



Starting Blocks

Early and Middle Years
Strategy
(0-12 years of age)

2022 - 2030



Hepburn
SHIRE COUNCIL

Message from the Mayor

During the early and middle years, a child's brain develops faster than at any other time of life. This begins in early childhood and then influences how children perform at school, as young people, as adults and as future leaders and active citizens.

Hepburn Shire Council is committed to achieving the best outcomes for our children and families. Laying strong foundations and applying early intervention for our children gives them the best start in life.

Our Early and Middle Years Strategy 2022-2026 outlines a vision where all children who live in Hepburn Shire get the best start in life and go on to reach their potential. The strategy also demonstrates our commitment and highlights the support and investment we will provide to our children and families to play and participate in their community, and to grow and develop at each stage of life.

Council takes seriously its role in leading policy direction, coordinating and collaboration with partners, the provision of infrastructure and programs, advocacy and strengthening community capacity. To positively impact on the lives of our children, we must collaborate internally and work with external partners to achieve our vision.

I would like to thank everyone who worked collaboratively to develop our Early and Middle Years Strategy 2022-2026. The council looks forward to working with families, government, community organisations and service agencies to achieve great outcomes for our community.

Cr. Tim Drylie, Mayor
Hepburn Shire Council

We would also like to acknowledge:

- The many stakeholders who contributed to the development of the Hepburn Shire Council Early and Middle Years Strategy 2022–2026. Particularly the input from children and families from schools, kindergartens, childcare centres and playgroups, and the input of many service providers in the shire.
- Projectura Pty Ltd who worked closely with council to prepare this Early and Middle Years Strategy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Hepburn Shire Council acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which we live and work. On these lands, Djaara have performed age-old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal. We recognise their resilience through dispossession and it is a testament to their continuing culture and tradition, which is strong and thriving.

We also acknowledge the neighbouring Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri to our South East and the Wadawurrung to our South West and pay our respect to all Aboriginal peoples, their culture, and lore. We acknowledge their living culture and the unique role they play in the life of this region.



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1 About the strategy



Purpose

Hepburn Shire Council’s Early and Middle Years Strategy 2022-2030 aims to plan and prepare for family growth and the development needs of early years and middle years children.

It provides direction for the development and coordination of services, programs, infrastructure, activities, and local community development processes that impact children aged 0 – 12 years living in Hepburn Shire.

Why do we need an Early and Middle Years Strategy?

It is well established that a child’s early years provide a foundational basis for their growth and development across their lifetime. Specific focus on the ages of 0-8 years enables early intervention to ensure each child receives the best start in life and no child is left behind.

Council has included the middle years within this strategy. The middle years include the age group of 8 to 12 years, which are the years of rapid physical growth as young people pass through puberty. Although not historically a focus of early intervention, Council recognises this is an important developmental phase of childhood when children need strong social and educational support systems.

Link to Council Plan

A healthy, supported, and empowered community

2.2 Increase the availability and accessibility of services in the Hepburn Shire area to support livability, health, and wellbeing.

Embracing our past and planning for the future

3.3 Build and maintain quality infrastructure that supports and promotes livability and active living in the community. hood when children need strong social and educational support systems.

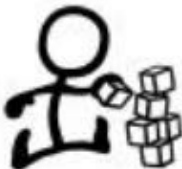
Vision STATEMENT

Hepburn Shire - an inclusive rural community located in Dja Dja Wurrung country where all people are valued, partnerships are fostered, environment is protected, diversity supported, and innovation embraced.

Project objectives

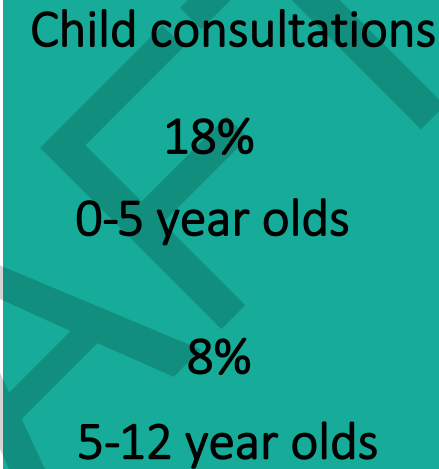
The Early and Middle Years Strategy 2022-2030 aims to:

- Provide a shared strategic direction to Council and the early years sector.
- Outline the service delivery, infrastructure and environment needed to ensure a vibrant future in the early year sector.
- Ensure the health, learning and development needs of children aged 0 to 12 years are met, and outcomes are improved.
- Ensure parents, families and carers have the support they need in their child-related role.



