



**WEST
WIMMERA
SHIRE COUNCIL**



**West Wimmera Shire Council
Municipal Early Years Plan**

2019-21

The best of country living



West Wimmera Shire Council are committed to providing child safe environments where children's wellbeing, learning and growth is holistically nurtured in an inclusive and supportive community.

For further information

Please Contact:

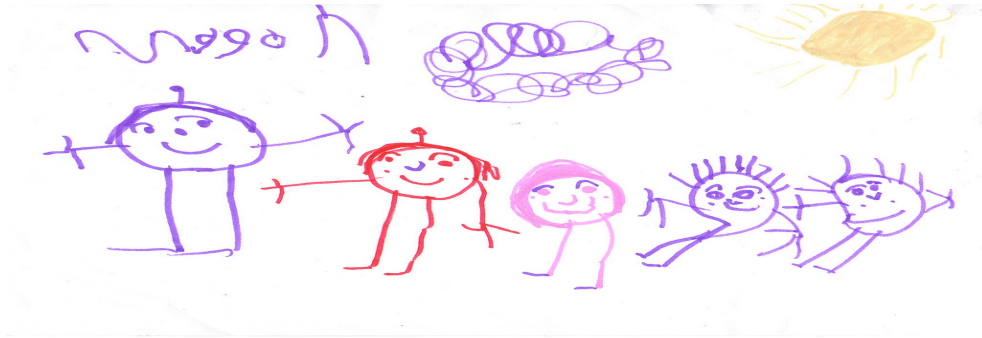
West Wimmera Shire Council

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Child Safe Organisation

West Wimmera Shire Council is committed to the safety of all children and has zero tolerance of child abuse.

Acknowledgment of Country

Council respects and acknowledges the unique Aboriginal cultural heritage within its boundaries. Council acknowledges and pays respect to their ancestors past and present.



A message from the Mayor



I am pleased to present the West Wimmera Shire Municipal Early Years Plan 2019 – 2021. The plan outlines our strategic direction for children aged birth to eight years living in the West Wimmera Shire.

Council are committed to providing and promoting safe, healthy, inclusive early year's services and socially and environmentally engaging environments for children and their families.

The plan has been developed through community consultation, analysis of data and aligns with the direction of the West Wimmera Shire Council Plan 2017 – 2021 and WWSC Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017 – 2021.

The Council partnership with many stakeholders such as the Department of Education and Department of Human Services to ensure the healthy potential of every child in the municipality and implements the early years learning framework to best support the learning and development of every child.

A message from the CEO



I take this opportunity to thank all members of West Wimmera Shire community who contributed to the municipal early years plan.

The strategic direction comes from collaboration with children and their families in our community and the following four priority areas have been identified as needs to improve in the early years.

- Social engagement opportunities for families
- Safe play environments
- Support for vulnerable families
- Sustainable services

We will ensure organisational structures, processes and culture are in place to encourage healthy community wellbeing and a safe, supporting and nurturing environment for children to learn and grow in family friendly spaces which adhere to child safe standards.

I am excited for council to continue to improve on contributing to creating sustainable and engaging communities and further provide excellence in early year's services, through strategic planning and strong partnerships.

On behalf of the West Wimmera Shire Council, I invite all children, family and community members to be actively involved to achieve the early year's outcomes we envision and to ensure all children feel safe and have a voice at West Wimmera Shire. We want our children to thrive into youth and adulthood in a supportive community and nurturing environment from the earliest possible stage of life.



Kaniva Fauna Park will be enhanced by the addition of a new adjoining play space in 2019

Introduction

The early years are the foundation of a child's growth, development and learning for life. The environment, experiences and relationships during the early years provides the building blocks for future self-development and growth.

Over the next three years West Wimmera Shire Council's vision is to give all children the best start to life and endeavour to achieve our early year's goals identified from families in our community. Child safety is a priority at West Wimmera Shire Council and organisational processes are highly valued which promote the rights of children to feel safe, valued and nurtured.

The plan is aligned with council values and objectives to ensure optimum and holistic growth and development of all children within the shire.

The plan sets the strategic direction of West Wimmera Shire community for the future and focuses on the needs of the community. We will continue to work with families and stakeholders to enable the best start and ongoing support for all children 0 – 8 years to encourage a life long journey of health, wellbeing and learning into the future increasing our vision of community sustainability.

