

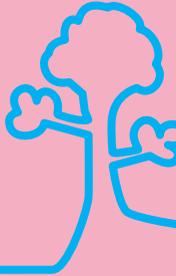
CREATE

MACEDON RANGES
SHIRE COUNCIL
MUNICIPAL EARLY YEARS PLAN
2021-2025



**Macedon
Ranges**
Shire Council

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



Macedon Ranges Shire Council acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this land and waterways. Council recognises their living cultures and ongoing connection to Country and pays respect to their Elders past, and present.

Council also acknowledges local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander residents of Macedon Ranges for their ongoing contribution to the diverse culture of our community.



CREATIVE



A snapshot*

The number of children aged 0 to 9 years in the Macedon Ranges Shire was 6,168 in 2016. By 2036 this number is expected to grow to 8,939.

Approximately 85 per cent of children aged 0 to 9 lived in one of the shire's urban settlements. This is a higher percentage of children living in urban settlements than in 2011.

5 to 9 year olds are the largest five-year age group projected in both 2026 and 2036 in the Macedon Ranges Shire, with a total of 4,005 persons and 4,712 persons respectively.

4.5 per cent of children aged between 0 and 9 years required assistance with core activities due to severe or profound disability. This is greater than the level of need identified in the 2011 Census.

Compared to Regional VIC (27.2 per cent) the Macedon Ranges Shire (31.6 per cent) had a higher proportion of people who provided unpaid child care either to their own or to other children.

Overall 11,275 people, or 51.9 per cent of the Macedon Ranges Shire's working residents, travel outside of the area to work.

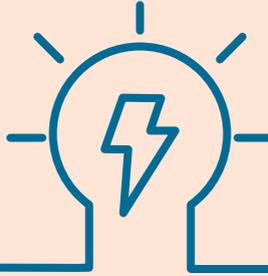
54 children aged 0-9 identified as Indigenous, which accounts for 26.7 per cent of the total Indigenous population in the Macedon Ranges Shire.

(*Census 2016, forecast.id)

THE STORY OF

CREATE





CREATE is a five year plan that responds to the needs, priorities, aspirations and challenges of children, as identified by the community.

This plan now replaces the previous Early Years Plan 2016-2020.

The name CREATE has been chosen because of the inherently creative way in which children engage with the world, which encourages us to be creative and aspirational in the creation of this plan.

CREATE recognises that 'children' (for the purposes of this plan those aged under 9 years) are citizens and contributors to the communities that they live in, and acknowledges that the participation of children in community life is largely influenced by the beliefs, practices and decisions of adults.

As such, Council was keen to hear from children and adults about what would support a child friendly Macedon Ranges. A child friendly community is a place where children's rights and needs are at the centre of good community planning and design. It is a place where adults listen to children and young people and take what they say seriously.

CREATE is informed by community consultation undertaken in late 2019, and includes children's voices. It includes priority areas for action and responsibilities across Council departments.



We engaged a consulting firm



We reviewed and analysed our findings



We drafted our Municipal Early Years Plan



We ran the draft past the community



We launched CREATE



We engaged over 980 people in the development of CREATE, including over 200 children



We made an Early Years Plan survey



We consulted the community



We asked Council to endorse CREATE

CREATE

THE HOW

From our consultation and survey results we found:

The top-rated priority areas to ensure **children can live safe, healthy, happy and productive lives:**



Easy access to public spaces and buildings



Being able to move around easily and safely

The **biggest challenge** facing children 0-8 years in the Macedon Ranges:



Childcare, kindergarten and OOSH care options



Clubs, groups, activities and events for young children and their families

The most common ideas for what a **children-friendly shire** looks like:



Clubs, groups, activities and events for young children and their families



Children are an important part of community

THE FOUND



Better access to, and increased provision of, early childhood education and care services



Footpath networks



Health facilities and specialist services



Children are safe



Pedestrian, cyclist and road safety

THE PRIORITY ACTION AREAS

We found that a child-friendly shire is one where children and families can move around easily and safely, and have access to a range of local services and activities that are needed for children to grow and thrive. Children want to feel valued, supported and connected within a supportive and strong community.



