



GLEN EIRA  
CITY COUNCIL

17 November 2023

# Your Questions Answered

## Preliminary Decision about Council's Early Learning Centres

### Written Public Questions – Ordinary Council Meeting 8 November 2023

*Responses are provided to questions that have not previously been answered.*

**Can Council please provide the exact information, support, and forums staff have been provided with during this process and specifically highlight the areas of the process asking staff for their perspective on the closure of the centres?**

Council has undertaken a four-week consultation process with affected staff. The consultation process has been undertaken in accordance with the Glen Eira City Council Enterprise Agreement and Local Government Act.

Affected staff were informed of Council's preliminary decision to close its three Early Learning Centres at a briefing on Wednesday 4 October 2023.

Following the briefing, impacted employees were emailed a letter and additional information on the strategic service review, Council's preliminary decision, consultation process (including how to provide feedback) and supports available.

An additional two staff briefings were held on Monday 9 October 2023 and Wednesday 11 October 2023. The Australian Services Union were in attendance at these staff briefings.

The relevant Unions were also provided with the information and documentation that was emailed to staff.

Consultation was undertaken to ensure that employees had the opportunity to ask questions and provide their feedback on Council's preliminary decision.

Affected staff were invited to ask questions, provide their views and feedback in the following ways:

- Feedback Forms - available for affected employees. Forms were submitted to a dedicated employee consultation email address. Hard copies of the forms were also made available on request.
- Email - affected employees (or their representatives) were also invited to ask questions or provide their written feedback to a dedicated employee consultation email address.
- In Person - affected employees were also able to request an interview with a People and Culture representative to discuss the process.

Employees were entitled to be represented for the purposes of the consultation process. People and Culture representatives were in attendance at each Centre to answer employee questions in relation to the consultation process, individual circumstances and support available.

Representatives from Converge International, Council's Employee Assistance Program were in attendance at each Centre and via individual appointment. A paid staff meeting for union members was held by the Australian Services Union during the consultation period.

**Will Council provide the profit and loss statements and breakdown of costs including the book entry for rent regarding the Early Learning Centres, given cost is a key decision factor? If not, why not?**

No. This information is commercially sensitive and is therefore commercial in confidence because Council's childcare services operate in a competitive marketplace.

**Council says the most important work they do is advocacy, including securing programs, projects and funding from other levels of government to address the needs of all children and families. Besides the standard services – MCH (and associated programs), immunisation - what other programs/services has Council sought funding from other levels of government to support young children aged five years and under?**

The broad range of services Council provides to support families and children is outlined on page nine of the [Childcare Discussion Paper](#), published on 5 October 2023, and is available on Council's website.

Council has advocated to the State Government for increased funding to support Maternal and Child Health Services, immunisation services, library services and school crossing supervisor programs.

Council has also submitted funding applications to the State Government for its stand-alone kindergartens, parent support programs and for the development of parks and playgrounds.

The Commonwealth Government is responsible for the funding of childcare, it is not funded by the State Government.

The Commonwealth Government has adopted a market-driven system for childcare services and does not directly fund operations and service delivery costs. The Commonwealth Government provides subsidies to benefit families and carers.

Advocacy for the funding of childcare infrastructure to make Council's Early Learning Centres viable into the future should be directed to Federal Members of Parliament.

**What other options have been considered for the Early Learning Centres as part of the service review which were not disclosed in the discussion paper? Will Council provide financial modelling to explain why other options have been dismissed?**

Information that was provided to Councillors that was considered for Council's preliminary decision can be found in the Agenda, Minutes and Council Report for the [3 October Special Meeting of Council](#) which are available on Council's website. Information from the service review, including the three options considered by Council and that can be provided, has been published in the [Childcare Discussion Paper](#), published on 5 October 2023, also available on Council's website.

**At the Council Ordinary Meeting on 17 October, the Council advised that a copy of the 'Strategic Service Review' report, which provided the basis of the Discussion Paper used to inform Council's preliminary decision to close three Early Learning Centres, would be made available to the public. On 26 October we received an email update about the preliminary decision. The email provided a selection of information in similar format to the Discussion Paper without a copy of the full Strategic Service Review report. What is Council hiding and when will a copy of the full Strategic Service Review report be released?**

The full Strategic Service Review contains material that is commercially sensitive and is commercial in confidence and will not be released to the public.

**Council Officers have recommended a two-step process to determine the future of the Early Learning Centres. Firstly, recommending the closure and then secondly recommending a future review to determine the use of the sites or the sale of the sites. Adopting a two-step process limits the options available for the second step that includes continuous operation of the Early Learning Centres services.**

**Why has a recommendation for the future use of the sites not been resolved as part of the Council Officers' report?**

**This would provide transparency to Glen Eira residents and the Councillors and ensure the ultimate outcome for the sites provides the most value to the Glen Eira community.**

In order for Council to consider options about the future of the Early Learning Centres, including the buildings where the services are delivered, it must first decide what its future role will be as a childcare service provider.

Council needs to consider the future use of the facilities in accordance with Council's Property Strategy to determine how to most effectively use buildings that are no longer required for their current use. The current use is for **Council-operated childcare**. Council could consider options such as leasing, re-purposing or disposal of the sites. The option of leasing Council assets to a not-for-profit or parent committee to operate a childcare service could form part of the consideration for the future use of the assets.

Council's decision-making process to inform the future of the three childcare assets has been previously answered in the Preliminary Decision about Council's Early Learning Centres [Your Questions Answered 20 October](#).

**Are the Early Learning Centres actually competing with the rest of the market if there are no equivalents? For instance, they have smaller class sizes, as was mentioned in the report. Where else can I send my three children that is both multicultural and has the ability for me to have them eat kosher food?**

All impacted families were notified that a listing of all 58 childcare centres, their accreditation ratings, addresses and contact numbers was published on Council's website on 13 October 2023, [Child Care Centres – Glen Eira – October 2023 Map](#).

There are a number of Early Learning Centres across Glen Eira that offer services and support for families from culturally diverse backgrounds including people of the Jewish faith. 25 per cent of the childcare places offered in the municipality have religious affiliations. The release of the [Childcare Discussion Paper](#) to the community enabled the community to be informed about the options considered by Council and how Council made its preliminary decision.

**Council stated that it costs to support the Centres currently, and this is forecast to increase. Where is the financial responsibility for continuing to run at such a loss and why hasn't anything been done about it?**

Each year senior Council Early Years staff undertake a financial and service model review to ensure the three centres operate as efficiently as possible and this is primarily driven by two key needs – compliance with the National Quality Standards, and the needs of families which is informed through the annual enrolment process. This means the use of rooms and staff needs to reflect the children's age groups that are enrolled in any given year.

