



Education  
and Training

# Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan

Towong Shire

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. REFORM CONTEXT

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

## 1.2. PURPOSE OF KISPS

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

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

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

## 1.3. HOW TO USE THE KISP

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

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

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

## 1.4. STRUCTURE OF THE KISP

Each KISP consists of the following sections:

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

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

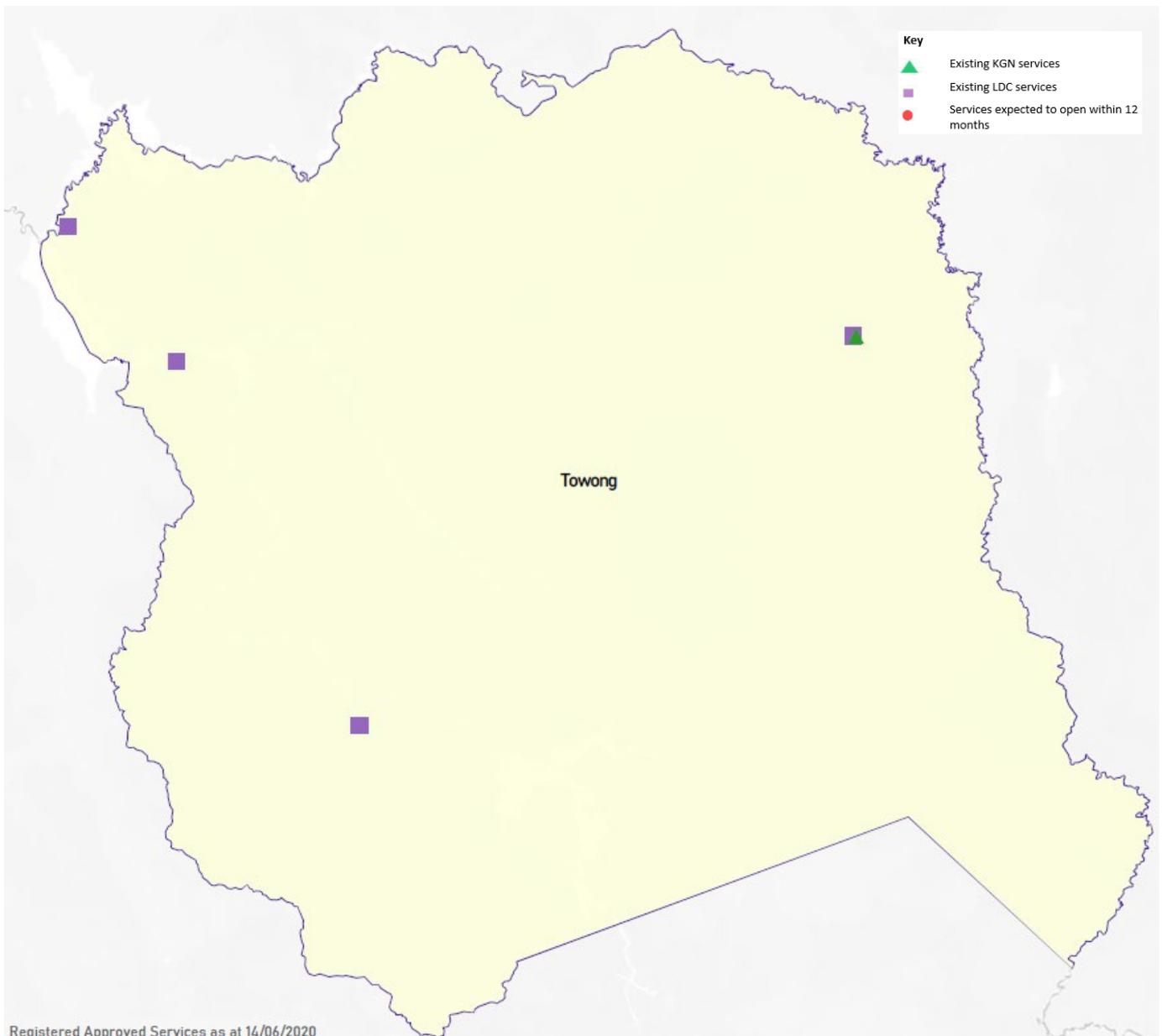
## 1.5. DISCLAIMER

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

## 2. MAP OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SERVICES IN TOWONG SHIRE

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

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



## 3. LOCAL CONTEXT

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### 3.1 PURPOSE

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

### 3.2 KEY CONSIDERATIONS

#### **Key demographic trends that influence demand for kindergarten**

Towong Shire Council is one of the most remote and sparsely populated shires in Victoria. The Shire is approximately the half of the size of Melbourne and home to just over 6,000 people.

Towong Shire Council currently operates four early years' services in Walwa, Tallangatta, Bellbridge and Corryong. Walwa\* has a very small number of children who attend the centre and is approximately 45 minutes' drive to the next closest centre.

There is no public transport in the Shire that operates on a regular basis and limited early years activities provided across the Shire, except for activities operated by kindergartens, libraries (Shire operated) and schools.

There is extensive use of nannies in rural farming communities because of the lack of availability of early years services. These are generally not experienced educators or teachers.

Due to the small population, all early years' providers find recruitment of suitably qualified educators and teachers extremely difficult.

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

Many of the projected kindergarten numbers have been based on a period that no longer reflects the present trends in kindergarten places. The critical changes that have and will continue to alter these trends are:

