



GLEN EIRA
CITY COUNCIL

28 November 2023

Your Questions Answered

Preliminary Decision about Council's Early Learning Centres

Written Public Questions – Ordinary Council Meeting 28 November 2023

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

Given the short notice of the closure of the Murrumbeena, Caulfield and Carnegie Early Learning centres and the proximity to the next Council elections, it is fair to assume there is a hidden agenda. Can each Councillor please disclose any conflict of interest regarding any family member or business associates that are involved in property development who would profit from the closures of these centres and redevelopment of these sites.

It's not fair to assume that there is a hidden agenda. As Council has only made a preliminary decision about closing the Early Learning Centres, no decision has been made regarding what might occur with any surplus facilities. Should the decision to close proceed, Council will then turn its mind to best future use of the facilities in line with our Property Strategy.

Following this 'consultation phase' and all the information that has now come to light, do Councilor's see the importance of the ELC services that local government provides and offers to its local community?

Yes - there has been strong feedback from families about how much they value Council's Early Learning Centres.

Why isn't Council celebrating the success of its three ELCs? Aren't they something to be proud of? Glen Eira City Council is a leader in offering exceptional quality education and care to children and also employs and pays women at a higher rate than private centres. The Council allows women to return to work with confidence and peace of mind. This is all cause for a big celebration! Don't you agree?

Thanks for your comments. They are consistent with feedback received through the consultation process and will be taken into consideration by Council as part of its decision making.

Is Council aware that this year the State government significantly increased the Building Blocks grant available to Council's for construction of a Community Hub? The discussion paper states there is \$4.5m available however there is now \$9m available to Council's . Additionally Council's are eligible to apply for Federal Government Infrastructure Grants for construction of Early Learning facilities. In light of this updated information, can the Council reconsider its decision to close the centres on 21 December 2023?

In [Your Questions Answered – 17 November](#), further explanation was provided about why \$4.5M is the maximum amount of funding Council is likely to be eligible for, for a child and family hub on the Murrumbidgee Early Learning Centre site. \$9M grant funding relies on 4 x 33 place kindergarten rooms being created which would not fit on the site.

If Council decides to pursue Option 3 – to consolidate its childcare places into a child and family hub – all available funding opportunities will be pursued.

Council has stated that it will not provide the profit and loss statements and breakdown of costs of running its three ELCs because it is commercially sensitive information. How can the community be assured that the Council is being honest, transparent and financially responsible when it cannot even provide the most basic information, yet it makes sweeping assertions about the losses the ELCs are making which were later revealed through public questioning to have included a 'notional rent'? Council's figures and statements are not adding up and there is a lot of doubt about how Councillors can make a proper vote if this information is not provided.

Commercially sensitive information is kept confidential and not distributed publicly, but it is made available to Councillors. As part of the service review, Councillors were provided with the financial performance of each centre including income, expenditure, utilisation rates, deficits, and expected future deficits.

Councillors will be in a position to make an informed decision on 12 December.

Councils are required to comply with Child Safe Standards. When questioned on how children were consulted about the preliminary decision to close Glen Eira ELCs, the response was “that process has centred on families, including children, who use the Early Learning Centres.”. There was no information on how children could be involved in the process. The consultation methods employed (online survey) were focused on gathering feedback from adults who spoke and read English. Can Council elaborate how children were actually (and genuinely) consulted through the consultation period on the decision to close the ELCs as individual members of the community? Children have not had the opportunity to provide feedback in an age-appropriate way.

Council did not directly engage with young children about its preliminary decision. However, feedback that has been submitted on behalf of children through the consultation process has been included in the feedback to be considered by Council before a final decision is made.

From 2026 vulnerable and First Nations children will be able to access 30 hours of pre-prep (transitioning from 4 year old kindergarten), with all children able to access this from 2032. This does not seem to have been mentioned in the Childcare Discussion Paper or factored in with projections. The increase in hours for funded kindergarten/pre-prep will effectively halve the number of kindergarten places both within stand alone kindergartens and funded programs in LDCs. With many working families needing to access funded kindergarten in a long day care setting (to be able to work a full day), has this change been factored in this decision to close Council run ELCs?

The Glen Eira Kindergarten Infrastructure Services Plan has not been updated with estimated demand and supply projections that include the transition of 4-year-old kindergarten to Pre-Prep. Therefore, this data was not incorporated into the Childcare Strategic Services Review.

Council is in the early stages of working with the Victorian Department of Education to update the Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan for Glen Eira.

Council has still not confirmed if it has considered that 4-year-old kindergarten students need to be in a full-year of kindergarten for their final year before transitioning to prep/primary school. Have Councillors taken this into consideration in their decision making in relation to the future of the ELCs?

Council's preliminary decision to consider closing the Early Learning Centres in December 2023 was in recognition of the natural end point of the calendar year, including for kindergarten children. However, feedback about the challenges associated with the short timeframe between Council's final decision on 12 December and potential closure on 21 December is currently being considered by Councillors prior to the final decision being made.

Members of the Glen Eira community have spoken with representatives of small ELCs. We have information which shows that these smaller-run centres are running at a profit in the same price bracket as Glen Eira's fees. We have been dismissed by Council officers and the CEO telling us we are comparing apples and oranges. Whilst we are not suggesting all centres are the same as Glen Eira's ELCs, we have information which shows smaller-run centres are profitable. Why is Glen Eira Council not providing us with transparent information about its financials and why is it still insisting on charging notional rent? Why isn't Glen Eira investigating other smaller-run centres which are successful and trying to make its own ELCs financially sustainable so that they can continue to provide high quality learning and care to our children and support the community?

Questions about the need for Council to comply with the National Competition Policy which includes accounting for notional rent have previously been answered in [Your Questions Answered 20 October](#); [Your Questions Answered – 17 November](#) and the [Childcare Viability Explained publication](#).

[In Your Questions Answered – 17 November it was explained that](#) profit and loss statements and full cost breakdowns is commercially sensitive information, and is therefore commercial in confidence because Council's childcare services operate in a competitive marketplace.

The work that Council has undertaken to investigate the financial sustainability of its Early Learning Centres is described in [Your Questions Answered – Family Briefing – 5 October](#), [Your Questions Answered – 17 November](#) and the [Childcare Viability Explained publication](#).