Whilst the three centres are operating at a loss of \$570k, the senior staff have significant experience operating centres and are confident the centres are running as efficiently as possible, whilst also ensuring they deliver 'Exceeding National Quality Standard' ratings which the families enjoy and have provided feedback about.

The service review was undertaken in response to the ageing buildings, financial losses, the growing childcare market in the municipality, and the current and emerging State and Commonwealth early years reform agendas. This included declining utilisation rates and increasing costs.

Amid increasing costs and economic uncertainty, it is becoming more difficult for councils to run services. Council undertakes regular reviews of its services to ensure it makes responsible choices now and that these services provide value to the community.

**What are the current utilisation percentage numbers at each of the three Early Learning Centres at the present date and have these numbers changed at all since the preliminary decision was announced?**

The average utilisation across the three Centres is currently sitting at 79 per cent (correct at 6 November 2023). Specific information about utilisation at each centre and any changes to utilisation since Council's preliminary decision is commercially sensitive and will not be shared.

**Can Council and Councillors guarantee the community that if utilisation or enrolment numbers have dropped now or before the time of the final vote, that a decline in numbers from the time the preliminary decision was announced, would not be a factor or consideration when voting to decide to remain open, close or amalgamate the centres?**

The final Council decision regarding the three Council run Early Learning Centres will be made on the information available at the time the service review was conducted and is presented in the Childcare Discussion Paper and feedback received during the consultation process. At the time of the service review the utilisation across the three Centres was 78 per cent

**Will the report prepared for Councillors after the consultation period be shared with affected families and community and, if so, when?**

The final decision will be made at a Special Council meeting to be held on 12 December 2023. Consideration of the agenda item and report relating to Council's final decision will be open to the public. The report (excluding any confidential information) will be available on Council's website on 7 December 2023.

**Has proper consideration been given to the possibility of the Early Learning Centres remaining open? The process itself is undermining the Centres by any new enrolments being turned away, the short time and lack of staff involvement, just to name a few reasons. If the answer is yes and proper consideration has been given, please provide the community and staff with Council's analysis of how to keep the Centres open.**

The [Childcare Discussion Paper](#) published 5 October 2023 and the [Childcare Viability Explained](#) published 26 October 2023 that are available on the Council website examine the challenges of the Early Learning Centres to remain open and includes the option to keep them open.

The re-enrolment process for current families for 2024 was initiated on 31 August 2023 and closed on 13 September 2023.

Families have indicated their preferences and needs for childcare and kindergarten for 2024 through our re-enrolment process. This information is currently being reviewed by the Early Learning Centre Team Leaders as they plan age groupings and staffing for 2024, should Council make a final decision to continue to operate the Early Learning Centres. Provisional offers will be made to currently enrolled families week commencing 20 November 2023.

Council's services have continued to enable prospective families looking for immediate care to access the centres and services at all times during this process, where there were vacancies that

accommodated their needs. The services continued to take parent tours when requested, and worked with prospective families where they could be immediately enrolled. However, services are also making prospective families aware that a preliminary decision had been made to close Council's three Early Learning Centres, as is appropriate.

Council will consider all feedback received during the consultation process from staff, impacted families and the wider community including those received about keeping the services open, prior to a final decision being made on 12 December 2023.

**If there is such a demand for kindergarten places that other centres are offering Saturday places to meet demand, why is Council considering reducing a much needed and in demand service?**

Demand for kindergarten places is different to demand for childcare places. The reference to Saturday kindergarten places concerns places in stand-alone kindergartens, not childcare centres.

Council's childcare places account for only two per cent of the places in Glen Eira and the modelling undertaken as part of the strategic service review concluded that there is likely to be sufficient supply of childcare places to meet current and future demand.

**Can you provide evidence to support the claim that families prioritise kitchen and modern facilities over the quality of educators and the continuity of care in their early learning centre preferences? Was a survey conducted to assess this and how was this assessment made?**

No. A survey was not conducted. The three Council Early Learning Centres are operating at a utilisation rate of 78 per cent which has declined since 2018-2019. Over the same period of time the number of childcare places in Glen Eira have substantially increased by more than 44 per cent – an increase from 3,966 places to 5,731 places since 2019. The majority of new modern centres provide cooked meals for children with modern kitchen facilities.

The falling utilisation rates is decreasing income, and Centres are now running at a loss of approximately \$570k per annum.

**Council is required to comply with Child Safe Standards. Under the Child Safe Standards, how is Council abiding by the following standards when making the decision to close the 3 Early Learning Centres? Standard 3 - Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously, and Standard 7 - Processes for complaints and concerns are child-focused.**

Council has undertaken a detailed consultation process with respect to its preliminary decision to cease operating the Early Learning Centres. That process has centred on families, including children, who use the Early Learning Centres. Council is satisfied that it has complied with the Child Safe Standards during this consultation process.

**The objectives of local government include supporting women, children, families and carers and also providing high quality early education. Having regard to these matters, how is Council's decision to close the three Early Learning Centres in the public's interest?**

The requirements for the objectives of a Council are set out in the Local Government Act 2020 and are wide ranging. These objectives do not specifically require the provision of childcare services. Of the 31 metropolitan Councils, only 14 operate childcare services.

**How will the 'Our Priorities Our Future' survey help inform the decision-making process if the feedback to Council is presented in December, post a decision on whether to close the three Early Learning Centres decision on 12 December?**

The community engagement for 'Our Priorities, Our Future' will inform Council's long-term strategic planning and decision-making.

Council will receive the community's feedback on 'Our Priorities, Our Future' at its final Council meeting on 19 December 2023, after the Community Priorities Panel creates its recommendations and the 'Our Priorities, Our Future' community survey closes.

In the meantime, Council is receiving regular updates on the community's early feedback through 'Our Priorities, Our Future'.

Council will continue to consult with the community in relation to specific proposals or changes in accordance with requirements under the Local Government Act 2020 and its Community Engagement Policy.

**Regarding one of Council's reasons for considering the closures is its compliance with the Competitive Neutrality Policy. Can Council provide the impacted families with the assessment including the public interest test?**

The application of the Competitive Neutrality Policy (CNP) to the operation of the Early Learning Centres is one of a number of considerations that must be taken into account by Council when making its final decision. If Council's final decision is that it will continue to operate the three Early Learning Centres, or any of them, then it will observe the CNP in implementing that decision. That may or may not involve a public interest test, depending on Council's approach to pricing.

A final decision about the three Council Early Learning Centres has not been made at this time.

**What is more important than Early Learning Centres and what are you currently not providing that you will provide instead of Early Learning Centres?**

Council provides more than 120 services to our local community. It is becoming tougher to operate and to remain financially sustainable. We are being asked to do more with less and this will only get harder with predicted inflation levels and interest rate hikes.