- Substantial increases in child births, compared with three years ago
- Increasing number of young families moving into the area (particularly Tallangatta and Bellbridge)
- Increasing number of young families settling in NSW along the Victorian border that utilise early years services
- Release of land in major town settlements of up to 400 additional homes in the next ten years

In addition to the trends, the services are also undergoing improvements to make them more attractive. These include:

- Upgrades to yards in Tallangatta and Corryong expected to be completed in 2021, these were approved through the inclusive playground's projects.
- Council has commenced master planning is for our Bellbridge service

- Council is planning to apply through the Building Blocks program to complete minor capacity and operational improvements to the interior of Tallangatta Early Years and Corryong Kindergarten services.  
These improvements include physical divisions and acoustic upgrades at Tallangatta Early Years.

### **Key local geographic considerations or information relevant to Three-Year-Old Kindergarten**

Towong Shire Council has committed to operating 15 hours of three and four-year-old kindergarten across the LGA from 2021. We aim to ensure that all children have access to quality kindergartens with highly trained and passionate teachers and educators. Our teaching team have committed to this principle and work together to cover any gaps where support to deliver this is unattainable.

Towong Shire Council expects significant growth in Bellbridge and Tallangatta with large subdivisions expected in the next five years. This may result in additional educational facilities being required.

### **Other information about the expansion of early childhood services**

Families in the Mitta Valley choose for their child to attend kindergarten in Kiewa (Indigo Shire) rather than Tallangatta, due to it being located closer to Wodonga, where many residents work.

Whilst there is a privately operated service in Mitta Mitta, there is no current kindergarten program operating from this service. To date there is no Family Day Care in Towong Shire.

*\*There is a unique service within Walwa that can provide a small number of Kindergarten enrolments through the Walwa Early Years Learning Centre. This is currently classified as an Occasional Care service and the program only operates in the years where there are Kindergarten-age children in Walwa that want to access a program. It does not appear in the estimates of supply within the KISP, but could potentially offer a greater level of capacity if this was required in future years in Walwa.*