The strengths of Aboriginal cultural traditions, as they apply to family life and raising children, revolve around....interrelated themes, including:

- Theme 1: A collective community focus on child rearing helps children - The values of interdependence, group cohesion and community loyalty are key features of Aboriginal family and community life, where raising children is considered to be a shared responsibility of all community members.
- Theme 2: Children need the freedom to explore and experience the world - Aboriginal communities offer their children every opportunity to explore the world around them, to help them develop the necessary skills to successfully negotiate their pathways to adulthood.
- Theme 3: Elderly family members are important to family functioning - The elderly are highly respected for their contributions to family life in Aboriginal communities, particularly in helping children to understand the practical aspects of life and society



Australian Government

Australian Institute of Family Studies

Council's Role in Early Years



Shady picnic area in a safe playspace at Kaniva



Provides Maternal and Child Health



Coordinates kindergarten services



Facilitates provision for child care



Provides early years opportunities such as playgroups and events



Advocates for children and families



Facilitates community connections

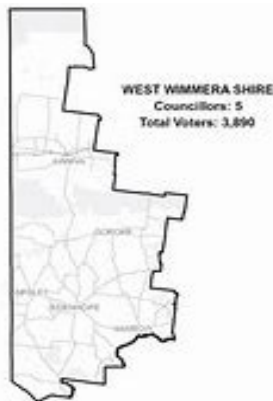


Owens and manages community facilities such as libraries



Provides and maintains playgrounds

Children and Families in West Wimmera Shire



West Wimmera Shire Council is situated along the Victorian-South Australian border and covers 9,200 square kilometres. Home to almost 4,000 people, the region prides itself in its welcoming communities and diversity of industry and environment. West Wimmera has vast untouched desert parks and wetlands and is known for its acres of grain growing. It is home to the Malleefowl, red-tailed black cockatoo and unique wildflowers.

West Wimmera Shire has the highest percentage of native vegetation of all Council areas (WCMA data). Healthy patches of protected Buloke Woodlands exist across the shire, and the shire is blessed with large areas of native vegetation, especially the Little Desert.

West Wimmera has a relaxed, informal lifestyle and Mediterranean climate and has excellent indoor and outdoor community facilities and education and care services.

Population forecast

With a declining and aging population forecast, West Wimmera Shire Council is prioritising sustainability.

Year	2016	2021	2026	2031
Population	3,933	3,828	3,696	3,631

Birth Rates

Year	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Number of Births	24	19	23	35	18



Goroke Nature Playspace

The Nature Play Space at Goroke creates an innovative, safe and educational play space that connects with and promotes the natural environment. It provides an inclusive space that unites the community and activates an increase in visitor numbers to Goroke.

Wellbeing and Development

Our aim is to provide services, environments and experiences for all children to develop and learn in a nurturing, inclusive and family supportive community. Our vision is to enable children the best start in life to ensure capable adults. We will do this through encouraging healthy community wellbeing which will be sustainable and thriving into the future. We will endeavour to provide a community spirit where children reflect hope, optimism and resilience.



Evaluation Process

Evaluation of 2013 – 2017 MEYP

Council gained feedback from families regarding early year's needs by the following sources

- Children's voices
- Consultation sessions
- Survey
- Community planning sessions
- Quarterly community forums
- Kindergarten Quality Improvement Plans

Other sources of information contributed to the plan through incidental feedback in budget forums and informal parental groups.

Children's voices



Children engage in collaborative learning in a safe natural environment

Listening to children's voices is valued in the community. This is stated by the United Nations as a basic right. Listening to children enables feelings of value and worth and contributes to a sense of belonging, being and becoming. It enables healthy relationship building and social connection in a child's community.

I love my town because....."I love the good kinder", "I like to borrow books at the library", "I like going to footy"

But I wish we had..."big dogs", "the circus", "a new playground", "dinosaurs and meerkats"

Policy context

West Wimmera Shire Council has strong partnerships between external service providers and stakeholders, including governmental and regulatory bodies. This links planning in the wider regional area to further support children and maintain community wellbeing. Joint projects such as the early years trial, relationships with local health providers and schools and networking with additional needs services strengthens support and opportunities for children. Close connections with child first and child protection enable strength in supporting all children.