While local government collects only 3.8 per cent of taxes, we manage one third of the nation's infrastructure. The cost of providing services has soared over the past two years and inflation and construction costs are making it harder to build and maintain infrastructure. With costs significantly increasing we need to look at the best and most responsible way to meet all of the community's needs.

Importantly, Council delivers a very broad range of services that support families and children which are clearly set out in the [Childcare Discussion Paper](#), published on Council's website on 5 October 2023.

**Why has the Mayor and other Councillors refused to attend meetings with Local State and Federal MPs who state there is government funding available?**

The Mayor has not refused to attend such meetings. The Mayor has both met and spoken with a range of State and Federal Members of Parliament. Council has also received submissions from State and Federal Members of Parliament that were received during the four-week consultation process. This feedback will be considered by Council prior to making a final decision on 12 December 2023.

**Council has stated that it identifies a shortfall in kindergarten places for Glen Eira municipality in 2028, but only in Bentleigh and McKinnon. This was done as part of the KISP (Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan). However, this assumption was made on the basis that Glen Eira's 0 to 4-year-old population is expected to increase by 1,700 children between 2016 and 2036. This is completely incorrect. The discussion paper attached to this preliminary decision states there will be an increase of 3111 children in the municipality between 2021 and 2036. As the KISP is clearly incorrect and has underestimated the increase in 0-4 population by 1411 children, why are Council considering reducing the number of places available across the region by closing the centres when there is clearly a much greater demand than council projections?**

Council supported the development of the Glen Eira KISP that was led by the Victorian Department of Education. The current KISP was developed in 2021-2022 before the most recent Census was conducted so some of the information now needs to be updated, which Council will do in partnership with the Victorian Government. Council is waiting for the Victorian Government to confirm a date for this. However, the KISP only reflects kindergarten demand and supply.

Demand for kindergarten places is different to demand for childcare places.

Specific modelling was undertaken as part of the strategic services review which concluded that Council's childcare places account for only two per cent of the places in Glen Eira and the modelling concluded that there is likely to be sufficient supply of childcare places to meet current and future demand.

Further information about current and future demand for places including population projections can be found in the [Childcare Discussion Paper](#), published on Council's website on 5 October 2023.

**Why, when the Council was informed 10 years ago via the review of the Tungsten Group Pty Ltd of the work required to bring the Early Learning Centres' facilities up to standard, did the Council fail to act? Has the Council by virtue of not acting in the last 10 years, actually forced the closures of the Centres?**

The Tungsten Report was commissioned in 2002 in response to changing early years regulations at the time. The report examined building fabric condition and physical environments to advise of upgrades required for both Council childcare and kindergarten assets to meet legislative requirements of 2003. The regulations have changed twice since 2003.

This report is more than 20 years old and does not reflect the regulatory changes made to the sector in 2009 and 2012.

The three Council-run Centres have been maintained according to standards which is reflected in the accreditation ratings of the services. In the last 10 years, Council has spent \$1,918,663.29 maintaining the building condition and physical environments. The issue associated with the three Centres is that they are no longer fit for purpose or provide the necessary economies of scale which has been clearly outlined in the [Childcare Viability Explained](#) document published on Council's website on 26 October 2023.

**Could you provide specific evidence or details regarding the educational activities that are asserted to be infeasible in small daycare centres that already exceed national quality standards?**

Council competes with 55 other childcare centres in Glen Eira. Larger centres may have dedicated spaces that are used for art and creative activities, as well as dedicated spaces used for yoga and music. Larger centres often have communal dining spaces adjacent to their kitchens which also allows children to be involved in cooking and food preparation with the centre cook.



**The forecast cost for closure of the Early Learning Centres is \$1M. Councillors are being asked to make a decision based on very limited options, no detailed financial analysis and no certainty on the future use for the sites. Without this information, how will the Councillors have complete confidence the option being selected is the one with the lowest cost and most benefit for the community?**

**Also, in the discussion paper and in various other documents and conversations, the Council and Councillors have all emphasised that they will 'genuinely consider individual feedback'. Knowing the volumes of feedback that you have received and being quite certain that all individual feedback that has been received is 100 per cent against the proposed decision, if you make the decision to close the Centres, what will be the deciding factors that you obviously consider more important than the voice of your own community members?**

Council will consider all submissions and feedback received as part of the four-week consultation process. This feedback will inform the final decision, however other important considerations as outlined in the [Childcare Discussion Paper](#), published 5 October 2023, including:

- Council's role and responsibility as a local government and a service provider in a competitive market.
- the financial viability of Council-operated Early Learning Centres.
- opportunities and challenges relating to the existing childcare infrastructure.
- an assessment of possible options for future service delivery capacity of the local childcare marketplace to meet current and future demand.

**On 12 December, if you do decide to close the centres by the end of the year, what is your step-by-step plan for helping 100 + families find comparable childcare places? Comparable being the same standard (e.g. exceeding standards, reasonable distance from home, aligned values and culturally appropriate). Will you call these centres, book tours, organise paperwork, trial days, orientation days/hours before the Christmas break?**

Our Family Liaison Officers are working closely with individual families to provide support now, and to understand the type of support families may require to identify alternative care that best suits their individual needs if Council does make a final decision to close its Early Learning Centres.

We now have a clearer understanding of vacancies after advising other childcare services of Council's preliminary decision, however Council cannot guarantee specific days, times or locations will be available to suit families' individual needs.

Of the 55 non-Council childcare centres operating in Glen Eira, 20 are rated as 'Exceeding' National Quality Standards and 23 are rated as 'Meeting' National Quality Standards. 52 of these centres also offer a State-funded kindergarten program for eligible three and four-year-old children. This means that at least 78 per cent of services meet the quality standards set by the Commonwealth Government, and over 1/3 (or 36 per cent) of services exceed the Commonwealth's standards.



**Glen Eira's Community Wellbeing Plan (written by Council) also states that "Early childhood (birth–six years) sets the foundation for a child's long-term development and learning. Investing in the early years of a child's life is crucial, as these years have a significant impact on the child's future physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing." Given the above, what does Council think the impact of uprooting children who have settled into the care of educators, and who have become accustomed to the environment will feel when they are promptly dumped from these places?**

Feedback received about the potential timing of the closure of Council's centres, and feedback received about support that families and children may require to transition to an alternative centre will be considered before Council makes a final decision.

**Can Council please outline the readership numbers and primary audience for the Glen Eira News?**

We print approximately 65,000 copies of the Glen Eira News for delivery to 64,500 households (as of October 2023), with the remainder either mailed to special premises such as aged care facilities or circulated at Council premises such as libraries and other community facilities. We have an additional 500 online subscribers.