CREATING OUR COMMUNITY

What's important to children and families

Children are socially connected and active

Provide opportunities for children to connect in community settings, including parks, playgrounds, shops and neighbourhoods

Provide opportunities for children to establish positive relationships with friends and adults outside the family

Support the community to deliver a diverse range of clubs, groups and events inclusive of children and supporting social connections

Protect opportunities for children to connect with nature

Deliver child friendly events

Children thrive in their community

Support children to move safely in the community

Further investigate issues about supply of health, education and care raised in consultation

Continue staff development to ensure council delivered services contribute to positive outcomes for children

Support and advocate for the interests of children

Enable and empower children to participate in decisions about their needs and interests

Support services that support families to provide a stable and loving home environment



Children's needs are recognised in infrastructure and the built environment

Provide solutions to how children and families navigate their communities to achieve easy and safe access to public spaces and buildings

Collaborate with other levels of government to progress infrastructure reform priorities for children

Actively seek and respond to opportunities to provide children opportunity to play, explore, solve problems, communicate, think, create and construct

Actively seek and respond to the needs of people of all ages and abilities in planning processes

Children are respected and valued in their community

Promote children's rights and reduce risks to their safety

Deliver opportunities for children to contribute to community decision-making processes

Inform the community about matters that affect them

Recognise and celebrate child-friendly aspects of the local community

Deliver initiatives to address ageism and promote child-friendly practices

Our vision is that the Macedon Ranges is a place where childhood is valued and where every child can thrive, reach their potential and actively participate in the community, now and into the future.

CREATING



Below is a condensed version of the Municipal Early Years Plan action table. We encourage you to visit mrc.vic.gov.au/CREATE for a full, un-condensed version of the action table.

OBJECTIVE	WHAT WE WILL DO	WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE
<p>1.1 Increase accessible parking options for families</p> <p>1.2 Improve footpath connectivity</p> <p>1.3 Increase the number of bike paths</p> <p>1.4 Improve pedestrian crossings and school crossings</p>	<p>In conjunction with community consultation, Early Years and Maternal and Child Health are engaged as knowledge experts for projects in the community impacting children and families, to gain a better understanding of children's and families' needs, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parking for parents with prams at shopping areas, five minute drop off zones near primary schools and increasing disability parking bays • footpath improvements and better connectivity to meet community expectations, child/family needs and address safety concerns • more interconnected bike paths that benefit the whole community • a review of pedestrian crossings and school crossings in each township to identify possible improvements that ensure child and family safety 	<p>More family friendly and accessible parking options are made available or are planned for in the future</p> <p>More footpaths and interconnected bike paths are built in the shire or are planned for in the future that improve access to schools, childcare and kindergarten services, play areas and other community resources and services frequented by young children and their families</p> <p>Safety issues related to young children's and their families' use of pedestrian crossings and school crossings are identified</p> <p>There are additional pedestrian crossings, or improvements to existing pedestrian crossings and school crossings, in locations with identified need</p>
<p>1.5 Improve bike safety on paths and roads for children</p>	<p>Introduce bike safety initiatives at Council managed kindergartens</p> <p>Encourage not for profit and private kindergarten providers, and local primary schools, to participate in bike safety initiatives</p>	<p>All Council managed kindergartens, and an increased number of schools and non-Council kindergartens, offer bike safety initiatives</p> <p>Increase in the number of children successfully participating in bike safety initiatives at schools and kindergartens across the shire</p>
<p>1.6 Expand local transport options</p>	<p>Advocate for the expansion of bus services and on-demand services including taxis, ride sharing, car sharing and volunteer transport</p>	<p>Availability of increased public transport options that allow for young children and their families to commute throughout the shire</p>
<p>1.7 Strengthen relationships between playgroups and toy libraries</p>	<p>Review Council's role in supporting playgroups and toy libraries and develop opportunities to strengthen the connections between user groups</p>	<p>Council provides clearly defined support to playgroups and toy libraries in the shire</p>
<p>1.8 Improve social connection for children and families with barriers to social engagement</p>	<p>Explore and advocate for additional funding with State Government to increase social connections amongst children and families who are at risk of experiencing social isolation and who may not engage in traditional community programs, eg young parents, families with child protection involvement, families from low socio-economic-status background, families from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities</p> <p>Use existing Council relationships to connect local community groups and services to support initiatives encouraging connection/participation of families with young children, including opportunities for intergenerational relationships</p>	<p>Children and families experiencing social isolation have stronger links to peers, community groups and service providers</p> <p>Programs run within the shire that seek to engage and connect with isolated families, and are referred into by local service providers</p> <p>Community groups and organisations are supported to run programs that connect families</p>
<p>1.9 Increase access to council managed pools</p>	<p>Review accessibility of Council managed pools on an annual basis, and where possible explore options to increase access for young children and their families</p>	<p>Annual review of Council managed pools occurs resulting in increased access for young children and their families</p>
<p>1.10 Explore partnerships with local schools</p>	<p>1.10.1 Explore partnerships with local schools around children's use of school grounds outside of school hours and during school holidays</p>	<p>An agreement is reached between schools and Council to support children's access to school grounds outside of school hours</p>

