devised from a combination of demographic data, policy reviews, evidence based approaches, and community consultation. They aim to provide an appropriate level and mix of services based on best practice models to meet community need in a cost effective and integrated manner. Where relevant, the appropriate service delivery model has been suggested against actions. The success of this action plan is largely dependent on Council's ongoing commitment to early years services; the establishment of an effective Horsham Early Years Network; and a genuine level of commitment and engagement of all other relevant partners.

The first two priorities are to establish the Horsham Early Years Network and to develop as much base line data as possible so that improvements can be measured.

Objective	Action	Partners	Key Performance Indicator	Priority
CONNECTION AND COLLABORATION				
1.1. Collaborative governance	1.1.1. Develop a governance model that enables the operation of an integrated service.	Horsham Rural City Council to facilitate. All relevant early years service providers to contribute.	A governance model to support integrated service is established. The Horsham Early Years Network is established.	High
	1.1.2. Develop and establish agreed memorandum of understandings between service providers and the governance body that establish roles and responsibilities and commitment to the integrated service.	Horsham Rural City Council to facilitate. All relevant early years service providers to contribute.	Memorandums of Understanding have been prepared and signed.	High - Medium
1.2. Linking services	1.2.1. Conduct bi-annual orientation / training events for service providers to educate service deliverers, build relationships between services and improve networking, e.g. training sessions on the common definition of vulnerable families, how to develop inclusive services, etc.	Horsham Early Years Network	Relevant orientation / training events are held bi-annually.	Medium
	1.2.2. Establish protocols to better	Horsham Early Years	Protocols are established between	High -

Objective	Action	Partners	Key Performance Indicator	Priority
	link services with one another and to enable direct referrals and appointments.	Network	services.	Medium
	1.2.3. Work towards developing integrated early years services.	Horsham Rural City Council to facilitate	Any new or upgraded early years facilities are designed to feature multiple services operating from the one location.	Ongoing
	1.2.4. Establish protocols to ensure smooth transitions for children and their families from one service to another.	All service providers to undertake	Transitions from one service to another by children and their families run smoothly.	High
1.3 Single point of entry and information	1.3.1. Develop a resource that provides information about all early years and family services.	Horsham Early Years Network	A hard copy and internet information resource has been developed.	High
QUALITY OF SERVICE				
2.1 Improved use of technology	2.1.1. Explore the options of introducing a comprehensive “virtual visit” program that can be utilised by all service providers where applicable.	Horsham Early Years Network to facilitate	The number of early years virtual visits is recorded and increases each year.	High - Medium
	2.1.2. Increase the use of social media and other digital technologies to improve communication with families around appointments, events and other activities.	All service providers to undertake Federation University to potentially partner	Horsham Early Years Network develops case studies on positive examples of the use of social media.	Ongoing

Objective	Action	Partners	Key Performance Indicator	Priority
		Locally based training institutions to implement as required		
2.2. Building capacity in professionals	2.2.1. Explore the possibility of establishing a volunteer parenting program to mentor families.	Horsham Early Years Network to facilitate Churches Community organisations	Options for a volunteer parenting program have been explored.	Low
2.3. Improve recruitment and retention of staff	2.3.1. Encourage regular meetings between service provision managers to determine staffing needs, resource / staff sharing opportunities, recruitment practices and retention issues.	Horsham Early Years Network to facilitate	The sharing of staff between agencies occurs as required.	Ongoing
2.4. Improve early childhood outcomes and school readiness	2.4.1. Adopt a whole of community approach to improving literacy and numeracy for children in Horsham & District through the implementation of suitable programs and initiatives such as the Let's Read program.	All service providers to participate. Horsham Library Playgroups Wimmera Southern Mallee LLEN	Relevant literacy and numeracy programs are introduced across the Shire.	Ongoing
	2.4.2. Advocate to Government for additional resources to support children requiring early childhood intervention services.	Horsham Early Years Network and Horsham Rural City Council to advocate	A number of different approaches have been made to Government to source additional resources.	Ongoing
	2.4.3. Seek funding to establish	Horsham Early Years	Funding is secured for additional	Low