The budget outlined in the ELC paper is narrow - it doesn't take into consideration the broader context of Council's budget position and the choices it's making. For example, in Council's Capital Works Program 2023-24 it states that an additional \$442,000 of Council's cash is being spent on the Town Hall Refurbishment (I can see in the description so please do not repeat the information from that). The Town Hall appears to be in good working condition. Can't Council redirect these funds to invest in the ELCs which actually get used by more people and provide high quality early learning, education and care to children?

Each year, Council makes decisions about where to allocate funding, striking the right balance between ambition for new initiatives, maintaining quality service delivery and remaining financially sustainable. The 2023–24 Budget is no different.

The funding of Capital Works projects is based on rigorous prioritisation and an annual process of community consultation. Demand for capital investment is always greater than the funding available and there is a long pipeline of worthy projects waiting for available funding.

In Council's Community Engagement Policy dated 23 February 2023, you state "where projects impact children and young people we work with our local early years and youth service providers and school communities and use age-appropriate methods." Can you please provide me with names of the local early years and youth service providers and school communities you worked with to reach your preliminary decision to close the three ELCs? Furthermore, please tell me what age-appropriate methods you have used to engage our children regarding your preliminary decision to close the three ELCs?

The requirement for Council to make a preliminary decision before consulting has previously been answered in [Your Questions Answered – Family Briefing – 5 October](#), [Your Questions Answered 20 October](#), and [Your Questions Answered – 17 November](#)

Council did not directly engage with young children about its preliminary decision. However, feedback that has been submitted on behalf of children has been included in the feedback that is being considered by Council before a final decision is made.

Do Councillors understand that there is a general consensus in the community that Glen Eira Council is using our women and children as political chess pieces? Any decision to close the centres either in December 2023 or in 6 months-time appears to be strategically timed to be before the October 2024 election so that Council can get these ELCs off its books. This decision and process that Council has adopted does appear to be conducted in line with the Local Government Act's requirements regarding: transparency principles, engaging the municipal community in strategic planning and strategic decision making or collaborating to achieve the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations.

We are satisfied that our process has complied with the requirements of the Local Government Act. Questions about this have previously been answered in [Your Questions Answered – Family Briefing – 5 October](#) and [Your Questions Answered – 17 November](#)

Why would Glen Eira City Council pay for the The Civic Partnership ‘Glen Eira City Council Communication Plan’ dated 15 September 2023, prior to Councillors making a decision? It appears Councillors may have not been able to keep an open mind in accordance with Winky Pop Pty Ltd v Hobsons Bay City Council if they saw this report prior to making a vote that detailed the Council’s communication plan of a preliminary decision that had not yet been made.

Council takes seriously its responsibility to transparently communicate its decisions and consult with the community around preliminary decisions, prior to final decisions being made. As part of this, Council engaged expert consultants The Civic Partnership to develop a communications and engagement approach, with the objective of ensuring the community could be quickly and fully informed if a preliminary decision was made. This is consistent with good governance.

In Council’s Community Engagement Policy dated 23 February 2021, you promised that you will use different types of engagement to ensure you hear from different groups in our community such as children or groups at risk of not being represented. At the public meeting on Wednesday 8 November 2023 you didn’t even answer Ari Hunt-Koadlow’s public question and to date you haven’t provided any mechanism to engage children. Given this decision impacts children, how will you be engaging them to inform your final decision on 12 December 2023?

Council did not directly engage with young children about its preliminary decision. However, feedback that has been submitted on behalf of children has been included in the feedback that is being considered by Council before a final decision is made.

How do Councillors feel about 4 female staff members being photographed and on display on the front cover of its Gender Equality Action Plan 2022-2025? Can’t the Council see the irony of dismissing these women from a good and well paying workplace, and yet when it was to the Council’s advantage, it placed these hard working women on the front cover of its material to promote Gender Equality and the Council’s good work in this space?

Thank you for your observation. We will take this as a comment.

The information provided in the Background section on the council’s Child Future Survey states; “Operating at 78 per cent capacity in 2022-23, the numbers at our centres keep going down while costs keep going up.” However in the Discussion Paper on page 23, the table Council’s Early Learning Centres % Utilisation, shows a clear trend in increase year on year over the past 3 financial years following the drop from 2 years of Covid and Lockdown law impacts. This misrepresentation of facts in the council’s message immediately prior to taking the survey has considerable impact on the wider community and their feedback who have not been provided with an accurate account of the facts. How will the council correct this misleading message to the

community in retrospect and also take this mistake into account when collating and reviewing all responses to the council survey?

The utilisation graph on page 23 of the Childcare Discussion Paper demonstrates a decline in the average yearly utilisation across all three centres from 89% in 2017-2018 to 78% in 2022-2023. Utilisation trends were examined for the two years prior to the COVID pandemic in recognition that the pandemic impacted the services in 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. However, utilisation in 2022-2023 is still lower than pre-pandemic levels.

The Our Priorities, Our Future process is not completed, with reports currently being worked on following the completion of the group meetings on 20 November 2023 for reports to be provided to Councillors some time in December, though not data specified in the timeline, and then information coming out to the community in early 2023. How can Councillors make a decision to close a service that is being considered as part of the Our Priorities, Our Future process when that process is not completed? Furthermore, what if it becomes apparent that children and ELC services are important to the community and you go ahead and decide to close the centres? It is such a shame that this process has been so rushed because this does not feel like thorough or transparent community engagement or decision making.

Councillors have been regularly briefed throughout the Our Priorities, Our Future community engagement program, including early results in November, prior to final survey outcomes being provided to Council in December. Councillors will be briefed on final Our Priorities, Our Future survey outcomes prior to making a final decision on the future of Council's early learning centres on 12 December.

1,746 Glen Eira residents responded to the survey. This is 1.15 per cent of Glen Eira's total population. The outcomes showed 'youth and family services and early education' was ranked ninth of 17 service areas in response to a question asking the community which services they feel are most important. Of all responses, 21 per cent of respondents – or more than one in five – included 'youth and family services and early education' in their five highest priority services.

123 incomplete paper surveys were submitted at our targeted engagements with harder-to-reach cohorts, such as young people aged 17 and under, seniors, people with disability and culturally and linguistically diverse people. Of these, 'youth and family services and early education' was prioritised lower than the broader community survey, at 13th of 17 service areas. 19 per cent of these respondents – or less than one in five – included 'youth and family services and early education' in their five highest priority services.