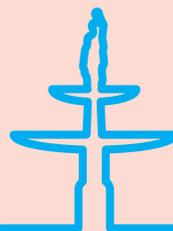
OBJECTIVE	WHAT WE WILL DO	WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE
<p>2.1 Provide and support access to quality kindergarten programs across the shire</p>	<p>In Council's role as early years planner, work with all kindergarten providers to ensure there are sufficient places for every three and four year old child to attend kindergarten within the shire</p> <p>Advocate for increased funding and resource investment by the State Government to co-locate new facilities with relevant early childhood services, eg schools and Maternal and Child Health</p> <p>Explore new partnership opportunities with not-for-profit and private sector agencies</p> <p>Explore feasibility of bush kinder programs being run across the shire</p>	<p>All eligible children in the shire have access to fifteen hours of four year old kindergarten and there are no wait lists</p> <p>All eligible children in the shire have access to five hours of funded three year old kindergarten by 2022 and fifteen hours of funded three year old kindergarten by 2029</p> <p>Increase in number of new facilities with co-located early years services</p> <p>Number of activities occurring in the shire in partnership between Council, and not for profit and private kindergarten providers</p> <p>The Macedon Ranges Approved Provider Network is established and chaired by Council, meeting at least four times a year and facilitating partnership projects</p> <p>Bush kinder programs are offered across the shire where appropriate</p>
<p>2.2 Plan for early education reform within Council managed kindergartens</p>	<p>Implement funded three year old kindergarten in Council managed kindergartens from 2022</p>	<p>Council provides five hours of funded three year old kindergarten in all Council managed services from 2022, and 15 hours of funded kindergarten by 2029, in line with State Government reform</p> <p>Council sets a strategic direction for the delivery of three and four year old funded kindergarten in the shire</p>
<p>2.3 Continue initiatives that improve school readiness</p>	<p>Continue to access School Readiness Funding (SRF) to assist children with communication, wellbeing, access and inclusion outcomes prior to attending school</p> <p>Explore options and funding for allied health professionals including speech therapists, dietician, autism specialists to identify developmental issues and maximise school readiness</p> <p>Investigate the need for a shire-wide transition strategy</p>	<p>School Readiness Funding is accessed on an annual basis with identified outcomes for children and staff</p> <p>Families feel their children are more equipped for the transition to, and learning once in, school</p> <p>Families, schools and service providers have clarity of steps around transition planning</p>
<p>2.4 Establish a Child and Family Services Network</p>	<p>Facilitate the development of a Child and Family Services Network to strengthen interagency partnerships with early childhood services in the shire</p>	<p>Regular meetings are held with early childhood services to respond to community needs</p>