Objective	Action	Partners	Key Performance Indicator	Priority
	additional supported playgroups.	Network and Horsham Rural City Council to facilitate Goolum Goolum Oasis	supported and culturally appropriate playgroups in Horsham & District.	
TIMELY ACCESS TO, AND PARTICIPATION IN SERVICES				
3.1. Co-ordinate transport with service provision	3.1.1. Find creative transport solutions to link families with early years services.	Horsham Early Years Network to facilitate	Creative transport solutions are developed and documented.	Medium
3.2. Ensure that facilities are located to enable access to all members of the community	3.2.1. Establish and retain integrated early years facilities in a number of locations throughout Horsham and District as required to allow ease of access to services.	Horsham Early Years Network	Early years services are distributed equitably across Horsham & District to maximise accessibility.	Low
3.3. Reduce the need for families to travel outside the district to access specialist services.	3.3.1. Explore options such as visiting services and virtual consultations by external medical specialists and allied health professionals to reduce the need for local people to travel away from Horsham for appointments.	Horsham Early Years Network to facilitate	Visiting and virtual specialist consultations are available to families in Horsham.	Low
3.4. Increase availability of	3.4.1 Explore options to provide more occasional childcare and more	Horsham Early Years Network	Appropriate and flexible childcare opportunities are available for families	Medium

Objective	Action	Partners	Key Performance Indicator	Priority
childcare	flexibility in childcare to enable a greater number of families to access this service.		in Horsham & District.	
3.5 Provide inclusive environments for children and families	3.5.1. All early years services adopt inclusive approaches to children and families so that both services and facilities maximise their accessibility in terms of universal access, affordability, transport and cultural inclusion.	All service providers to facilitate	Early years services and facilities are accessible and inclusive.	Medium
IMPROVED OPPORTUNITIES FOR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN				
4.1 Provide a range of activities and opportunities for children	4.1.1. Ensure that children of all ages are provided with a range of fun and low cost social, educational and recreational activities in Horsham & District, such as libraries, arts programs, music programs and movement programs, to enhance their growth and development.	Horsham Rural City Council to facilitate Community groups	There are a broad range of programs available for children in the community. Children's programs are well supported by families.	Ongoing
	4.1.2. Ensure that quality play facilities and open space areas (including walking / cycling paths) are provided throughout Horsham & District to enhance the growth and development of children.	Horsham Rural City Council to facilitate	There are a range of quality and accessible outdoor opportunities available for children in the community.	Ongoing

Objective	Action	Partners	Key Performance Indicator	Priority
4.2 Provide information to maximise children's physical health	4.2.1. Ensure that families are provided with information about the physical activity and nutritional needs of children, as well as information about healthy weight ranges.	Horsham Early Years Network to facilitate	Information about physical health has been provided in a range of different formats.	Medium
	4.2.2. Ensure that families are provided with information about the importance of immunisations and breastfeeding in terms of their children's health.	Horsham Rural City Council to facilitate	Immunisation and breastfeeding rates in Horsham & District are at least at the state average, if not higher.	High
4.3 Encourage children's participation in planning.	4.3.1. Ensure that Council provides opportunities for children to be involved in the planning of spaces, places and services that may impact upon them, e.g. play spaces, shopping precincts, open space, early years centres, etc.	Horsham Rural City Council to facilitate	Children are involved in the planning of public spaces and relevant services in the community.	High Ongoing

12.0 Infrastructure plan

Having analysed the existing condition of current facilities within the Horsham area and the capacity for expansion of facilities, it has become apparent that almost none of the existing facilities has any real capacity for expansion or the meaningful addition of facilities to allow for an integrated service. A geographical analysis of the Horsham area in relation to travel distances, population growth, placement of other community infrastructure and social need has led to the conclusion that there are three main precincts which should be developed as part of an overall integrated service plan. Due to fluctuations in population growth and the uncertainty over distribution of new housing developments within the Horsham district, it is recommended that infrastructure development take place over time focusing on short (0-5 years), medium (5-10 years) and long term (10+ years) aims.