Process

The development of the strategy included five main stages >>

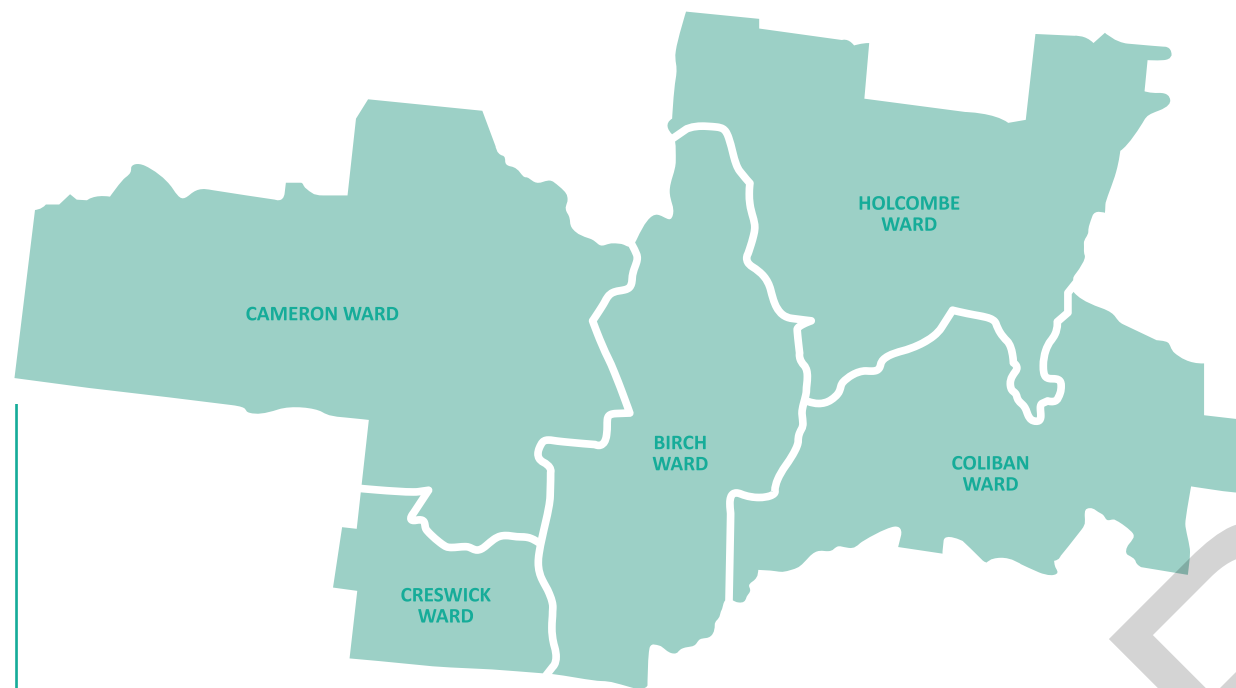


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Children and families in Hepburn Shire



Hepburn Shire



Hepburn Shire sits on the traditional lands of the Djaara people of the Dja Dja Wurrung, covering 1473 km² in the Central Highlands of Victoria.

Located approximately 115km northwest of Melbourne and 50km north of Ballarat.

The shire includes the townships of Clunes, Creswick, Daylesford, Hepburn Springs, Trentham and other small villages and hamlets.

Services and infrastructure

Maternal and Child Health

Jointly funded by Council and the Victorian Government, the Maternal and Child Health service is delivered by Central Highlands Rural Health in Daylesford, Creswick, Clunes and Trentham. Families can access ten key age and stage consultations for all children from birth to pre-school age, parenting support programs, information and referral to other child and family services, and a 24-hour counselling and advice line.