Port Phillip Council have a specific marketing campaign on facebook which advertises vacancies in named centres according to specific day and age-group to alert the community, thus filling any vacancies very efficiently and effectively. Why hasn't Glen Eira advertised where specific vacancies exist (e.g. centre, age group, which days) in order to fill those places if they desire a higher utilisation?

Council has previously advertised vacancies on our website. We will take the suggestion to post vacancies on social media on board if Council decides to continue to operate the Early Learning Centres.

There are multiple inquiries currently going on which are reviewing early childhood education and care as well as childcare services. It is now well known that one of the biggest issues with childcare services is that staff at private centres are not well-paid and this is a big reason for the shortage in staff at private centres (i.e. due to long hours and low pay, staff are leaving the sector). Wouldn't it be a shame for Glen Eira to add to this problem because by closing its three ELCs it will remove well-paid and longstanding early childhood staff members from a troubled industry?

Thank you for your comment. This feedback is consistent with submissions provided through the consultation period.

An objective of Glen Eira's Public Transparency Policy dated 11 August 2020 is to increase transparency in Council's decision making processes. Without access to critical data such as the breakdown of costs and book entries for rent regarding the ELCs as well as the full Strategic Services Review, transparency is not being achieved. All of this information is critical to Council's decision which it will vote on, on 12 December 2023. Will Council please reconsider making this information available to the impacted community members for the sake of transparency and good governance? Without this information the public is losing faith in elected Councillors and there is growing sentiment in the community that Councillors are not complying with its own standards of conduct (pursuant to Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020 - Schedule 1). The public is feeling deliberately misled.

Council has released all relevant information from the Childcare Strategic Services Review that is not commercial-in-confidence information in the [Childcare Discussion Paper](#). 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](#), [Your Questions Answered 20 October](#), [Your Questions Answered – 17 November](#) and the [Childcare Viability Explained](#) publication.

How is it that other centres which have small rooms (and do not benefit from the 100+ capacity / economy of scale type rooms Glen Eira is now stating it needs) are able to make a profit and yet Glen Eira City Council cannot seem to find a way to do this?

Council is unable to comment on the financial viability of private and not-for-profit centres. Questions about the financial viability of Council's Early Learning Centres have previously been answered in [Your Questions Answered – Family Briefing – 5 October](#), [Your Questions Answered – 17 November](#), and the [Childcare Viability Explained](#) publication.

I am locked into rosters for 2024 and I am scared I will lose my job if the ELCs close on 21 December 2023 because I cannot find alternative care for my children. What can I do?

Our Family Liaison Officers have up to date information about vacancies in other centres in Glen Eira and are available to support individual families find an alternative centre.

Regarding the ELCs, why have we heard a number of accounts from people in the Caulfield centre parent network of prospective families for 2024 who put in for placements for 2024 at some point earlier on in this process, but were told that the centres are closing and thus they won't be receiving any placement offers?

One particular parents accepted an offer at Caulfield ELCs, filled out all the paperwork, then couldn't get in touch for weeks and then told they are no longer accepting applications to the centre and that the ELC was closing at the end of the year. This happened in October 2023 and we have written evidence. So this means that many families may have simply been told no for next year and have found other places elsewhere. With the prospective placements going out for 2024, has Council engaged with this family and all others that have enquired but were told this?

Prospective families enquiring about enrolling now, and on our waiting list for 2024 have been transparently advised of Council's preliminary decision to close the Early Learning Centres. Individual families have made decisions to not accept an available place at our centres after being informed of Council's preliminary decision.

Currently only 3% of advertised vacancies in early education in the whole state of Victoria are full time. This is a strategy used by the profit sector to casualise a qualified workforce to save money and reduce hours to pay educators less. If the centres were to close, our experienced and dedicated educators will be forced into insecure part time and casual roles. At a time when job security and cost of living issues are incredibly important, how do Councillors feel about forcing a highly trained and experienced workforce into insecure work? The Council 'solution' of redeployment does not respect the profession of education to which our educators have chosen as their vocation and will need to seek work in the area of their significant expertise and passion, not just any area redeployed by council. Glen Education are only offering part time or casual work and is therefore not a solution.

As outlined in [Your Questions Answered – 17 November](#), Council is unable to comment on the employment conditions of private or not-for-profit providers in the childcare sector.

Now that Council has the hand signed petition and also can see the online change.org petition (which has received resounding support to keep the ELCs open with over 7,000 signatures), along with overwhelming responses from the community in support of the centres in all aspects, can Council make a decision to keep the centres open at a sooner date to alleviate the community?

Questions about the process and timing for Councillors to consider all feedback received prior to making a final decision has previously been answered in [Your Questions Answered 20 October](#) and [Your Questions Answered – 17 November](#). Council's decision will be made on 12 December, as previously advised.

Local government isn't mandated to provide ELC services. The issues regarding the profitability of ELCs are just one factor in Council's preliminary decision to close. A main issue Glen Eira Council appears to have is that it just does not want to provide ELCs anymore. Looking at the community response, it is obvious that the community want local government to continue to provide early learning services. Petitions, broader feedback and multiple inquiries show the provision of exceptional early learning services provided by you are beneficial and wanted. Council is obliged to listen to its community and to prioritise achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations. Given Council's obligations and the resounding feedback from the community to keep these centres open and for Glen Eira Council to remain providers of these crucial services, will Council comply with its obligations to listen to its community?

Council is obliged to make decisions that balance the needs of the entire Glen Eira community with our finite resources. This means making decisions regarding relative priorities, like in any business or household.

The consultation and engagement process was designed to gather feedback from staff, families and the community about Council's preliminary decision. The feedback received is currently being considered by Council prior to making a final decision on 12 December.

Please identify by naming which external experts were consulted to conduct the Childcare Strategic Services Review - were they consultants, teachers, demographers? Please provide the information as we have now requested on multiple occasions but are yet to have received any direct answers naming any experts or organisations. This has been a key assertion of council however failed to provide a direct response to the initial and all follow up questions.

As previously answered in [Your Questions Answered 20 October](#), 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.

Why is Council saying that it must abide by the Competitive Neutrality Policy and therefore this is a reason for closure, when it has also admitted that it has not undertaken the public interest test and therefore not determined whether it is exempt from the policy? Surely it would have to complete this test to be sure it even meets the criteria and needs to apply the notional annual rent (which other neighbouring councils don't even apply to their council run Early Learning even in adhering to CN) that greatly inflates the proposed operating loss and gives a false indication of the costs to operate.