12.1 Short term development

This infrastructure plan has identified the most pressing need for the development of an integrated service hub is in Horsham North. This has already been anticipated by the Horsham North Urban Design Framework and is backed by the poor SEIFA data indicating that this area of Horsham is the most pressing social needs. A priority of this early years plan should be the development of a new integrated services hub to be located on Horsham-Kalkee Road adjacent to the Dudley Cornell Reserve. The placement of an integrated early years hub in this location will also enable activation of the reserve along Horsham-Kalkee Road and provide a potential catalyst for further development within the reserve itself, providing a range of co-located recreational and potentially educational facilities over the longer term.

12.2 Medium term

Council's strategic planning and existing structure plans indicate that the next wave of residential development in Horsham is likely to take place on the western edge of the city. For this reason, this precinct is considered to be the next priority in the development of integrated facilities. A site is yet to be identified but it is likely that Council could procure land through development contributions from land sub-division in that area. It is anticipated that the services provided at this hub would be similar to those provided in Horsham North. Planning for the detailed requirements for this building would need to take account population growth over the medium term.

12.3 Long term

In the long term population growth and housing development is also anticipated in the area south of the river. The facilities currently provided at Green Park are considered adequate within the short term but could be improved immediately with the addition of some other allied uses such as consulting space. In the long term if population and residential growth occur in the area, it will be necessary to consider a third integrated hub to be constructed and managed along the lines of the other two. Detailed planning for this facility would need to occur in line with population growth.

12.4 Other Potential Impacts

It is noted that all of the planning that has been carried out has used data currently available which anticipates population growth occurring at a similar rate to previous years. It should be noted, however, that there are currently plans being put in place to increase the level of mining and other research activities within the Horsham district. Depending on the timing and the nature of such activities if they occur, planning may need to be brought forward for the medium and long term provision. It is recommended that Council engage with potential companies intending to establish activities in the area with the aim of determining the potential impacts for families and provision of children's services. It will be important, regardless of whether or not additional demand occurs as a result of a period of growth from mining activities that services are flexible and able to cater for changing needs and numbers.



Figure 17: Image by Noah aged seven. Playing football makes him happy.

13.0 Governance

There are two distinct governance models that need to be developed in relation to early years services in Horsham. The first of these is a model to govern integrated early years services across the entire municipality. This particular governance model does not relate to any one particular facility; instead, its focus is more on ensuring that all relevant agencies communicate with each other and operate in an integrated manner. The second model refers to the governance of a specific early years hub to be developed in Horsham North. It focuses on the governance of the building and the user groups who operate from the building.