Immunisations

Immunisations are available through family medical practitioners within the shire. Council had previously delivered monthly infant immunisation but ceased the service due to low attendance.

Playgroups

There are nine playgroups that meet regularly within the shire. Six of the playgroups are community-run, with the other three being run by the Maternal and Child Health service.

Long Day Care and Occasional Care

There are two Long Day Care centers in Creswick and Daylesford

Occasional care services in Trentham and Daylesford

Local family daycare providers offer longer hours of care from private homes across the Shire

After School Care and School holiday programs

After school care is currently available in Daylesford School holiday programs are run from Long Day Care in Daylesford and youth holiday programs are run by council through the Youth team and libraries

Kindergarten

Kindergarten services for children aged 3 and 4 years are delivered by three kindergarten providers running seven centres: Aussie Kindies Creswick, Clunes and District Preschool, Creswick and District Preschool, Daylesford Preschool, Daylesford Community Child Care Centre, Hepburn Kindergarten, and Trentham Kindergarten.

Council does not directly provide preschool or kindergarten services to the community but acts as landlord to six of the preschools, providing the facility to operate out of.

Eureka Community Kindergarten Association (ECKA) is the Cluster Manager for the daily management of kindergarten services across the shire.

Primary schools

There are eleven primary schools in the shire, of these eight are public schools and three are private.

Youth Programs

Community interest based Youth activities are run through Council libraries and youth program throughout the school term

Community infrastructure

Council supports the delivery of services to children and families by providing infrastructure including playgrounds, parks, preschools and libraries.



Profile



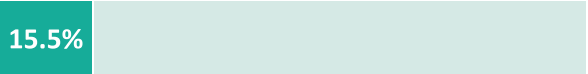
Children aged 0-14 years - % of total population 2011



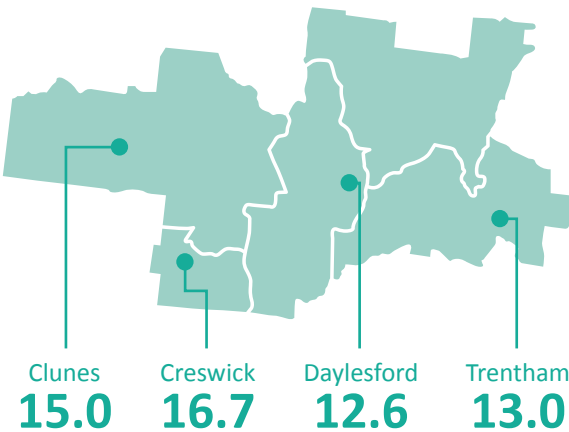
Children aged 0-14 years - % of total population 2016



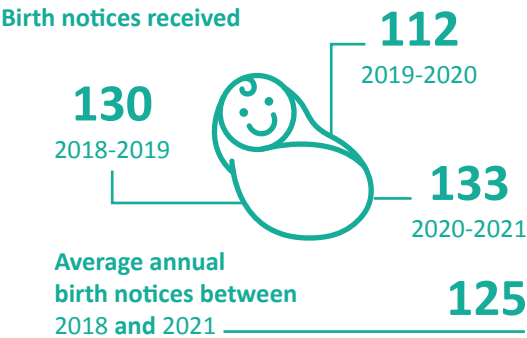
Children aged 0-14 years - % of total population 2020**



Percentage of total population aged 0-14 years who live in the main population areas (2016)



Birth notices received



Families



* Estimated residential population

** The Census reports on age groupings of 0-4, 5-9 and 10-14 years. Although not precisely aligned with the age cohort under consideration in this strategy, it is informative to consider.