It is not possible to determine the actual readership rates, only print and distribution.

Glen Eira residents are the intended audience, primarily reached through household delivery of the *Glen Eira News* 11 times each year.

**Can Council please outline how Maternal and Child Health Centres promote the Council-run Early Learning Centres. General parent feedback is that this has never been promoted to any current parents. Feedback has also been that MCH nurses are not allowed to promote one centre over another and so, do not specifically promote Council's Early Learning Centres.**

The Caulfield and Murrumbeena Early Learning Centres are both co-located with Maternal and Child Health Centres. In 2022-23 these centres received 3,176 Key Age and Stage visits combined from families and children under five years of age.

As part of the Key Age and Stage visits, transition and adjustment to childcare is discussed. When parents enquire about childcare services, the Council services are promoted, and parents are referred to the Family Services page of the Glen Eira Council website for further information and contact details.

**The Local Government Act states: "Participants in community engagement must have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation." 5 October: Families informed of closures. 13 October: Council provided non-transparent information based off questions from 5 October meeting. Took 8 days to provide information. 20 October: Council provided information. Took 15 days (since start of 'consultation process') for relevant information to be shared. 1 November: Consultation ended. Parents were not provided objective/relevant information from the beginning of the consultation process. Council took 15 days (20 Oct) to provide relevant required information (and there's still gaps in information). The 1 November end date for community consultation failed to meet the requirement of providing information in a timely manner. Information to date is still largely irrelevant due to lack of transparency. How does Council justify its failure to meet the Local Government Act's requirements to provide objective/relevant/timely information?**

Information that was considered to inform Council's preliminary decision can be found in the Agenda, Minutes and Council Report for the [3 October Special Meeting of Council](#). This includes the information that can be provided from the Strategic Service Review which has been published in the [Childcare Discussion Paper](#) on 5 October 2023. Information that is commercial in confidence cannot be released.

Additional information has also been made available to families, staff and the community to help them understand the information that Council considered before making a preliminary decision, including [Your Questions Answered – Family Briefing – 5 October](#) published on 13 October 2023; [Your Questions Answered 20 October](#) published on 20 October 2023; and [Childcare Viability Explained](#) published on 26 October 2023. All of these documents are available on the Council website.

Council is confident it has met all requirements to undertake a genuine consultation and engagement process in accordance with the Local Government Act and Glen Eira's Community Engagement Strategy and Policy.

**Councillors I am sympathetic to the challenges you face in weighing the needs of the community. That you have chosen to sacrifice your investment in Early Learning indicates you are not fully informed of how investment in Early Learning has a multiplying impact in the benefit it delivers to the community. Every engaged learner, every instance of early learning intervention aids every teacher and every child in every classroom. Council services provide the secure care that enables this.**

**It makes no sense that Councillors could support a withdrawal from their investment in early learning and fail to be interested in reversing service under-utilisation and the alleged loss at a time when private investors are flocking to make money out of early learning services.**

**Will Councillors acquaint themselves with the considerable research and evidence that supports the provision of high quality care delivered when delivered by a secure and professional workforce?**

It is understood the childcare service review found that our Centres deliver high-quality early childhood education and care programs which is reflected in our 'Exceeding' accreditation ratings.

The strategic service review also examined how the three Council-run Early Learning Centres could operate sustainably into the future in the context of ageing infrastructure, financial losses, the growing childcare market in the municipality, and the current and emerging State and Commonwealth early years reform agendas.

This final Council decision will also be informed by all submissions received from staff, impacted families and the broader community received through the four-week community consultation process.

**I appreciate that Glen Eira's Early Learning Centres model has been inappropriately compared to those in other municipalities where Councils are not providers of Early Learning. However we are fortunate to live in proximity to two Councils that remain strong providers of early Learning, Stonnington and Kingston.**

**As I understand it Kingston Council made the decision to invest and expand its Early Learning Centres a number of years ago. The Kingston community now benefits from an expanded service and significant capital investment.**

**Would Councillors be open to visiting these centres and seeking discussions with Kingston Councillors regarding why and how Kingston Council arrived at this outcome?**

Kingston City Council own and operate three children's hubs that were constructed in stages from around 2013. Each hub has between 110 and 150 childcare places. The option to consolidate

all of Glen Eira Council's childcare places was considered and is outlined in the [Childcare Discussion Paper](#), published on 5 October 2023 – this option is similar to the model in Kingston and the estimated cost to construct a hub on the Murrumbeena Early Learning Centre site is at least \$10M. Modelling in the Childcare Strategic Service review did not identify unmet childcare demand that would justify Glen Eira Council expanding its childcare provision to three large children's hubs.

**Why didn't the preliminary decision accord a higher level of importance to quality, at the very least, equal to the budget? Why did the report driving this initial decision fail to consider the wide-ranging implications of closing three centers that exceed National Quality Standards, especially in terms of their impact on children, families, and the community and why does the Council not prioritise quality in childcare (rather than quantity) within its community, essentially compelling parents to accept lower-quality centers?**

The strategic service review found that we provide quality care and have excellent educators, but our buildings are outdated and lack many of the basic amenities such as kitchens that many families expect, and newer centres offer. More information about the challenges associated with our buildings can be found in the [Childcare Viability Explained](#) document published on Council's website on 26 October 2023.

Childcare places in the municipality have doubled since 2010 and grown by more than 44 per cent since 2019 while the number of children aged under four has dropped by almost 10 per cent since 2016. There are now 58 childcare centres operating in the municipality.

A total of 43 non-Council centers in Glen Eira are currently rated as either Meeting or Exceeding the National Quality Standards. Twenty centres have the same 'Exceeding' rating as the Council-run services. The Glen Eira municipality has childcare choice, capacity and quality which means it is likely that current and projected demand for childcare can be met.

**Following this four-week consultation period, how do Councillors now feel shutting down services which they now know are the best run Early Learning Centres in Glen Eira?**

The quality of care and education provided at our centres has never been in question.

All of the submissions received from staff, families and the community were provided to Councillors on Thursday 2 November – immediately after the consultation and engagement period closed. Councillors will consider all of the feedback provided before the final decision is made on 12 December.

**Please provide an answer to the question, rather than the statements provided. Does Council believe that their handling of the preliminary decision to close community Early Learning Centres, and Council's management of a one-month "consultation" process is in line with their Community Vision? Does Council believe in this instance they are being proactive in meeting challenges and innovate using evidence-based methods? As a reminder, the six Visions, as written by Council are: · Principle 1: We work together, Principle 2: Planning for community resilience, Principle 3: Inclusive and healthy community, Principle 4: Maximise and diversify our green and natural spaces, Principle 5: We are proactive in meeting challenges and innovate using evidence-based methods, Principle 6: Promote and develop our creative potential, celebrating our diverse identities through art and other cultural expression.**

Council's obligations and approach to community engagement is informed by the Community Vision and Council Plan 2021-2025, however the practical delivery of community engagement is guided by the provisions of the Local Government Act and Council's Community Engagement Policy.