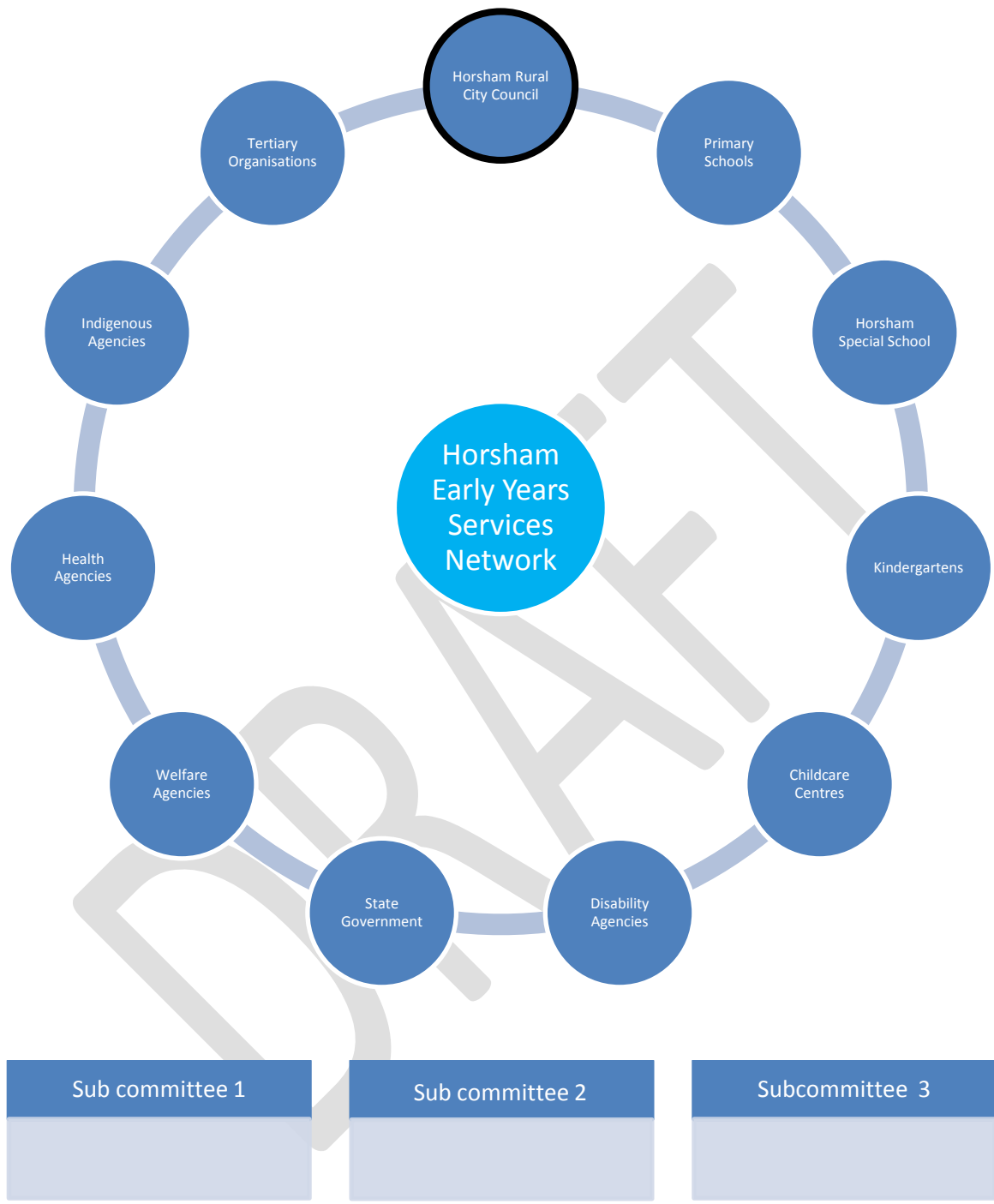


Figure 18: Image by Ayva aged five. Playing on the monkey bars makes her happy.

13.1 Governance model for integrated early years services in Horsham & District

To assist with the implementation of the Municipal Early Years Plan and the integration of early years services in Horsham, it is recommended that the working party established to help develop the MEYP is retained and becomes the Horsham Early Years Services Network. This working party represented many of the key services that work in the early years sector in the community. Specific positions from each relevant organisation need to be identified on this committee in order to have the most impact.

Under this governance model, the network will meet quarterly each year (or more times if necessary) to help guide the implementation of the recommendations contained within the MEYP and to progress the desire to integrate early years services. It is envisaged that this network is coordinated by Horsham Rural City Council and that each member signs a Memorandum of Understanding which outlines the objectives of parties working together and the roles and responsibilities of each party. Sub-committees or working groups may be formed from time to time to progress specific issues. Members of the general community or other organisations may be co-opted on to these sub-committees as required.



Refer to the Appendix for a copy of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

13.2 Governance model for an integrated early years service centre in Horsham North

13.2.1 Background

The nature of the integrated early learning centre has been determined, but further work is required on the most appropriate governance model. An agreement by all parties in terms of roles and responsibilities needs to be documented and reflected in a signed MOU. This will help to ensure the best possible outcomes for integrated service delivery and more broadly, the best possible outcomes for children and their families.