OBJECTIVE	WHAT WE WILL DO	WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE
<p>2.5 Strengthen early childhood education and health services</p>	<p>Develop a Shire wide recruitment and retention strategy for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services</p> <p>Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture in Macedon Ranges Shire Council</p> <p>Advocate for funding and service opportunities that facilitate connections for families and children who are hard to reach/overlooked, eg young parents</p> <p>Advocate for funding and service opportunities with the State and Federal Government to increase holistic access to local family support and educational services such as new parent groups, allied health care providers, paediatricians and child psychologists</p>	<p>A recruitment and retention strategy is in place to support a full complement of qualified staff at ECEC services across the shire</p> <p>Protecting children from harm and abuse is embedded in the everyday thinking and practice of leaders, staff and volunteers</p> <p>Hard to reach/overlooked families and children have stronger community connections</p> <p>Children and families are connected and have greater access to qualified health professionals</p> <p>Children and families are able to access local allied health care providers, paediatricians and child psychologists</p> <p>There is an increase in paediatricians and child psychologists and a decrease in average wait times for these services in the shire</p>
<p>2.6 Build on existing Maternal and Child Health (MCH) initiatives</p>	<p>Develop an educational campaign to improve breastfeeding awareness, rates and duration in the shire</p> <p>Implement the State Government funded sleep settling initiative</p> <p>Continue to strengthen the <i>smalldtalk</i> supported playgroup program and Enhanced Maternal and Child Health programming to support eligible families and children</p> <p>Support, educate about and promote use of reusable cloth nappies</p> <p>Support, enable and deliver innovative programs and activities targeting diverse parents of young children, eg young parents, parents who are socially isolated, new dads</p> <p>Implement learnings from COVID-19, to explore innovative ways for MCH Nurses to connect with new parents and to enable new parents to connect with one another</p>	<p>The Breastfeeding Support Service continues to provide early access to a lactation consultant</p> <p>Further breastfeeding education activities are initiated across the shire</p> <p>'Fully breastfeeding' rates at 6 months are improved from the 2019/20 rate of 24 percent</p> <p>Breastfeeding rates improve in the shire and remain consistently above the state average</p> <p>The sleep settling initiative is delivered within the Universal Maternal and Child Health services as per the identified targets</p> <p>All families assessed as meeting the criteria have access to a <i>smalldtalk</i> playgroup or the Enhanced Maternal and Child Health support service</p> <p>Number of families indicating they use reusable nappies</p> <p>There is an increase in programs and activities in the shire that support a broad range of parents and families</p> <p>Vulnerable parents report they feel better connected, resourced and supported</p> <p>New parents report that they feel connected, resource and supported, and develop relationships with peers outside of the traditional new parents groups</p>
<p>2.7 Support the promotion of events and activities for families</p>	<p>Contribute to the annual planning and promotion of Council-led arts, culture and sporting activities and events for children of all abilities and backgrounds</p> <p>Explore and promote activities, events and programs for children organised by external stakeholders</p> <p>Partner with Goldfields Library Corporation to explore opportunities, including events and activities, to enhance social connection, participation, wellbeing, fun, literacy and introduction of lifelong learning for children</p>	<p>More children are engaged with arts, culture, sports and learning</p>

OBJECTIVE	WHAT WE WILL DO	WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE
2.8 Increase capacity of Council staff and programs to support Indigenous children and their families	<p>Provide cultural competency training to Council staff in early childhood and Maternal and Child Health settings</p> <p>Continue to work towards goals as identified in the Reconciliation Action Plan</p> <p>Encourage other Early Childhood Education and Care providers in the shire to participate in cultural competency training</p> <p>Continue to explore ways to celebrate Indigenous cultures in public spaces in planning, design and activation of the space</p>	<p>Number of Early Years/MCH staff participating in cultural competency training</p> <p>Indigenous culture is celebrated across the shire, including in public spaces</p> <p>Number of ECEC services in the shire participating in cultural competency training</p>
2.9 Continue to deliver an immunisation service to babies and children	<p>Continue to provide an immunisation service to families and children in the shire as per the national immunisation schedule</p> <p>Explore opportunities to support hard to reach families to have their babies and children immunised</p>	<p>An accessible immunisation service is available to all residents across the shire</p> <p>All eligible babies and children in the shire are immunised as per the national immunisation schedule</p>