In order to comply with Council's Enterprise Agreement and the Local Government Act, Council was required to make a preliminary decision before being able to consult. Questions about the process for Council making a preliminary decision have been previously answered in [Your Questions Answered 20 October](#) published on 20 October 2023.

The viability challenges associated with the three Council-run centres has been clearly evidenced in the [Childcare Viability Explained](#) publication, published Council's website on 26 October 2023.

The evidence-based outcomes of the service review contained in the [Childcare Discussion Paper](#) also includes the option of consolidating services onto a single site at an estimated cost of approximately \$10M which promotes the opportunity for innovative design.

**Have the councillors been shown locations of under-utilised space at both the Caulfield and Murrumbeena centres? Parents received a case study of Carnegie, the smallest centre, but nothing around how completely vacant space at Murrumbeena and under-utilised spaces, including occasional care and maternal health care nurse offices could be used as they are or with some adjustment works to help achieve an economy of scale.**

The Murrumbeena Family Centre facility houses the Murrumbeena Early Learning Centre, the Maternal and Child Health Service, and a community room that is utilised by Supported Playgroups and other important programs to support families with young children including parent support groups. There is no completely vacant space at Murrumbeena Family Centre.

As outlined in the [Childcare Discussion Paper](#), published 5 October 2023, Council considered the option to consolidate all of Council's childcare places into the Murrumbeena Early Learning Centre site into a refurbished child and family hub to cater for at least 100 places so that it would likely be a viable service for Council to operate.

Maternal and Child Health Services must be delivered in facilities that meet the requirements outlined in the Victorian Government's Maternal and Child Health Program Standards. This includes appropriate consultation rooms, a waiting area, and spaces for other activities and programs delivered by Maternal and Child Health Nurses including first time parent groups. The space currently allocated to the Maternal and Child Health Service at the Murrumbeena Family Centre meets these requirements.

**How many council members have children in one of the three childcare centres?**

This is not relevant to Council's decision-making role.

However, if a Council member did have a child attending one of the three centres they would need to declare a conflict of interest and excuse themselves from the decision-making. No Council member has declared a conflict of interest.

**In regard to the issue concerning the closure of the Early Learning Centres, where is Council's analysis that its three Early Learning Centres are subject to the Competitive Neutrality Policy? For instance, is council running a "significant business activity" given it only services two per cent of Early Learning Centre services. How does this council know if it meets the requirements to invoke the Competitive Neutrality Policy?**

The application of Competitive Neutrality Policy (CNP) to the operation of the Early Learning Centres is one of a number of considerations that must be taken into account by Council when making its final decision. If Council's final decision is that it will continue to operate the three Early Learning Centres, or any of them, it will then observe CNP in implementing that decision. That is, Council's approach to pricing for the service.

An activity should not be regarded as significant or insignificant solely because of its size relative to the number of like services in the municipality. A variety of factors informs that assessment.

Council has assessed the Early Learning Centres through this lens and is satisfied that they are a 'significant business activity' for the purposes of CNP.
<b>There is no doubt that Council's current employees would be detrimentally impacted by a final decision to close the centres. Private providers have inferior employment conditions. Poorer employment conditions for workers translates as a lower standard of care for children. Have Councillors considered this?</b>
<p>Council is unable to comment on the employment conditions of private or not-for-profit providers in the childcare sector.</p> <p>If Council decides to close its three Early Learning Centres, in accordance with Council's Enterprise Agreement, affected staff would be considered for redeployment into another vacant role at Council if available, including via re-training, or would be eligible for a redundancy package.</p> <p>Additionally, career support would be provided through an outplacement service and include support for resume writing and interview skills.</p> <p>Council is also considering additional supports such as updated first aid training, anaphylaxis and CPR refreshers for affected staff to support their career progression, should Council decide to close its three Early Learning Centres.</p>
<p><b>In many instances, parents (more likely mothers) will not be able to return to paid work while childcare arrangements are unavailable, generating further pressures such as financial, mental health, and stress.</b></p> <p><b>How does Council believe these realities align with The Community Wellbeing Plan created by Glen Eira City Council?</b></p>
Questions relating to Council's preliminary decision and the Community Wellbeing Plan have been previously answered in <a href="#">Your Questions Answered – Family Briefing – 5 October</a> , published on Council's website on 13 October 2023.
<b>Are the officers who are compiling the community response report to present to the Councillors, the same officers that provided a skewed report of only three options for the Early Learning Centres that ultimately pushed for closure?</b>
Council does not accept the premise that Officers presented a skewed report. All submissions and responses received as part of the four-week consultation process will be provided to Council for consideration prior to the final decision on the 12 December 2023.
<b>Were factors such as unique needs of local families and the potential advantages of small centres, like lower staff turnover, given adequate consideration in the preliminary decision-making process? If not. why not?</b>
<p>Yes. The service review found that we provide quality care and have excellent educators, however the review also found that our small and ageing Early Learning Centre buildings are no longer fit for purpose because they prevent Council from achieving the economies of scale required to operate financially viable childcare services. This is primarily due to the small room sizes and educator to child ratios required by the Commonwealth Government's National Quality Framework.</p> <p>More information about the challenges of our ageing assets can be found in the <a href="#">Childcare Viability Explained</a> publication, published on Council's website on 26 October 2023.</p>

**The staff and educators are amazing, the buildings are in good working condition and they provide a safe, amazing, family environment for our children. They are like homes. Parents have peace of mind going to work, the children are happy and thrive there and the staff love their work and the children.**

**Given how little Council Officers running these reports and responses have demonstrated an ability or desire to actually explore other options such as marketing strategies, operational adjustments or a variety of other approaches to solve some of the overarching issues of cost, are all nine Councillors comfortable that they are the right people to be running such a large operation and to what extent has their inaction and inability to adapt to changes around them led to this situation? Can this small loss not be turned around?**

Our staff running our centres are highly experienced in the provision of high-quality early years education programs which is reflected in our 'exceeding' accreditation ratings and feedback we received from families during the consultation process. In addition, a range of consultants with expertise in early childhood service operations, early childhood policy and funding, and early childhood building design and costings were involved in the Strategic Service Review.

The viability of our centres is impacted by three factors – the ability to compete in a growing marketplace; the relative affordability of fees which would be required to meet our increasing costs, and the ageing nature of our buildings which no longer achieve the economies of scale to make them economically viable. More information about the viability of Council's Early Learning Centres is contained in the [Childcare Viability Explained](#) publication, published on Council's website on 26 October 2023.