Programs such as libraries and special children's events provide additional learning and social opportunities for all children. Infrastructure provides early year's facilities and programs for early learning, socialisation and growth and strong partnerships with local service providers enables child care options. West Wimmera's strength is the accessibility to the great outdoors. This allows children vast and rich opportunities to explore and value natural environments. Council provided outdoor play spaces enhance the experience in safe surroundings and allows access to all, promoting social connection and physical activity.

Emergent priorities

The feedback allowed analysis of early years needs. It was evident that families were satisfied overall with the early years services offered in West Wimmera Shire. The following areas were identified for growth. Goals were developed to achieve outcomes of the emergent priorities.

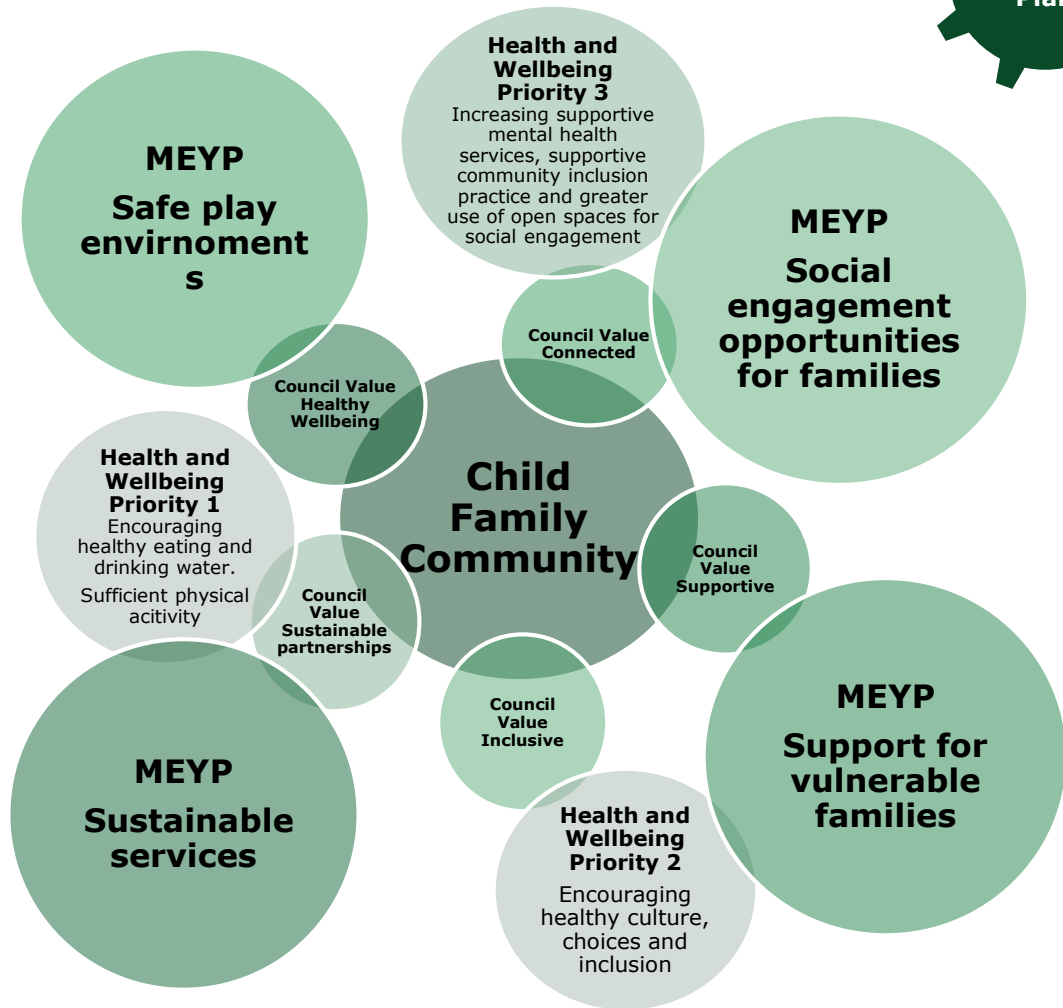
- Social engagement opportunities for families
- Safe play environments
- Support for all families
- Sustainable services



Emergent priorities and goals

Alignment with Council Values and strategic plans

The West Wimmera Shire Council (WWSC) Municipal Early Years Plan 2019-2021 (MEYP) is coordinated with the WWSC Council Plan 2017-2021 and WWSC Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-2021. Alignment of vision, goals and strategic direction is incorporated holistically into the development of the MEYP with the intent of children in WWSC having the best possible start.