13.2.2 Possible services involved in an integrated early years service

When an integrated early years service facility is developed in Horsham North, it is anticipated that numerous services or agencies will operate either permanently or on a casual or visiting basis from the centre. These services or agencies may include:

- Kindergarten
- Childcare / Family Day Care
- Maternal and Child Health Service
- Playgroups
- Toy Library
- Local health and welfare agencies
- Disability agencies
- Support groups
- Early childhood intervention services
- Visiting health professionals
- Other relevant organisations
- Outside school hours care

Other organisations may hire the centre for health and wellbeing classes, parenting courses, meetings, workshops, etc.

13.2.3 Governance components

The key decisions that need to be made around the governance of an integrated early years service include:

- Who manages the integrated service?
- Who holds the children's service's licenses?
- Who maintains the buildings?
- Who funds the service?
- Who manages the money?
- Who employs the staff?

13.2.4 Governance options

Possible governance arrangements for the integrated Hub include:

- An existing local organisation such as a school or a non-government agency could take on management of the hub building and co-ordination of services in the building. There will need to be a lease agreement with Council for the building itself and agreements between all stakeholders, e.g. MOU, Heads of Agreements.
- If a new service is developed, it could become an incorporated body with a constitution such as a company limited by guarantee; a partnership, a proprietary limited company (private company with shares), a public limited company (public company with shares), a co-operative, etc. This body would manage the hub and have a lease agreement with Council as the owner of the asset.
- Council could engage a private management service, such as ECMS or similar company to manage the centre on their behalf. Agreements with the various providers would then be made with Council, with the manager being Council's representative.
- Council could manage the Hub directly but would need to employ additional staff with appropriate expertise.