**Can Council please provide the relevant research and studies they are referring to when stating older-style buildings are not conducive to good early childhood education?**

Council has not stated that the older style buildings are not conducive to good care and education. Council has stated that our centres provide quality care and we have excellent educators, but our older buildings are no longer fit for purpose and are not equipped with modern contemporary service spaces that are able to achieve economies of scale.

More information about the viability of Council's Early Learning Centres is contained in the [Childcare Viability Explained](#) publication, published on Council's website on 26 October 2023.

**Can you please explain, in detail, how the information you relied on to make the preliminary decision was adequate to make such a decision?**

The information provided to Councillors was adequate to inform the preliminary decision. The service review examined:

- the growth in local childcare services in the municipality and capacity to meet current and future demand.
- an analysis of the financial viability of Council-operated Early Learning Centers.
- an analysis of the opportunities and challenges relating to the existing childcare infrastructure.
- Council's role and responsibility as a local government and a service provider in a competitive market.
- an assessment of possible options for future service delivery.

**Why didn't Council afford families with young children the respect to advise Council on the issues regarding the closures, prior to the preliminary decision being made?**

Questions about the process for Council making a preliminary decision have been previously answered in the [Your Questions Answered 20 October](#) published on 20 October 2023.

**There are families who currently attend the Council's Early Learning Centres with vulnerable children (such as neurodivergent children, children with epilepsy, severe allergies, and other impairments) that are under immense stress. Waiting until 12 December, two weeks before Christmas, to find out their fate is unacceptable. This is a time where families should be winding down and enjoying the holidays. What is this Council and its Councillors doing to support the families specifically who have vulnerable children and children with higher care needs?**

Our Family Liaison Officers are working closely with individual families to provide support now, and to understand the type of support families may require to identify alternative care that best suits their individual needs if Council does make a final decision to close its Early Learning Centres.

**As per the ACCC's Childcare Inquiry (interim report) published September 2023, "The success of childcare services is enormously dependent on the educators and staff in those centres. Educators and staff have a significant impact on the quality and reputation of the service, as well as the service's ability to generate profits and contribute to the ongoing viability of the service through stable tenure." Have Councillors considered what the Early Learning Centres could deliver if Glen Eira took an approach of investing in early learning?**

Yes. The service review confirmed that Council's Early Learning Centres provide quality care and education, and that we have excellent educators.

The viability challenges associated with the service is attributed to the ageing childcare assets which has been clearly outlined in the [Childcare Viability Explained](#) publication, published on Council's website on 26 October 2023.

The option of investing in new childcare infrastructure and consolidating services onto a single site at an estimated cost of approximately \$10M has been investigated and is clearly set out in the [Childcare Discussion Paper](#), published on Council's website on 5 October 2023.

**Council have tried to shift all the responsibility for Aged Care Services to other levels of government and now it is trying to do the same with Early Learning Services. It is expected that Council will next try and shift all the responsibility for Maternal and Child Health Services to other levels of government? Why does Council refuse to take responsibility for any of the services that are vital for the vulnerable people of our community?**

Childcare services operate in a competitive market-driven sector which has grown significantly in recent years. There are now 58 childcare centres operating in the municipality. The number of places available across the municipality has almost doubled since 2010 and increased by more than 44 per cent since 2019 – an increase from 3,966 places to 5,731 places.

The service review concluded there is now a strong supply of childcare places in the Glen Eira municipality and there is a high degree of confidence that this supply will meet current and future demand for childcare places across the municipality.

The Commonwealth Government has adopted a market-driven system for childcare services and does not directly fund operations and service delivery costs. The Commonwealth Government provides subsidies to benefit families and carers.



By comparison, Council is the only provider of Maternal and Child Health Services in the municipality. Maternal and Child Health operations and costs of service delivery is part funded by the State Government through service level agreement with Council. Council has no plans to exit Maternal and Child Health Services.

**Why has there been no advertising? We have reviewed claims that the Early Learning Centres advertise in the newsletter. I urge you to review the last few years newsletters - there is next to no advertising for places. Since 2017, there have been only three advertisements placed for vacancies (December 2020 page 9), December 2021 (page 11, with features on family day care, Ripponlea kinder, but no large article on Early Learning Centres), February 2021 (page 7) and one additional for Murrumbeena in September 2021, (page 14 in the 'What's On' section). Do the Councillors believe that adequate effort has been made to market the Early Learning Centres and that the availability of these services is widely understood by the community?**

The Early Learning Centres have consistently been advertised in the Glen Eira News since at least 2017. The Centres have also been advertised on social media, at community events, playgroups, street signage and flags, direct emails to families on the waiting list about current vacancies, and through the distribution of printed collateral such as booklets and postcards.

**Has council turned its mind to whether closing its three Early Learning Centres complies with its obligations under the Charter of Human Rights?**

When Council makes a decision, it is required to have regard to the rights recognised by the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (the Charter). Council is satisfied that if a final decision is made to cease operating the Early Learning Centres, it would not limit the rights recognised by the Charter.

**Regarding Council's preliminary decision dated 4 October 2023, if Council does not shut the three Early Learning Centres down this year and plans to keep them open for only part of 2024 – this will undoubtedly disrupt the final year of kindergarten for the pre-prep / four-year old children. It would be detrimental to the four-year old kindergarten childrens' development and emotional wellbeing to make them change kindergartens in the year before they make the big leap to primary school. Have Councillors and Glen Eira City Council considered that the 4-year-old kindergarten children need a whole year of kindergarten at the one place?**

Council will carefully consider all feedback received prior to making a final decision. Feedback received about the timing of the potential closure of the Centres will form part of the considerations of the final decision-making process.

**Parents have sought legal advice from multiple legal counsel confirming Glen Eira City Council has breached the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth). Has Glen Eira City Council and its elected Councillors turned their minds to whether closing the three Early Learning Centres directly and/or indirectly discriminates against women, and/or those who have family or carer responsibilities?**

Council takes its obligations not to discriminate in the delivery of its services very seriously. Council is satisfied that a final decision to cease operating the Early Learning Centres would not be discriminatory, either directly or indirectly. In particular, Council is satisfied that it would not be treating people with an attribute (e.g. sex or parental status) unfavourably because of that attribute. If it made a final decision to cease operating the Early Learning Centres, no direct discrimination would arise. Similarly, Council is satisfied a final decision to cease operating the Early Learning Centres would not disadvantage people with an attribute disproportionately to the rest of the community.