Source: ABC Census 2016, 2019 Victoria in Future report, ABS, 2011 Census Community Profile + ABS, 2016 Census Community Profile + Social Health Atlas for Estimated Resident Population (ERP), Hepburn Shire Council Maternal and Child Health service data, ABS, 2016 Census State Suburb Codes, 20577 (Clunes), 20667 (Creswick), 20716 (Daylesford) and 22564 (Trentham)

Strengths and challenges

What is working well

- Perception of Hepburn Shire as a good place for children to grow up, including access to nature and open spaces, location and proximity, and the safe and friendly community
- The Maternal and Child Health service
- Number of infants enrolled in the Maternal and Child Health service
- Percentage of children full immunised at 1, 2, and 5 years of age
- Breast feeding
- Social activity programs like playgroups and rhyme time
- Children who met the fruit and vegetable consumption guidelines
- Proportion of children who are 'on track' in the physical health and wellbeing domain (readiness for the school day, physical independence and gross and fine motor skills)
- Community facilities such as libraries and kindergartens

Areas for improvement

- Childcare access and availability
- Information and awareness of programs, services, and activities that are available
- Awareness of available parenting support
- Updated and age-appropriate playgrounds
- Prevalence of family violence
- Physical and emotional health and wellbeing
- Parental concern about child behaviour, social emotional, and expressive language and articulation
- Cost of the Maternal and Child Health Service
- Percentage of Aboriginal children enrolled who participate in the Maternal and Child Health Service
- Proportion of population ever diagnosed with anxiety or depression
- Mothers smoking during pregnancy
- Percentage of women who did not attend antenatal care within the first 10 weeks of birth
- Transport
- Range of child-friendly and age-appropriate activities
- Facilities such as walking, cycling and pump tracks, and indoor play spaces

What you told us



Early Years (0 to 8 years)

We need:

- Exercise and play
- Healthy food and water
- Good wellbeing supported by family
- Learning and education opportunities

What makes us healthy:

- Exercise and play
- A broad range of activities
- Strong family support
- Helping others
- Hugs
- Learning and participation opportunities

We would like to:

- Help people
- Be nice to people
- Behave well
- Build houses
- Keep people safe
- Exercise choice in our own actions including lots of play and telling people what to do!



Middle Years (8 to 12 years)

Issues:

- Access to sport, recreation and playground infrastructure
- Feeling connected, included, safe and supported
- Places to meet and hang out
- Age-appropriate organised activities

What would make the shire a better place to live:

- Cycling and walking paths
- An indoor pool
- An indoor sports stadium
- Motorbike track
- Places to ride scooters
- Updated and age-appropriate playgrounds
- More events and activities
- Better places to meet and hang out



Families

What makes Hepburn Shire a good place for children to grow up:

- The natural environment
- Location and proximity
- Safe and friendly community

What's contributed to positive experiences raising a child:

- Maternal and Child Health and childcare services
- Libraries
- Social activities such as rhyme time and play groups
- Local people and other families
- Community groups
- Community feel
- Open spaces
- The opportunity to get out and about during recent lockdowns

What's contributed to negative experiences raising a child:

- Playgrounds and facilities
- Lack of walking, cycling and pump tracks
- No indoor play centres for cooler weather
- Spaces for children



Service providers

Challenges

- Finding qualified staff
- Cost of providing the service
- Finding suitable venues or locations to deliver services

Issues affecting children aged 0-12 years and their families

- Access to all forms of childcare
- Access to health services including mental health, and allied health
- Social vulnerability including poverty, education, and housing
- Family violence
- Lack of timely information to keep parents informed
- Addressing the impact of COVID-19 including increased anxiety, the need to build resilience and address the uncertainty

COVID-19 related impacts and issues:

- Increase in childhood development or disengagement issues
- Access to, and participation in, activities and opportunities which address social, emotional and language development
- Access to mental health or allied health support
- Separation anxiety due to isolation
- Educator and staff fatigue

We see Council's role as:

- Provide infrastructure, parks and gardens
- Provide financial support
- Deliver the Maternal and Child Health service.
- Facilitate programs and events
- Advocate for funding from state and federal governments





Community priorities



Service delivery

- **Childcare** availability and options to meet diverse needs within the community
- Local access to **health and allied health services**

Infrastructure

- Good community **infrastructure and facilities**
- **Sport and recreation** infrastructure and facilities, including tracks and trails, an indoor pool, pump tracks, sporting fields and courts, motorbike tracks, skate and scooter parks, and outdoor recreation equipment
- **Places** to meet and hang out
- Excellent **playgrounds** with shade, parks, nature play