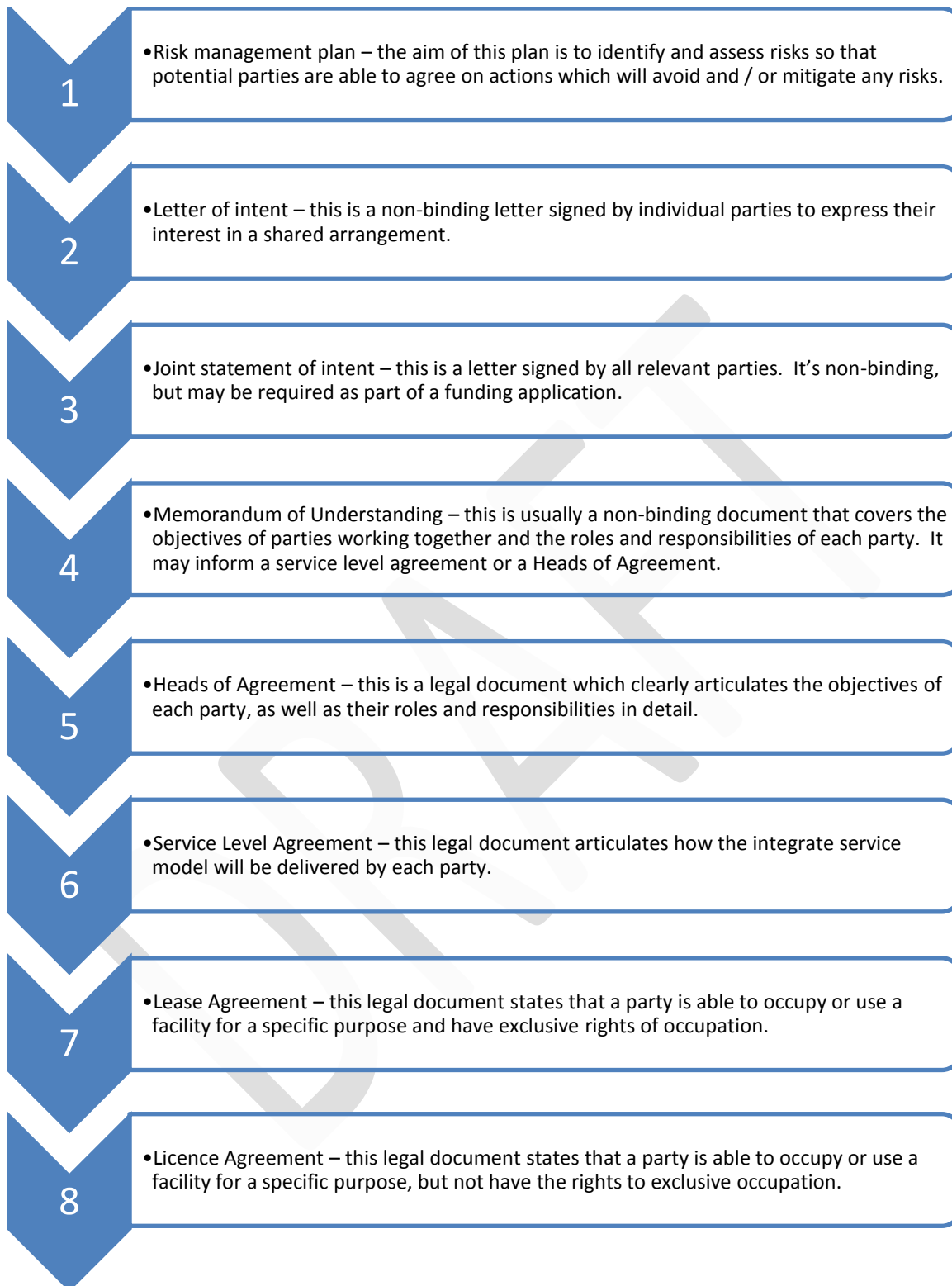


Figure 19: Image by Seth aged five. Playing outside makes him happy.

Some of the steps required to establish an integrated service³³:

³³ Adapted from: **Every Child Every Opportunity**

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14.0 Glossary of early years terminology

The following table provides a definition or description of key terms used throughout the Municipal Early Years Plan.

Term	Definition / Description
Early Years	Early years is described as the period of time from a child's birth until they reach eight years of age.
Long day care	<p>“Long Day Care is sometimes referred to as centre-based care and is generally provided in a building or part of a building that has been created specifically for use as a child care centre.</p> <p>Centres usually operate between 7:30 am and 6:00 pm and offer professional care for children aged 0-6. Children are usually grouped in rooms according to age and developmental stage.</p> <p>Child care is usually available for all day or part of the day at a centre. Some centres offer morning or afternoon sessions.</p> <p>Many centres offer meals throughout the day including morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea. The types of meals vary from centre to centre. If a centre does not offer meals then families will need to provide their own.</p> <p>Most Long Day Care centres will have an early education component to their programme so children will learn as they are cared for.</p> <p>Long Day Care centres are run by private companies, local councils, community organisations, individuals, non-profit organisations or by employers for their staff.” (My Child: http://www.mychild.gov.au/sites/mychild/childcare-information/pages/options)</p>
Occasional care	<p>“Occasional Care offers professional care for children on a casual basis. This service is suitable for families who do not need child care on a regular basis but would like someone to look after their children occasionally, for example when they have a medical or other appointment. Most Occasional Care centres have flexible operating hours and can cater for children whose parents work irregular or unpredictable hours (e.g. shift workers).” (My Child: http://www.mychild.gov.au/sites/mychild/childcare-information/pages/options)</p>
Family day care	<p>“Family Day Care (FDC) services deliver flexible home-based education and care for children via a network of FDC educators. FDC services support and administer the care that is provided, on their behalf, in educators' homes. FDC services can provide flexible care, including all-day care, part-time, casual, overnight, before and after school care, and care during school holidays.” (My Child:</p>