Council has determined that its Early Learning Centres constitute a 'significant business activity' under Competitive Neutrality Policy, and Council must therefore comply with the Policy. This is, however only one element of Council's decision-making process.

If Council makes a final decision to continue to provide childcare services, Council will then need to undertake the necessary steps to ensure it is compliant with Competitive Neutrality Policy. A public interest test is the last step in implementation of a measure to comply with Competitive Neutrality Policy.

Glen Eira City Council has stated that the childcare sector has grown rapidly in Glen Eira in recent years and therefore its ELCs are no longer needed for the community. Can this same logic be applied to swimming pools, noting that GESAC is only 3.7km from Carnegie Swim Centre and yet Glen Eira has injected millions into a swimming pool, but doesn't want to inject a fraction of this money into continuing to provide exceptional and high quality education and care to children? Doesn't GESAC service the swimmers of Glen Eira?

Also if Glen Eira is injecting so much of its cash into Carnegie Swimming Pool for the benefit of the community, why can't Glen Eira see that it is costing the Council much less to provide a much wanted and needed service via its ELCs to the community? The community has spoken and it wants you to keep providing high quality early learning and care to children which you already do!

Thanks for your comments. Council will take this into consideration as part of its decision making.

Councillors have suggested to community members on a number of occasions that they have lots of agenda items to get through at the public meeting on 28 November 2023. While we can appreciate that Council has lots of business to attend to, the abrupt removal of exceptional and key services in such a short time frame is tremendously important to community members and impacted families. It feels like we are being dismissed. Can't Council officers and Councillors see how unsympathetic this attitude is when there are so many questions and issues that have not been solved or answered? If you don't have time to get through the community's questions regarding the abrupt closure of ELCs perhaps this decision should have been processed and timed differently. The community shouldn't be made to feel that Council does not have time to engage further with it on such a key issue.

Council has heard from community and families in many different ways since the announcement of its preliminary decision and throughout the consultation process. The cumulative amount of time invested by Councillors and officers in meeting with and responding to families has been significant and has reflected the importance of the decision.

Council meetings' primary purpose is to conduct the business (ie decision making) of the Council. While some provision is made for public participation and public questions as part of a Council meeting agenda, it is not intended to be a consultation mechanism. Timely responses will be provided to all questions, regardless of whether there is time to address them in the meeting.

When will the Gender Impact Assessment be done and will you make the assessment available to the public?

The Gender Impact Assessment has been completed and will be made available to the public as an attachment to the Council Report for Council's final decision.

Does Glen Eira City Council and its officers agree that its three ELCs impact and in fact improve the quality of early childhood education in Glen Eira and beyond? And by removing such services, there will be a negative impact on the quality of early childhood education offered in Glen Eira?

We appreciate that our services are highly valued by the families who use them. We also understand that if we close our Early Learning Centres, there will be 20 Early Learning Centres in Glen Eira that have the same Exceeding rating as Council's centres. The Commonwealth Government is responsible for assessing the quality of childcare services, and concerns about quality should be referred to the regulator.

Statistics show that 90% of a child's brain develops by age 5 and therefore good quality early childhood education is critical to the development of young children. Why can't our local government / Glen Eira continue the good work it has been doing to assist in the development of our children?

The Early Learning Centres are only one part of Council's broad role in supporting children and families in Glen Eira, which is described on page nine of the [Childcare Discussion Paper](#). The reasons behind Council's preliminary decision to close the Early Learning Centres are detailed in the meeting papers for the [3 October Special Meeting of Council](#).

Could you please tell me how long Glen Eira Council has had Civic Partnership / CPR working for Council on the ELC closure matter and how much you have spent to date on this agency to date? Could you please also provide the breakdown cost of the Communications Plan tabled in the minutes that Civic Partnership / CPR delivered for the Council?

As part of its commitment to transparently informing and engaging with the community around decisions, Council engaged expert consultants The Civic Partnership to create a communications and engagement approach, with the goal of ensuring the community could be quickly and fully informed if a preliminary decision was made. The Civic Partnership was engaged in June 2023.

The Glen Eira Council's Community Wellbeing Plan 2021–2025 states: "Council and Glen Eira residents will collaborate to ensure fair and equitable decision-making."

Council used the lowest two forms of community engagement (as per the IAP standards), used rushed timelines (with 27 days for community to have a say), and failed to listen to children's voices in this matter.

How can Council call themselves collaborative, fair and equitable in this decision-making process?

Council's community engagement approach was in line with its *Community Engagement Policy*, *Community Engagement Strategy*, and strategies and plans. We heard from hundreds of community members who responded to the community or families' surveys over a four-week period. All of the views we received will now inform Council's final decision in December.

How will Council be conducting a Gender Analysis / Gender Impact Assessment, or rather, where will the data that Council collects for this gender impact assessment come from? Will Council be interviewing or surveying mothers, families and impacted carers from the three ELCs it's proposing to close?

Council has conducted a Gender Impact Assessment in line with our obligations under the Gender Equality Act 2020.

The Gender Impact Assessment utilised a broad range of data sources to inform its assessment, these sources included:

- Consultation information collected through Council's community engagement program on the preliminary decision to close the three Early Learning Centres, consultation closed 1 November 2023.
- Workforce demographic data from Council's three Early Learning Centres – internal data.
- Planning permits for new childcare centres, including the number of proposed places and their locations -Internal data.
- Data relating to the licenced childcare places from Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority.
- Data relating to the number of children aged 0 - 4 from Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Census.
- Relevant social and demographic data from Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Census.
- Forecast data relating anticipated growth of 0 - 4-year-old groups by local area from Profile.id population forecast.
- Local childcare workforce data from Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Census.

In Council's published "Early Learning Centres For Your Child"(document) you state:

"At Glen Eira City Council we support community-focused Early Learning Centres that remain small with a personalised touch, putting the wellbeing of local families over profit."

Can you explain why profit is now the top priority over the wellbeing of children and families of Glen Eira?

The expected ongoing financial loss is only one factor that Council is considering as part of the Childcare Strategic Services Review. Other important considerations are outlined in the [Childcare Discussion Paper](#).

Council says there are plenty of places available at other centres but failed to research why places with availability are not popular.