**I refer to Council's preliminary decision dated 4 October 2023 to make a final decision on 12 December 2023 and potentially permanently close on 21 December 2023. You have not given our children enough time to plan for this change. You are completely out of touch with the community. The current published plan you have in place is irresponsible and deficient. Families are experiencing distress before the busy holiday season. You have burdened families with a rushed decision. Where is the change management in your plan and the responsibility of the Council towards its residents for such a major and emotional event?**

A final decision has not yet been made with respect to the future of the Council-run three Early Learning Centres. A final decision will be made on 12 December 2023, following consideration of all feedback received during the consultation process.

Our Family Liaison Officers are working closely with individual families to provide support now, and to understand the type of support families may require to identify alternative care that best suits their individual needs if Council does make a final decision to close its Early Learning Centres.

We now have a clearer understanding of vacancies after advising other childcare services of Council's preliminary decision, however Council cannot guarantee specific days, times or locations will be available to suit families' individual needs.

**The Victorian Department of Education has claimed to have reached out to Council to discuss providing financial assistance. Why has this not been taken up?**

The Department of Education has not contacted Council with an offer to provide financial assistance to operate its three Council-run Early Learning Centres.

**Are Councillors aware that staff of the Early Learning Centres have reported increasing difficulties in getting any standard maintenance done for the buildings (as we know modern centres need maintenance too) in the lead up to the preliminary decision and that staff have not been consulted in the lead up to inform the preliminary decision?**

Councillors are not aware of any issues with regard to standard maintenance. All three facilities represent a sizeable proportion of Council's ageing buildings and contribute to increasing maintenance fees. For the year 2022-23 the cost across these centres was \$144,408.99, an increase of seven per cent on the previous year.

There has not been a direction to delay or postpone any standard maintenance. Unless urgent, any maintenance requires time and planning from internal departments, and this timing has not been influenced in any way by the service review or preliminary decision.

Staff were not consulted in the lead up to inform the preliminary decision, because in order to comply with Council's Enterprise Agreement and the Local Government Act, Council was required to make a preliminary decision before being able to consult.

Council has consulted widely with staff and their representative unions since the announcement of the preliminary decision.

Questions about the process for Council making a preliminary decision have been previously answered in the [Your Questions Answered 20 October](#) published on 20 October 2023.

**Has Council approached external providers enquiring whether they would be interested in running the service on behalf of Council? If not, why not? If so, what was the response?**

No. Council has not approached any external providers to run the service. Council has made a preliminary decision, not a final decision to exit direct service provision from the three Centres.

Council is now considering all submissions received during the four-week consultation process prior to a final decision being made on 12 December 2023. Once Council has determined what its own role should be in the delivery of childcare, other options can be explored.

**Council is currently completing an ‘Our Priorities, Our Future’ survey as part of an assessment of Council’s budget priorities. The survey asks participants to select the five services that are most important to you. The possible answers include 112 words for the participant to select an answer from. The last two words at the bottom of the list of the options are ‘early education’. Will the Council officers confirm if this ‘push poll’ survey is intended to be used as a tool to assist the Councillors in consideration of the Final Decision for Glen Eira Early Learning Centres? If so, will the Councillors confirm if they will disregard the findings of a biased poll in consideration of the final decision?**

The ‘Our Priorities, Our Future’ community survey is designed to help Council understand high level views of what services the community sees as their highest priorities. It is not possible to list the more than 100 services Council provides for the Glen Eira community individually. The survey provides for 15 categories of services that Council delivers. The services are listed in alphabetical order in those groupings.

The survey responses are a key input to Councillors’ broader future strategic planning, along with the recommendations of the Community Priorities Panel. Council will continue to consult with the community in relation to specific proposals or changes in accordance with requirements under the Local Government Act 2020 and its Community Engagement Policy.

**Can council please outline what services are currently operating at losses and despite this which of these services Council believes should remain as provided by the City of Glen Eira?**

Glen Eira City Council provides more than 120 different services to the community, with responsibilities extending well beyond roads, rates and rubbish. A snapshot of the services provided by council includes:

- the built environment — assets and roads, city planning, and supporting businesses.
- the natural environment — open spaces and places, urban forest, and sustainable living.
- health and wellbeing — family health and wellbeing, arts, culture and libraries, community connection and keeping you safe.
- Council operations – the day-to-day running of council activities such as customer service, governance, financial management etc.

Council has obligations and responsibilities under more than 100 Victorian Acts and Regulations including those relating to planning and building control, public health services, domestic animal control and environmental protection legislation. Council is also responsible for maintaining community infrastructure and assets such as town halls, libraries, parks and gardens and for making and enforcing local laws.

It’s becoming tougher to operate and to remain financially sustainable. We are being asked to do more with less and this will only get harder with predicted inflation levels and interest rate hikes.

While local government collects only 3.8 per cent of taxes, we manage one third of the nation’s infrastructure. The cost of providing services has soared over the past two years and inflation and construction costs are making it harder to build and maintain infrastructure. With increasing costs significantly increasing we need to look at the best and most responsible way to meet all of the community’s needs. This means ensuring that we are able to fund those services where Local Government is the only provider, rather than prioritising subsidisation of services that are also provided by the private or not-for-profit sectors.

**Council states that the Early Learning Centres buildings are ageing, needing modifications and upgrades to meet modern expectations. In contrast, the ASU identified feedback from staff that 'it has been increasingly difficult to get maintenance done on the buildings'.**

**How much of the annual budget was spent on the significant renovating and extending of the Council building throughout 2020-21? Especially poignant given its under-utilisation post-COVID with many officers permitted and encouraged to work from home. To exemplify, the 10 workstations at the ground floor window have never been observed with more than four staff utilising them.**

Council has not stated that the buildings need modifications or upgrades. Council has stated that the buildings are no longer fit for purpose and do not provide the economies of scale to make them financially viable. This is why the service review examined an option to consolidate services onto a single site at Murrumbena at an estimated cost of approx. \$10M. More information about the viability of the centres can be found in the [Childcare Viability Explained](#) publication, published on Council's website on 26 October 2023.

Councillors are not aware of any issues with regard to standard maintenance. All three facilities represent a sizeable proportion of Council's ageing buildings and contribute to increasing maintenance fees. For the year 2022-23 the cost across these centres was \$144,408.99, an increase of seven per cent on the previous year. In 2021-22 the maintenance costs for the three centres totalled \$135,352.

During 2020-2021, \$37,473 was spent to upgrade the ground floor at Town Hall. Renovations to the Town Hall have allowed Council to save over \$550,000 each year by ceasing the lease agreement at 840 Dandenong Road.