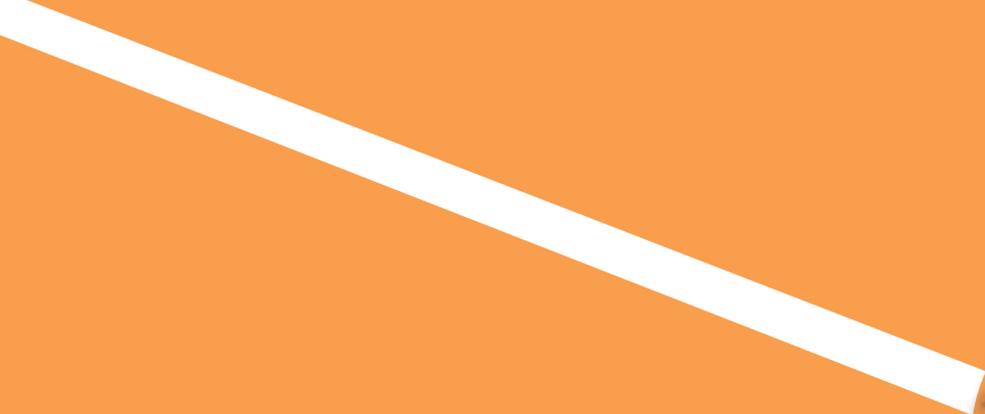
OBJECTIVE	WHAT WE WILL DO	WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE
3.1 Support children and families of all abilities to access open spaces	<p>In conjunction with community consultation, Early Years and Maternal and Child Health are engaged as knowledge experts for projects in the community impacting children and families, to gain a better understanding of children's and families' needs, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all ability access to Council outdoor and community open spaces including seating, shade, BBQ facilities and toilets with baby change facilities and breast feeding amenities • improvements to parks and public spaces to make them more child and family friendly • fencing of playgrounds as appropriate to increase safety of children 	<p>All families can access and enjoy open spaces</p>
3.2 Understand community need and satisfaction with baby change facilities in the shire	<p>Undertake a review of baby change facilities within each township</p> <p>Support budget bids and grants that allow for upgrade of facilities with baby change facilities as needed</p>	<p>Review undertaken that provides clarity on possible gaps in baby change facilities in each township</p> <p>Number and location of baby change facilities in the shire reflect community need</p>
3.3 Strengthen municipal planning of early years services	<p>Identify the feasibility of a substantive Early Years Planner to address social planning priorities, and to support and lead collaboration and development of the early years sector across the shire</p> <p>Work with stakeholders on a process that considers early years expertise in the provision of public play spaces and early years infrastructure in the shire, and broader infrastructure and development projects including new planning applications</p> <p>In Council's role as Early Years' Planner, review the provision of childcare in the Macedon Ranges and investigate opportunities to increase the access</p>	<p>It is proposed to employ an Early Years Planner on an ongoing basis subject to feasibility and budget</p> <p>Multiple early childhood services are available locally to meet expanding community needs</p> <p>Sufficient childcare options are available to meet the need across the shire</p>

OBJECTIVE	WHAT WE WILL DO	WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE
<p>4.1 Involve children and families in consultation to inform services and program planning, and infrastructure and development projects in the shire</p>	<p>Develop engagement strategies to ensure children and families are included in the planning and development of local activities, services, programs and projects</p> <p>Communicate with children and families in child-friendly ways about changes to programs and services that impact them</p>	<p>Children and parent views inform decision making</p> <p>Relevant information is communicated to children in ways that they can understand</p>
<p>4.2 Explore the use of video technology in early childhood services</p>	<p>Explore the use of video tours of Maternal and Child Health centres, toy libraries and playgroups, as per video tours of kindergartens, allowing greater access for families</p> <p>Explore other innovative ideas to showcase early childhood services and add elements of creativity to programs</p> <p>Kindergarten and MCH staff build a collection of strategies, resources and activities that can be utilised to support with the intention of strengthening children's and families' engagement with services during periods of restrictions due to COVID-19</p>	<p>Video tours are available for Council Early Years/ MCH programs and services</p> <p>Increase in the use of creative and contemporary technologies in Council's early childhood services</p> <p>Children and their families remain connected to Council's early years services when face to face service provision isn't possible</p>
<p>4.3 Explore feasibility of Macedon Ranges becoming a child friendly community</p>	<p>Identify processes and criteria involved in recognising the Macedon Ranges as a child-friendly community</p> <p>Establish a partnership with UNICEF and obtain UNICEF recognition if recognition criteria are met</p>	<p>Council agrees to work towards becoming a child-friendly shire</p> <p>A child-friendly framework is adopted in the Macedon Ranges</p>









Read the Municipal Early Years Plan
2021-2025: CREATE on our website

mrsc.vic.gov.au/CREATE



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