One ELC with availability is a centre that two of my mother's group left and told me not to send my kids to.

Another centre with availability I toured and I watched poor attitude and treatment of a child by an educator. A local mum I know removed her child from that centre after a month.

Another centre I toured had a high staff turnover - the longest staff member there for a year. The outdoor area was terrible. The baby's room educator was frustrated and over it. She contained all the babies in high chairs rather than actively engaging with them.

The only centre I've found that meets exceeding and has availability, is faith based but does NOT have availability for both my children on the same days. What work did Council undertake to understand if appropriate places were actually available?

Council has contacted every centre in Glen Eira at least twice since the preliminary decision was made to ensure we have the most up to date information about vacancies. A decision on appropriateness is for families to make taking into consideration the unique needs of their child.

Council provided councillors the information that the preliminary decision to exit the ELCs were based on and put in place the community consultation process. Through questions and information now provided by community to council, evidence has emerged showing the information and process provided by council was deficient and a failing of protocol. Based on this new information what are council and councillors perspectives of information that was deficient and processes that were not followed?

Council does not accept that the information has been deficient and protocol has not been followed. However, any feedback received during the consultation process from staff, families and the community about aspects that are considered to be missing from the strategic service review has been included with other information that Council is considering prior to making a final decision.

What date did Glen Eira Council brief The Civic Partnership to prepare a communications plan regarding the preliminary decision to close its three ELCs?

Council engaged The Civic Partnership in June 2023 to work alongside Council leading up to its preliminary decision, helping Council to understand how any preliminary decision could be transparently communicated and engaged on.

How much did Council pay for The Civic Partnership 'Glen Eira City Council Communication Plan' dated 15 September 2023?

To ensure that the community was transparently, quickly and fully informed and engaged after a preliminary decision was made, we engaged expert consultants. They were engaged to provide advice and develop communications and engagement approaches in line with our *Community Engagement Policy*, *Community Engagement Strategy*, and *Local Government Act*. The communications plan was extensive and considered the needs of a range of the broad community, people directly impacted, and Council's many other stakeholders. The cost of developing such a comprehensive and considered communications plan was in the order of \$15,000.

Can Glen Eira Council please explain why they chose to spend money on a communications plan rather than invest this money into the ELCs, given the Council says finances are a key reason for closure?

Council takes seriously its legislative obligations to transparency communicate and engage with the community following a preliminary decision on the future of a service it provides, so we needed to develop a comprehensive and considered communications plan and sought expert guidance. As we have said previously, significant operating losses of more than \$570,000 per year are just one of many concerns Council took into consideration when making its preliminary decision.

In Council's 'Your Questions Answered' document dated 17 November 2023, you state that '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.' This response completely dismisses and ignores the fact that our ELCs still provide kindergarten services, moreover high quality and exceptional kindergarten programs to the community's children. Why is Glen Eira removing such a crucial and beneficial service from the community, which we know there is a high demand for and Glen Eira don't acknowledge that it is removing an important and beneficial service from currently enrolled students?

The quality of the programs provided in Council's Early Learning Centres has always been acknowledged, including the quality of the funded kindergarten programs. When Council commenced the Childcare Strategic Services Review, the most up to date data about projected demand and supply for kindergarten places was available in the currently endorsed [Glen Eira Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan](#) which demonstrates an adequate supply of kindergarten places in the municipality, and a strong preference across the community for stand-alone kindergarten programs.

Council acknowledges that the Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan needs to be updated following the Victorian Government's announcement of transitioning 4-year-old kindergarten to Pre-Prep over the next decade; and Council will continue to work in partnership with the Victorian Government and kindergarten providers in Glen Eira to plan for this initiative.

In response to a previous public question stating the Council's Gender Equality action plan includes a measurable goal to 'improve the gender composition of council', asking how the culling of jobs of ELC staff in levels 3-5 positions would impact the gender spread, Council's response was "the gender composition of level 3-5 staff is 67% female and 33% male. Should the centres close and the affected staff no longer have a role, than the gender composition at level 3-5 will be 66% female and 34% male."

Council choose to take a perspective of the whole pool of staff numbers as their justification in this instance, however with a tiny operating loss from a combined council P&L making profit (of which the \$249,000 is not actually an operating cost) does it choose only to focus and publicise the micro detail. Does Glen Eira value money more than people, moreover women?

No, Council does not value money more than people. Council provides over 120 services and therefore must make responsible financial decisions on behalf of the whole Glen Eira community.

Did Councillors see The Civic Partnership Communications Plan dated 15 September 2023 prior to voting on the preliminary decision to close the three ELCs on 3 October 2023?

The communications plan was included as an attachment to the Council report for the information of Council when the preliminary decision was made.

Glen Eira Council has actively developed high density living around train stations leading to more families living in apartments. Key reasons for high-density living families choosing Glen Eira ELCs is because of the centres' long-established gardens which are missing in nearby centres. The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) and the National Quality Framework (NQF) acknowledge the critical importance of outdoor and nature-based play for children. Increasing the amount of time children spend outdoors and in natural environments helps improve childrens' learning and development. Council reported extensively on the indoor facilities available at our ELCs. Why were the outdoor facilities not touched on in Council's reporting?

The outdoor environments at the Early Learning Centres do not present the same challenges as the indoor environments do for Council to provide financially viable and sustainable services.

If Council is paying itself notional rent from one account to another, why isn't this money being invested back into the ELC's?

Council accounts for notional rent as one measure to comply with Competitive Neutrality Policy and therefore cannot invest the money back into the Early Learning Centres.

In addition, notional rent represents an internal charge cost allocation to assist the service area in determining the full cost for the services. There is no transfer of monies involved.

Have Councillors considered how much it would mean to the community if they worked together with the community to see that the ELC's break even or even make a profit?

Yes - there has been strong feedback from families about how much they value Council's Early Learning Centres.

Council has been previously asked to provide examples of advocacy regarding the children, but no answer was provided. Can Council please provide examples of advocacy and outcomes over the last 12 months that's ensure Glen Eira's children and families thrive?

Council endorses its advocacy priorities annually. In 2022—2023 and 2023—2024, advocacy priorities around young people have been featured in Council's endorsed *Priority advocacy projects* documents.