Health, learning and development needs of children

- Live a **healthy and active lifestyle**, featuring exercise, play, and healthy food
- Sense of **belonging** and family **support**
- Enjoy **nature** and the great outdoors
- **Learning and education** opportunities, including a secondary school in Creswick
- **Reduce vulnerability** with a focus on socio-economic issues, housing, and family violence
- Child-friendly **events and activities**
- Strengthen children’s links to the **community**, through community and social support **groups**

Parents, families and carer support

- **Information** and communication
- Diverse **retail and hospitality offering**
- Address the **impact of COVID-19**, including some childhood development issues arising from isolation, anxiety and resilience



3 Early and Middle Years Strategy



Purpose

Hepburn Shire Council’s Early and Middle Years Strategy 2022-2030 aims to plan and prepare for family growth and the development needs of early years and middle years children.



Strategic priorities

The Early and Middle Years Strategy 2022-2030 is structured using themes and strategic priorities, which have been developed through extensive consultation with the community and key stakeholders.

A. Play and participate

- Provide age-appropriate, accessible and welcoming playgrounds, parks, open space and infrastructure to help children and families to live a healthy and active lifestyle
- Strengthen children’s links to the community, through community and social support groups
- Organise and promote child-friendly events and activities to support social connection, diverse interests, and parent peer support
- Improve communication of information to families

B. Grow and develop

- Learning, and healthy food options that support physical and emotional development
- Promote prevention of family violence initiatives, and early intervention initiatives to the community through the Maternal and Child Health service and Council promotional methods
- Improve the resilience of our children and their families

C. Our future need

- Plan for service demand across childcare, education and health services
- Plan appropriate facilities to respond to changing demand for kindergarten and childcare
- Greater coordination between services and cross-referrals

A number of actions fall under each of these strategic priorities and are listed in the following section of this strategy.

Council’s role

Council takes a collaborative approach to early years planning to ensure children in our community have enabling environments and opportunities to grow and develop.

The Strategy outlines the Council’s role in the delivery of each priority, described using the following terms:

- Planning and coordination
- Service provision
- Facility planning
- Advocacy
- Strengthening community capacity



Play and participate

- Provide age-appropriate, accessible and welcoming playgrounds, parks, open space and infrastructure to help children and families to live a healthy and active lifestyle
- Strengthen children’s links to the community, through community and social support groups
- Organise and promote child-friendly events and activities to support social connection, diverse interests, and parent peer support
- Improve communication of information to families



Focus	Actions	Our role	Our partners
Playgrounds	Implement priority recommendations from the Hepburn Shire Playspace Strategy – Play is for everyone 2020-2030	Planning and coordination Service provision Facility planning	Children Community
Sporting, community and social support groups	Continue to support sporting, community and social support groups and organisations within our community	Strengthening community capacity	Community groups
	Implement priority recommendations from the Hepburn Shire Active Women and Girls Strategy 2019-2029	Planning and coordination Service provision Facility planning	Sport and recreation clubs Children Community
	Actively promote all play groups within the area and focus on encouraging participation	Planning and coordination	Playgroup Victoria Local playgroups Central Highlands Rural Health
Events and activities	Continue to deliver, fund and promote a calendar of events and activities for children (eg Rhyme Time)	Planning and coordination	Children Community
	Implement priority recommendations from the Hepburn Shire Events Strategy 2020-2025	Planning and coordination	
Information and communication	Produce and distribute a Families Booklet, both in print and online versions. The Booklet will communicate the services, social supports, activities, parks and programs available for children and families across the shire	Planning and coordination	Education providers, childcare providers, community early years childcare, children and the community
	Use Children’s Week to promote services, activities and programs that are offered in each township. Work with key service providers for a collaborative approach	Planning and coordination	Early years educators and service providers

Grow and develop

- Promote prevention of family violence initiatives, and early intervention initiatives to the community through the Maternal and Child Health service and Council promotional methods
- Learning, and healthy food options that support physical and emotional development
- Improve the resilience of our children and their families