Term	Definition / Description
	http://www.mychild.gov.au/sites/mychild/childcare-information/pages/options
Maternal and Child Health	<p>Maternal and child health (MCH) services are provided by a qualified MCH nurse and can be accessed by all Victorian families with children aged from birth to six years old. The services includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “child health monitoring • maternal health and wellbeing • early identification of health and development concerns • nursing intervention and referral when indicated • health promotion and education • parenting support.” (MAV: http://www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/children-families/maternal-child-health/Pages/default.aspx)
Kindergarten	<p>Kindergarten, or pre-school, “has traditionally been the education and care program offered to young children in the year prior to school entry. It is often considered the first step into a more formal learning environment. Over recent years kindergarten has included one year of funded kindergarten (the year prior to school entry) and an unfunded year (often referred to as three-year-old kindergarten). Kindergarten programs provide an educational program in which qualified early childhood teachers and educators work to engage each child in effective learning, thereby promoting communication, learning and thinking, positive relationships and identity.” (Early Learning Association Australia: https://ela.org.au/Parents/FAQ%27s)</p>
Outside school hours care	<p>Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) services are targeted at children generally between 5 and 12 years of age and include before school care, after school care and vacation care. OSHC services are commonly provided to children in centres at, or close to, primary schools. Services are provided by Government and community run centres as well as private for-profit organisations. Government funding for OSHC is primarily from the child care benefit and the child care rebate. (The Productivity Commission Report: http://www.pc.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/113854/10-early-childhood-chapter7.pdf)</p>
Early childhood intervention	<p>“Early childhood intervention consists of multi- disciplinary services provided to children from birth to eight years of age to promote child health and enhance emerging wellbeing competencies, minimize developmental delays, remediate existing or emerging disabilities, prevent functional deterioration, and promote adaptive parenting and overall functioning.” (MAV: http://www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/children-families/municipal-early-years-planning/Pages/default.aspx)</p>

Term	Definition / Description
Playgroup	<p>“Playgroups are regular gatherings of under school age children and their parents or caregivers for the purpose of play and social activities. They are generally community - based and offered locally. Playgroups are beneficial for both children and parents/caregivers, providing opportunities for children’s development, as well as potential to support parents/caregivers in their parenting role.” (Playgroup Victoria: https://www.playgroup.org.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/Research/PlaygroupResearchAgenda.pdf)</p>
Toy Library	<p>Toy libraries feature a vast array of well made toys that have been designed to support child’s skill development and imagination Families may pay a small annual membership to borrow toys from the library. A key aim of toy libraries is to support families and encourage togetherness with quality time spent playing with children. Toy libraries can be located in a variety of different places, and be managed in a variety of different ways. (Toy Libraries Australia: http://www.toylibraries.org.au/content/what-toy-library)</p>
Best Start Program	<p>This is a State Government program that seeks to introduce service level changes to improve outcomes for children.</p>
Early Intervention	<p>The National Disability Insurance Scheme identifies the seven key principles and practices of early intervention as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Infants and toddlers learn best through every day experiences and interactions with familiar people in familiar contexts. 2. All families, with the necessary supports and resources, can enhance their children’s learning and development. 3. The primary role of the service provider in early intervention is to work with and support the family members and caregivers in a child’s life. 4. The early intervention process, from initial contacts through transition, must be dynamic and individualized to reflect the child’s and family members’ preferences, learning styles and cultural beliefs. 5. IFSP outcomes must be functional and based on children’s and families’ needs and priorities 6. The family’s priorities needs and interests are addressed most appropriately by a primary provider who represents and receives team and community support. 7. Interventions with young children and family members must be based on explicit principles, validated practices, best available research and relevant laws and regulations. <p>(Workgroup on Principles and Practices in Natural Environments, OSEP TA Community of Practice: Part C Settings. (2008, February). Seven key principles: Looks like / doesn’t look like.)</p>



Figure 20: Image by Summer aged seven. Sunshine makes her happy.

DRAFT