For example, we have advocated for fair funding for the School Crossing Supervision Program, which keeps children safe to and from school. Council joined with other

councils to call for the funding agreements – which have seen funding decreasing year-on-year from the state through cost shifting – revert back to 50:50 funding. This resulted in an increase to 50:50 funding, but only for a single financial year. Council continues to advocate strongly for fair funding from the state, to ensure our children get safety to and from school.

As another example, Council continues to advocate for its valued maternal and child health services to be fairly funded from the state. Cost shifting has also seen this service inequitably funded over time. The state contributes just \$126.38 per hour of service, compared to councils which contribute \$142.79. This puts the service at risk for children and their mothers during these critical formative months.

These priorities are in addition to broader priorities – like unlocking more open space – which benefits all Glen Eira residents, including young people. Council will continue to advocate strongly for other levels of government to fairly fund Council services like these that support our children.

Council's published answers on 17 November 2023, state that during 2020-2021, its expenditure on the Town Hall building was just short of \$40,000. The 2021-2022 Budget Capital Works Program states that Council allocated \$1,000,000 of its funds to refurbish the Town Hall. Is this true?

Yes. The question submitted to the 8 November Ordinary Council Meeting (published in [Your Questions Answered – 17 November](#)) asked how much was spent on the Town Hall in 2020-2021. In 2020-2021, Council spent \$37,473 to upgrade offices at Town Hall. The Town Hall renovations continued into the 2021-2022 year and \$1,000,000 funding was allocated to this project.

The objectives of this refurbishment were to:

- a. improve customer service and way-finding;
- b. improve building security;
- c. address challenges with disability access;
- d. maximise office capacity; and
- e. improve working conditions that are currently cramped, inefficient and not motivating to work in.

Renovations to the Town Hall have allowed Council to save over \$550,000 each year by ceasing the lease agreement at 840 Dandenong Road.

Council's Community Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025 states:

“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.”– Does the Council believe that their decision to close our three ELCs is upholding this value?

Questions about Council’s preliminary decision and Council’s Community Wellbeing Plan have previously been answered in [Your Questions Answered – Family Briefing – 5 October](#)

The budget forecast result expected for the financial year is a surplus of \$4.97m. This compares favourably against the original adopted 2023-24 Budget surplus of \$1.04m. Why then are the ELC’s even being considered to close (let alone be enhanced) if such a surplus is now forecast?

Council provides over 120 services and therefore must make responsible financial decisions on behalf of the whole Glen Eira community.

The expected ongoing financial loss is only one factor that Council is considering as part of the Childcare Strategic Services Review. Other important considerations are outlined in the [Childcare Discussion Paper](#).

The forecast result expected for the financial year is a surplus of \$4.97m. This compares favourably against the original adopted 2023-24 Budget surplus of \$1.04m. This operating surplus is not a 'cash' profit as it recognises all revenue and spending for Council to operate and includes one-off items such as grant funding and non-cash items including depreciation and amortisation.

It has taken Council over five years to build steps at Duncan MacKinnon Reserve, noting that the upgrades commenced in 2017, and the steps / new stair access points to lower lawn areas on the Crosbie Road side of the Reserve have still not been built! How could Council possibly decide to close its doors on children, parents, families and staff of its three ELCs within the space of 3 months but it has taken Council longer to build a set of steps? Council is legislated to prioritise achieving best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations. Your actions to close off much needed and wanted community ELC services do not appear in line with this mandate.

Feedback received about the timing of the potential closure of the centres has been provided to Councillors and will form part of the considerations of the final decision-making process.

Do Councillors and Council officers realise that if Glen Eira has a plan or any desire to sell or repurpose the land on which the ELCs are on to make a profit and more cash for Council, that this money will be spent back into the community and on another community project, and that the community has now spoken loudly that it prefers to have these ELCs? Can't Glen Eira Council see that early learning and children are a top priority for this community? This is a community service we are talking about, not a private enterprise. Please consider the community.

Thank you for your comments. They will be taken into consideration as part of Council's decision making.

The Council ELC's are 3 of currently only 9 centres that are both non-denominational and rated to an exceeding (high) national standard across the whole of Glen Eira. They offer BOTH kindergarten and early learning in a long-day setting which other Council kindergartens do not. Therefore, they are extremely important and make up over 30% of a high quality market available to all members of the community. Given they serve a clear market, why are they even being considered to close? Why are they not being celebrated as a high-quality service that should be not only preserved, but celebrated and used as exemplars across the sector?

Council has always recognised the high-quality education and care that is provided at the Early Learning Centres. The considerations that formed part of Council's preliminary decision to close the Early Learning Centres are outlined in the [Childcare Discussion Paper](#).

97% of current advertised vacancies in Early Learning in Victoria are part-time or casual only. The Australian Council of Trade Unions states from insecure work to wage theft, big business has found too many ways to exploit weaknesses in Australia's workplace laws to enable it to pay people less. Low pay and the cost of living crisis are creating extreme financial stress for casual workers. 70% of all workers facing underemployment are "part time casuals" with women making up 55% of all casual employees. With women adversely affected with reduced superannuation and savings as a result of such employment, how do council feel about forcing the educators of Glen Eira ELC's into this scenario - a group of women who are currently in stable, full time employment, some for 15 years at Glen Eira ELCs - into insecure underemployment, if the centres were to close?

Council is unable to comment on the employment conditions of private or not-for-profit providers in the childcare sector. The support that would be available to staff if Council makes a final decision to close the Early Learning Centres has previously been answered in [Your Questions Answered – 17 November](#)

By way of anecdotal evidence, have councillors been seeking feedback from within their own immediate networks about the closures of the ELC's. If yes, what has been the feedback to date? If no, why?

Councillors are in the process of reviewing feedback and submissions in order to inform their view before the final decision is made on 12 December. It is important that Councillors consider all feedback, not just that of their immediate networks.

In a written response dated 13 November 2023, Council states that it competes with 55 other childcare centres in Glen Eira and that larger centres are able to offer additional activities that Council cannot provide because of the size of Council's small centres. Examples of activities which Council provided were yoga, music and dance. Why don't Council officers and Councillors know that our children are undertaking yoga, music and dance at all three ELCs? In fact just this week in the latest Kinderloop notification parents were sent pictures of their children doing yoga. The children have been doing yoga, dance and music since they have been in the baby room and all the way up to the 4-year old kindergarten rooms. How can Council be so out of touch with the happenings of its own ELCs?