Focus	Actions	Our role	Our partners
Maternal and Child Health	Continue to fund the delivery of the Maternal and Child Health Service	Planning and coordination	Central Highlands Rural Health Municipal Association Victoria
Learning, education, and care	Work with early years educators to promote the available childcare and preschool options in the community	Planning and coordination	Early years educators Childcare providers Eureka Community Kindergarten Association
	Partner with education providers to support children and families in the transition from Preschool to Primary School	Planning and coordination Strengthening community capacity	Eureka Community Kindergarten Association
Healthy food and behaviours	As documented in the Hepburn Shire Council Plan 2021-2025, support initiatives that encourage healthier lifestyles and habits across the lifespan, particularly in children’s early years	Planning and coordination Service provision Strengthening community capacity	Central Highlands Rural Health Victorian Government
Recovery and resilience	Address the impact of COVID-19, including development issues arising from isolation, anxiety, and resilience	Planning and coordination Strengthening community capacity	Central Highlands Rural Health Victorian Government
Immunisation	Follow up of over-due children on the Australian immunisation Register	Planning and coordination	

Our future need

- Plan for service demand across childcare, education and health services
- Plan appropriate facilities to respond to changing demand for kindergarten and childcare
- Greater coordination between services and cross-referrals



Focus	Actions	Our role	Our partners
Future service demand	Advocate for specialist health services such as mental health services, speech pathology, and occupational therapy to be available locally	Planning and coordination Advocacy	Health providers, service providers, Maternal and Child Health services, community Victorian Government
	Advocate for diverse childcare options to be available locally to meet the needs of families in the shire	Planning and coordination Advocacy	Families Victorian Government Childcare providers
	Continue to advocate for learning and education options that meet the needs of our community	Advocacy	Families Education providers Victorian Government
Facilities	Conduct rolling facility and infrastructure audits and master planning to meet current and future needs	Facility planning	
	Continue to provide welcoming, modern and comfortable facilities for preschool/ kindergarten for service delivery	Facility planning	Victorian Government
	As required, seek Building Block Grants to provide welcoming, modern and comfortable facilities for preschool/ kindergarten	Facility planning	Victorian Government
	Deliver well-planned and designed facilities that contribute to community life in the shire	Facility planning	Victorian Government
Cross-service coordination	Council to facilitate an early year's network/s of key service providers that meets regularly according to the needs of each township. The group will aim to collaborate on enhancing understanding of the early and middle years cohort, share information across service providers, improve cross referrals, and address shared issues such as workforce planning	Planning and coordination Strengthening community capacity	Service providers, childcare providers, community early years childcare, education providers, Maternal and Child Health and health providers

In action

Council have prioritised the needs of children and their families, with strong partnerships with families and service providers playing a key role in the development and implementation of the strategy. Council will strive to meet the needs of children through thoughtful planning and creating supportive environments to live, learn and grow.

Implementation

Hepburn Shire Council has developed strategic priorities and actions for early years to guide Council's decision making over the next eight years. A process of continuous improvement will be established to allow for flexibility and adaptability for early years planning. Where required, specific action plans will be developed by Council in partnership with key service providers and organisations to ensure the priorities are met.

Council will embed the strategic priorities and actions into broader Council planning, and take a lead role to implement, review and evaluate the strategy together with our families and service providers.

Governance

The role of local government across the early and middle years sector should focus on planning and coordination, service provision, facility planning, advocacy, and strengthening community capacity.

Through the development of this strategy, Council will develop partnerships to identify local opportunities and priorities, lead the coordination and implementation of the strategy, ensure stakeholders are committed to the success of the strategy and its objectives, plan for infrastructure development that supports early and middle years, and advocate for services to be provided locally to those who need them.



Review and evaluation

Hepburn Shire Council will monitor and report on the success and progress of the plan. The Baseline Data Report was developed to provide a baseline measure for the strategy and will assist in determining if positive change has occurred in the community, as well as identifying new priority areas.



Hepburn
SHIRE COUNCIL

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DAYLESFORD
Corner Duke & Albert Sts
Mon to Fri 8:30am-5pm

CRESWICK
68 Albert St
Mon to Fri 8:30am-5pm
Sat 9am-12pm

CLUNES
36 Fraser St
Mon & Thurs 10am-6pm
Wed & Fri 10am-4pm

TRENTHAM
13 Albert St
Mon, Wed, Fri 10am-5pm
Sat 10am-1pm