West Wimmera Council's strategic objectives reflect the vision of the early year's plan – community participation, meaningful partnerships, quality sustainable community services, thriving, safe and diverse local communities, participation in activities that address health and wellbeing and providing access and promotion of the natural environment.

West Wimmera Shire Council early year's services are guided by the Early Years Learning frameworks which also regulate the early years plan, where children have a strong sense of identity and wellbeing, are confident and involved learners who connect and contribute to their world with effective communication.

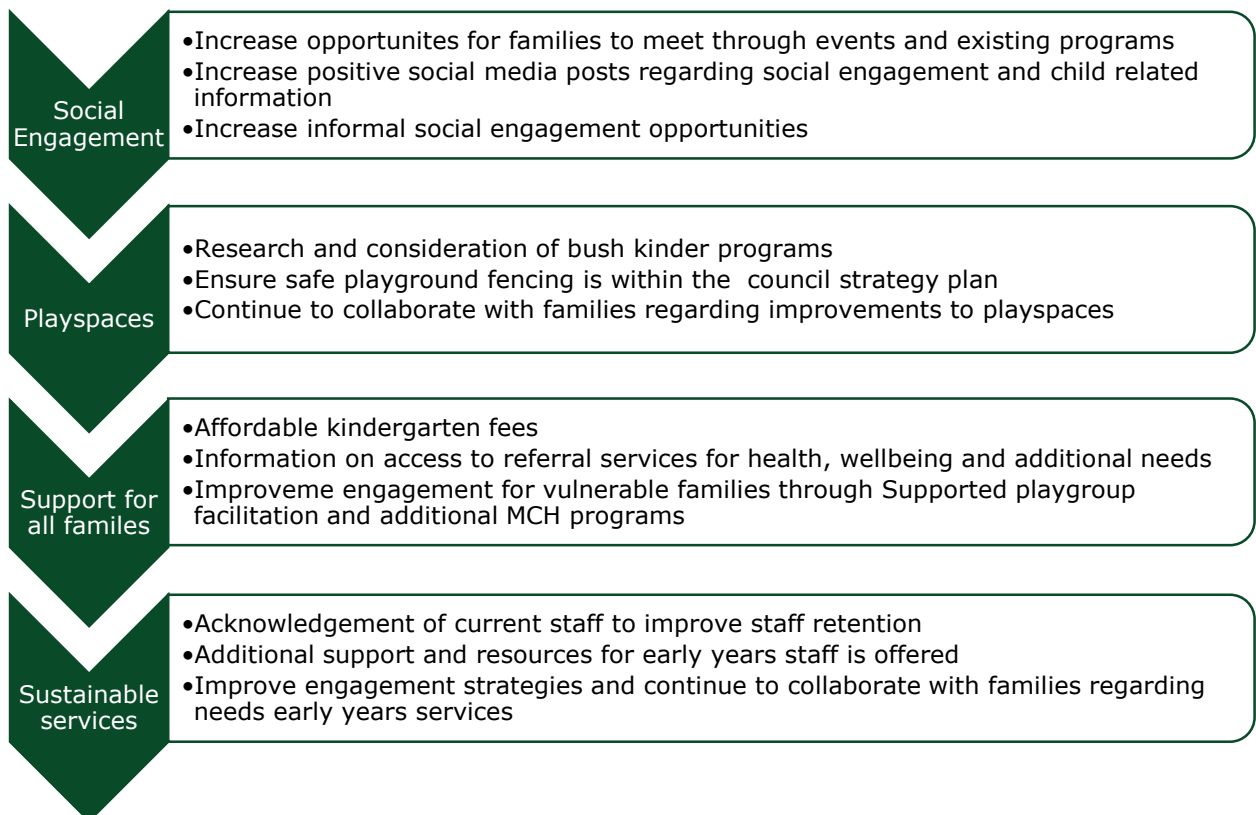
Implementation of the plan

Reflective and collaborative practice with children, families, stakeholders and external support services will contribute to achieve the early year's goals over the next three years.



Construction begins on the new play space in Kaniva next to the Fauna Park

Planning in progress



Collaborative Reflections



Social Engagement

- Date:
- Reflection

Playspaces

- Date:
- Reflection

Vulnerable Family support

- Date:
- Reflection

Sustainable services

- Date:
- Reflection

Social Engagement

- Date:
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Family support

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Sustainable services

- Date:
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