Larger centres may have dedicated spaces that are used for art and creative activities, as well as dedicated spaces used for yoga and music. However, our educators do a great job of utilising the spaces they have available. Larger centres also 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.

You still have not provided any evidence which supports Council's assertion that families prioritise kitchen and modern facilities over the quality of educators and the continuity of care in their early learning centre preferences. Merely stating the 'majority of new centres provide cooked meals for children with modern kitchen facilities' does not equate to families providing these facilities. Using failing utilisation rates also do not indicate preferences. There are many factors that go into utilisation rates and Council has stated that specific information about utilisation at each centre is commercially sensitive and will not be shared. Without providing this information, Council cannot rely on that to assert utilisation shows families' preferences. In the Council officer's own words, it's like comparing apples and oranges. So, once again, please provide Council's evidence that modern facilities are what families prioritise and prefer (rather than what they get because it's what's in the market).

Council recognises that there are many factors that may influence the choices that families make when choosing a childcare service. For some families, this includes choosing centres that provide cooked meals over Council's Early Learning Centres. We do not assume that not providing cooked meals is the only reason for declining utilisation at our centres.

Councillors appear to think that the community do not want a hub (which could be achieved via Building Blocks / government funding). The problem here is that the community cannot know what a hub or other options look like, because Council has not informed the community via proper consultation. When it comes to exploring other options, Glen Eira Council cannot purport to know what the community wants (or doesn't want) unless proper consultation is done. It appears Council is wedging the community towards one idea because of its desire to remove ELC services. If Glen Eira pursues the hub option it can still provide continuity of high-quality education and care, retain its excellent staff, outdoor natural green spaces for children, engage women in the workforce, eliminate gender discrimination and champion gender equality. Why has Council not consulted with the community on alternative options such as a hub?

Council is considering all feedback received during the recent consultation period, including feedback received about the third option outlined in the Childcare Discussion Paper which investigated the possibility of Council consolidating its childcare places into a child and family hub.

Are sundry services i.e. garden and general maintenance, cleaning, IT performed by Council employed staff or by 3rd party contractors? If internal, how are these costs determined and how are the ELC's charged? And are costs shared across multiple entities who receive the service? e.g when garden maintenance is done for the Council property including ELC's, is the amount apportioned out?

Sundry services are performed by 3rd party contractors and paid by a central business area such as Buildings and Properties and IT. These costs are then apportioned to the respective business areas based on the appropriate methodology and cost drivers such as headcount, floor space and types of IT equipment provided.

We confirm Council has stated 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 with the community. Can you please direct us to the section of the Enterprise Agreement where it stipulates that a preliminary decision is required to be made before consulting?

Clause 11 of the Glen Eira City Council Enterprise Agreement 2022, outlines Council's obligations when introducing a proposed change. The Enterprise Agreement outlines that where Council has made a definite decision that will have a significant effect on employees, it will notify and consult with the employees who may be affected and the relevant unions and invite views and/or options in regard to the proposal.

Additionally, the Local Government Act 2020, the Chief Executive Officer must consult members of Council staff affected by a proposed organisational restructure, before implementing the organisational restructure.

As a Child Psychiatrist I'd like to ask that given the council's duty of care to the children they are currently educating in the ELCs, can the council please outline the means by which they have meaningfully evaluated the developmental and emotional impact of closing these centres, in particular at such short notice? I.e. which expert advice was sought from someone from the field of child mental health, early development or attachment?

As previously answered in [Your Questions Answered 20 October](#), 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.

If families have specific concerns about their child's wellbeing at this time, we encourage them to speak directly with their Centre Team Leader, or contact our Family Liaison Officers, so that Council can assist with additional support.

Given the extensive literature that highlights the absolute public health and economic imperative of investment in early childhood education and wellbeing, what analysis has the council completed on the longer term health economics of their decision to close these centres? I.e. the expected ratio of return on investment in the first 2000 days of a child's life is around \$11 returned for every \$1 invested. Closing the centre might potentially cost the council millions of dollars over the longer term, though the exact impact would require a detailed analysis, which is not evident in the material provided to date.

The financial analysis that has been undertaken to inform Council's preliminary decision is outlined in the [Childcare Discussion Paper](#). This did not include longer-term modelling about the return on investment, because the analysis undertaken as part of the Childcare Strategic Services Review demonstrates that Council's Early Learning Centres only account for 2 per cent of places in Glen Eira, that there are 20 other childcare services that have the same Exceeding rating as Council's centres and there is likely to be sufficient supply to meet current and future demand.

Our investigations have revealed that many providers in Glen Eira have places on paper but are running at significantly reduced occupancy due to staff shortages, leaving no places available for our children. Have the council investigated the actual number of vacant places that are currently offered by childcare providers in the city of Glen Eira, and if so do they feel confident they meet the needs of all families?

Yes, Council has investigated the actual number of vacant places currently available. The best way for a family to find out if a centre meets their specific needs is to talk with them directly. Should families need support with this, Council can provide assistance.

The budget forecast shows a \$4.95 million blow-out of cost for the Carnegie pool, on top of the \$10.912 million already allocated in 23-24. Why are ELC's being targeted when the 'cost' of these community services is miniscule in comparison to a budget blow-out of the Carnegie pool?

The expected ongoing financial loss is only one factor that Council is considering as part of the Childcare Strategic Services Review. Other important considerations are outlined in the [Childcare Discussion Paper](#).

Please note in relation to the Carnegie Pool, \$10.91m is actual expenditure incurred as at end of October and the forecast is \$15.86m. Council's expenditure incurred is \$4.95m below expected forecast expenditure YTD. This is not a budget blow out but is due to timing differences based on progress payments made of work performed to date.

In Council's 'Your Questions Answered' dated 17 November 2017, Glen Eira Council states that 'the senior staff have significant experience operating centres and are confident the centres are running as efficiently as possible'. Please identify the specific experience these staff members have in operating centres. Furthermore, how are we (the public) to rely on a statement that 'senior staff are confident'? This is not an objective measure or standard in which to measure the efficacy of running ELCs. We need further transparency and details regarding Council's assurance that centres are running as efficiently as possible. Please provide more transparent information regarding the financial and business management and operations of the three ELCs.