# 4. FUNDED KINDERGARTEN ENROLMENT ESTIMATES BETWEEN 2021-29 FOR TOWONG SHIRE

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## 4.1 PURPOSE

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

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

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

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

## 4.2 METHODOLOGY

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 4.3 SUMMARY OF CURRENT KINDERGARTEN PROVISION

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

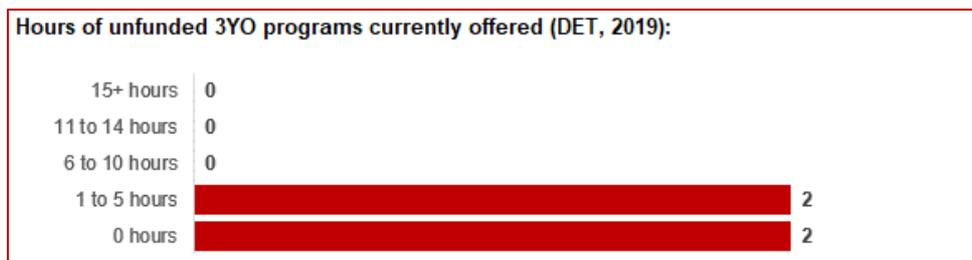
- The Kindergarten Capacity Assessment Program (KCAP), collected between June and October 2019.
- The Department’s Kindergarten Information Management System (KIMS), as at 2019.
- The Department’s Quality and Regulatory Division (QARD) monitoring data, as at 2019.
- The National Quality Agenda IT System (NQAITs), as at April 2020.
- The Victorian Child and Adolescent Monitoring System (VCAMS), as at 2018.

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

Number of services by service type (NQAITs, 2020)	
Stand-alone kindergartens	1
Long day care centres	4

Percentage of services by management type, LGA level (NQAITs, 2020)	
Type	Percentage
Local Government	60%
Private not for profit	20%
Private for profit	20%
Other	0%

Current kindergarten offering	
Four-Year-Old Kindergarten participation rate (VCAMS, 2018):	76%
Number of services that offer a funded kindergarten program (DET, 2019):	4
Number of services that offer an unfunded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program (DET, 2019):	2



## 4.4 APPROACH TO OPTIMISING THE USE OF EXISTING SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

### Change management strategies to optimise existing services and infrastructure

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

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

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

- Encouraging and supporting other providers and services in the LGA to undertake change management.

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

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

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Estimated existing supply of kindergarten places*	134	134	134	134	134	134	134	134	134

\*This may be higher than current three and four-year-old enrolments as it includes any spare places that are currently available or could be generated by making some minor adjustments to programming approaches. The likely expansion of services and kindergarten places in response to population growth (i.e. growth in demand not generated by the Three-Year-Old Kindergarten Reform that would likely occur) is not accounted for in these estimates.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### LGA estimates

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

LGA level estimates	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Total estimated demand for kindergarten places (three and four-year-old children)	89	93	94	95	96	101	101	100	100
Total kindergarten places that cannot be accommodated by existing services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

### Community estimates

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

Towong estimates	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Total estimated demand for kindergarten places (three and four-year-old children)	89	93	94	95	96	101	101	100	100
Total kindergarten places that cannot be accommodated by existing services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

## 5. AUTHORISATION

The Area Executive Director (Ovens Murray) of the Department of Education and Training and the Chief Executive of Towong Shire Council endorse this Kindergarten Services and Infrastructure Plan (KISP) for Towong Shire by signing on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021.

This KISP is not intended to create legal relations or constitute a legally binding contractual agreement between the parties. The parties may review this KISP in 2025 to publish a new version that will replace the previous version.

An out-of-cycle review may be triggered if both parties agree that there has been a change in relevant data, information or the local early childhood sector that significantly affects the reliability of a KISP's estimates for planning purposes.

### Signed for and on behalf and with the authority of Towong Shire Council

.....  
Signature

.....  
Witness Signature

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Title: Chief Executive Officer

Address: 32 Towong Street (PO Box 55) Tallangatta VIC 3700

### Signed by Area Executive Director (Ovens Murray), Department of Education and Training

.....  
Signature

.....  
Witness Signature

Name: Bernie Boulton

Title: Area Executive Director (Ovens Murray), Department of Education and Training

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