**Throughout Council's Early Services Review and Discussion Paper there are countless incorrect assumptions. For example, that "increased fees would not be competitive in the local market-place due to not being able to give meals/nappies" or "others have indicated that they are not willing to pay the higher fees now or into the future."**

**Our own parent survey indicated that of the 89 respondents 100 per cent would be willing to pay an increased daily fee. This is useful information. Council could have asked these types of questions throughout this process. It would have at the very least showed some understanding of the value parents place on quality early learning.**

**Why did I have to spend \$100 dollars of my money to subscribe, create, run and analyse a survey for you to have this information? Assumptions have been passed off as fact too often in this unreasonable process.**

Information about the viability of the centres has been previously provided to all impacted families and the community and can be found in the [Childcare Viability Explained](#) publication, published on Council's website on 26 October 2023.

Income for childcare operators and the viability of childcare centres is primarily driven by utilisation rates and the childcare fees paid by parents.

In order to recover losses if the Centres were operating at 90 per cent capacity, which is the current budget target, the daily fees would need to increase to an estimated \$179.50 per day (a \$33.50 increase). This would make our services one of the most expensive in the municipality.

Pricing must also be set at a competitive rate and in line with the service offering to attract prospective families to ensure the ongoing viability of the Centres. Council's three small Centres were established in the 1990s and are not equipped to provide cooked meals, nappies and additional educational activities and as such, are unable to effectively compete for new enrolments from prospective families who are seeking contemporary services, which is essential for the ongoing viability of the Centres.

**The Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan (KISP) assumes “kindergarten places currently available are retained into the future and it does not factor in a reduction in kindergarten places due to ageing infrastructure or sites that are not fit-for-purpose into the future. Council considers that funding to renew or replace existing infrastructure will be required to maintain current supply of kindergarten places”.**

**The question is in two parts: If the KISP modelling assumes no reduction in kindergarten places, why would a decision to close be made if this reduces the places available by 43 funded kindergarten places? Secondly, if Council identified this requirement to renew or replace infrastructure, why has infrastructure been allowed to languish, knowing full-well that renewal of infrastructure will be required to maintain the current supply of kindergarten places in future?**

The Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan (KISP) examines the number of kindergarten places available across the municipality which are provided by both stand-alone kindergartens and childcare centres.

As highlighted in the service review there has been a substantial increase in the number of childcare places available in Glen Eira including kindergarten places provided through new centres.

There is also growth forecast with nine new Early Learning Centres in the planning phase which have the capacity to provide a further 919 places.

For Glen Eira, the current KISP does not identify a shortfall in kindergarten places for the Glen Eira municipality until 2028, and the shortfall in kindergarten places is expected in Bentleigh-McKinnon; not the suburbs where Council’s Early Learning Centres are located.

Council’s Early Learning Centres have not been allowed to languish. For the year 2022-23 the maintenance cost across these Centres was \$144,408.99, an increase of seven per cent on the previous year. This issue regarding viability is associated with ageing design and layout of the Centres which is why consolidating services onto a single site at an estimated cost of approximately \$10M was considered as an option as part of the service review.

**Have all funding options been explored? In 2023 the State Government significantly increased the ‘Building Blocks Capacity Building’ grant available with up to \$9M available to Councils for the construction of a Children’s Centre that includes a kindergarten and long daycare. The Discussion Paper makes comment that there is potentially \$4.5M of funding available. This comment is incorrect, and the Discussion Paper does not provide financial modelling to assess the viability of utilising grant money to improve the performance of the Centres. Do Councillors support the utilisation of State Government funding to improve early learning in Glen Eira? And will the Councillors request financial modelling to assess the viability of accessing State Government funding to improve the financial performance of the Early Learning Centres?**

Council does support State Government funding for early learning in Glen Eira. Council owns 10 stand-alone kindergarten facilities and supports applications for grant funding from the kindergarten providers who lease these facilities. Council also provides letters of support for other early years providers in the municipality to submit with their applications for State Government grant funding.

Financial modelling was undertaken as part of the Strategic Service Review. The option considered by Council to consolidate its childcare places into a child and family hub on the Murrumbeena Early Learning Centre site was comprehensively assessed and costed and the maximum amount of funding Council might be eligible for is \$4.5M. This is because the larger amounts of grant funding rely on more kindergarten places being created. The Murrumbeena site is not large enough for a hub with four kindergarten rooms, and the current Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan for Glen Eira does not identify a shortfall in kindergarten places for the Glen Eira municipality until

2028 with the shortfall in kindergarten places expected in Bentleigh-McKinnon. This means that there is also not the demand for four new kindergarten rooms in Murrumbeena.

Council cannot use Building Blocks funding to expand its Early Learning Centres to increase the number of childcare places available. It is necessary to expand the number of childcare places available in order to improve the viability of the facilities. A viable childcare centre needs to be at least 100 places, and the sites where the Carnegie Early Learning Centre and Caulfield Family Centre are located are not large enough to accommodate expanding these facilities.

**Why did Council focus solely on the competitive edge of its Early Learning Centres against larger private ones, neglecting factors like quality and community impact, and overlooking comparisons with smaller, thriving centres?**

The [Childcare Discussion Paper](#), published on Council's website on 5 October 2023 provides detailed information about the recent strategic service review that examines how the services could operate sustainability into the future in the context of ageing infrastructure, financial losses, the growing childcare market in the municipality and the current and emerging State and Commonwealth early years reform agendas.

More information about the challenges associated with our Early Learning Centres can be found in the [Childcare Viability Explained](#) publication, published on Council's website on 26 October 2023.

**Are the ELCs actually competing with the rest of the market if there are Council boasts investing in children and families. Please breakdown in detail the funding and support level offered by Council for the following. Family Day Care – Occasional Day Care (19 places at GESAC, 19 places at Carnegie multipurpose centre) – expand Kindergarten Central Registration – outline the level of funding and support Council provides. collective online registration platform? Professional development programs – please outline the level of funding and support Council provides. Supported playgroups – level of funding and support Council provides. Additional in-home support (20 families) – outline level of funding and support Council provides. Overall, please outline and provide a breakdown of the level of financial investment made by Council into services that are specifically related to early childhood education and care. Can you also please provide examples of advocacy and these outcomes over the last 12 months that ensured Glen Eira's children and families thrived?**

In the 2023-2024 Budget, Council has allocated Council funds to:

- Family Day Care - \$209,240
- GESAC Occasional Care - \$188,457
- Carnegie Occasional Care - \$142,486
- Kindergarten Central Registration - \$39,102
- Supported Playgroups - \$48,724

In the 2023-2024 Budget, Council has allocated \$1,697,914 of Council funds to support early childhood education and care activities, programs and services.

Council has identified funding for the School Crossing Supervisor Program and Maternal Child Health as advocacy priorities in 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, as well as funding to support sustainable services for the Glen Eira community.