The senior staff referred to have experience:

- As qualified early childhood educators and teachers
- Managing a range of early childhood education and care services, including long day care centres, stand-alone kindergartens, family day care and occasional care
- Managing small, medium and large services; including single services and in organisations that operate over 30 services
- Managing early childhood services in the not-for-profit; private and local government sectors
- Managing early childhood services during changes to State and Commonwealth Government regulations to ensure that the services continue to comply with legislation

These staff are also supported by other business units in Council, such as the Finance Team, to ensure that financial and operational modelling is accurate.

Council has not adequately addressed what its position is on uprooting children who have settled into the care of educators at its three ELCs. Nor has it provided a statement on its position regarding the children's physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing as a direct result of its preliminary decision. Council's response that 'feedback received about the potential timing of the closure of Council's centres... will be considered before Council makes a final decision' is not a sufficient response and does not answer the question. So please answer this question: what is Council's position regarding our children's physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing with regard to Council's preliminary decision? Our children are suffering and this decision has had a significant impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

Council has always prioritised and valued children's health, wellbeing and development. It does this by providing a range of high-quality services, programs, activities, and public places like parks for families and young children.

Council is genuinely considering feedback received about the amount of time families and children need to transition to another childcare or kindergarten service if Council makes a final decision to close the Early Learning Centres.

If families have specific concerns about their child's wellbeing at this time, we encourage them to speak directly with their Centre Team Leader, or contact our Family Liaison Officers, so that Council can assist with additional support.

In February 2022, Glen Eira Council adopted a Philanthropic Partnership Policy, allowing it to consider donations which benefit the local community. Has Council considered seeking philanthropic funding to assist with continuing to provide early3 learning services? The community has spoken and it is evident that good quality education and care of children under five is a top priority for the community of Glen Eira. Will Council now consider a philanthropic partnership agreement to achieve the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations, to ensure you continue to provide much needed and wanted exceptional early learning care and kindergarten services? We implore you to do this. Although you are not mandated to provide early learning services, the community needs and wants you to.

Council is considering all feedback received during the recent consultation period, including feedback about considering different models and funding opportunities. This will form part of the information considered by Council when it makes its final decision on 12 December 2023.

Does Council have plans to close or transition away from running Glen Eira Kindergartens, Occasional Care, Family Day Care, Aged Care services or independent living units?

No.

I put my child on the Caulfield ELC waitlist in June 2023. I received an email in October that the ELC may be closing. I have not heard anything since. What should I do? Do I look for alternative care? The date of the final decision leaves it very late to find a different centre.

Council has only made a preliminary decision to close its Early Learning Centres, and it is important for families to make decisions that suit their individual circumstances.

I asked a question at the last meeting which was not addressed in the answer. I was on the 2040 Glen Eira community vision panel. The first principle was Council and Glen Eira residents will always work together in collaboration to ensure fair and equitable decision making.

Council to implement robust consultative processes and foster opportunities for all residents to be involved in working for the betterment of the community. Receiving feedback after a preliminary decision has been made is not "fostering opportunities" to be involved.

1) Why was there no opportunity for the active participation of stakeholders in this process? 2) Why was the feedback about the timeline being unfit for purpose ignored? 3) Why was there no community engagement process for the affected children (the council has experience engaging children [see the 2040 Community Engagement Report for how children 0-4 were engaged])?

The consultation and engagement process was designed to gather feedback from staff, families and the community about Council's preliminary decision. The feedback received, including about the timing of the potential closure of the Early Learning Centres is currently being considered by Council prior to making a final decision on 12 December.

I am following up on a question that was left unanswered last time I asked it. I asked where else can I send my children where they can get kosher meals at an ELC that is not run by a religious group where the children are from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds? I also would like to send my children to a place where we can walk or use public transport, but I can't even find a place that allows you to pack your own food. Is the council actually going to help me find a place, or just say "here is a list of 58 places" and that you aren't actually interested in figuring out if this specific need is addressed?

The other question that I am seeking clarity on is either (A) The council ELCs are in direct competition with similar services which is why they are not necessary or (B) The council ELCs offer smaller class sizes and are therefore substantially different than other commercially run centres and therefore a gap would left by the close of the council ELCs? It is either A or B, and the messaging is not clear which is the view of the council.

Our Family Liaison Officers are available to support individual families find an alternative centre.

Council competes with all childcare centres in Glen Eira – different centres suit different families' needs.

As a parent of a child going into 4 year old kinder next year. We would like to remain at the ELC as this is what is best for her and our family circumstances. I am concerned at the impact of an end of financial year closure if remaining open. Have council considered the impact of a mid year closure on children? Particularly those about to start school. I also want to know if centres remain open Caulfield ELC need to hire a kinder teacher. Will it be a casual teacher or fixed term contract how will you be able to fill this vacancy with a suitable candidate with such a short time to closure? Also places at mid year will also be difficult to find.

Council's preliminary decision to consider closing the Early Learning Centres in December 2023 was in recognition of the natural end point of the calendar year, including for kindergarten children. However, feedback about the challenges associated with the short timeframe between Council's final decision on 12 December and potential closure on 21 December is currently being considered by Councillors prior to the final decision being made. Council has not made a final decision about closing the centres, nor about closing them mid-year.

Workplace planning including reviewing any recruitment requirements will be undertaken if Council makes a decision on 12 December to keep the Early Learning Centres open beyond 21 December 2023.

My four-year old child's mental health and wellbeing is being compromised with Glen Eira's preliminary decision. She knows her kindergarten and baby sister's early learning centre may close and she keeps asking me and my husband where she will go to kindergarten next year, as she has one year left. Is Council aware of the impact this process is having on children and that waiting until 12 December 2023 for a final decision is impacting our children's mental wellbeing? Furthermore, providing a 6 month extension will have the same negative impact on our preschoolers' mental health, stability and wellbeing as they will be uprooted a mere 6 months before starting prep. This does not appear well thought out by Council. Please think of the children.

Council has not made a final decision about closing the centres, nor about closing them mid-year. Council's preliminary decision to consider closing the Early Learning Centres in December 2023 was in recognition of the natural end point of the calendar year, including for kindergarten children. However, feedback about the challenges associated with the short timeframe between Council's final decision on 12 December and potential closure on 21 December is currently being considered by Councillors prior to the final decision being made.

If families have specific concerns about their child's wellbeing at this time, we encourage them to speak directly with their Centre Team Leader, or contact our Family Liaison Officers, so that Council can assist with additional support.