

West Wimmera Shire Council Proposed Budget 2021/22

Submission Form

Proposed Budget submissions must be received by Council by **no later than 5pm on Friday 21 May 2021**. Please address submissions to:

**Chief Executive officer
West Wimmera Shire Council
PO Box 201
EDENHOPE VIC 3318**

Email: paulbrumby@westwimmera.vic.gov.au

Note: all written submissions lodged with the Council will become public documents available for inspection by the public in accordance with s.94 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Name: Alysha Jacobson & Shelley Hartle

Organisation: _____

Address: PO BOX 9 Apsley

Contact number: 0437 994 865

Email: alysahajacobson38@gmail.com

Please note that separate forms are required if you are making multiple submissions.

Any person/s who have made a written submission to Council are entitled to be heard in person or to have a specified person appear on their behalf before a meeting of the Council.

Do you wish to be heard in person or have a person acting on your behalf before a proposed budget submission meeting in support of your written submission?

- Yes, I will appear before a meeting of the proposed budget submissions.
- Yes, someone will appear on behalf of me, their name is: _____
- No, I will not appear.

Submissions will be heard:

Friday 28 May 2021 /time: TBA

Edenhope Community Hall
76 Elizabeth Street
Edenhope VIC

I/we under s.94 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (Right to Make a Submission) are hereby making a formal written submission in relation to the 2021/22 Proposed Budget. Submission should include a descriptions, costings and any other relevant detail. Please document your written submission within the space provided (if you require more space please attach additional pages to this form).

Summary of Submission

The current child care services available in the West Wimmera Shire are insufficient for the community. This issue ties directly with the councils liveability framework and would see significant improvements in line with the councils Health and Wellbeing plan.

Some of the impacts of insufficient childcare in our community include:

- Local businesses are unable to secure both skilled and unskilled employees, with most currently recruiting numerous positions
- Local families are struggling financially as they are unable to obtain two incomes
- Parents are struggling with mental health issues due to numerous reasons for example
 - o not having enough time to take care of themselves
 - o increased financial pressures
 - o less financial independence
 - o Unable to implement long term financial plans including making personal contributions to their super
- New parents are unable to return to the workforce after starting their families, further compounding the lack of skilled workers in the region
- The local economy is unable to progress as we cannot bring in new families to the region for work due to the lack of services available

There is an opportunity for the West Wimmera Shire Council (WWSC), in conjunction with the Edenhope and District Memorial Hospital (EDMH), the Wimmera Primary Care Partnerships (PCP) and the Edenhope College to set up and run a new centre-based child care service (including long day care, occasional care and before/after school care); utilising the facilities available at the Edenhope College or any other alternative site (former Senior Citizens Building).

The educator to child ratios for centre-based services are significantly higher than Family Day Care. Therefore this service would be more able to support and meet the needs of West Wimmera Families.

This submission is for West Wimmera Shire Council to commit \$50,000 in the budget to undertake business planning and feasibility activities to ensure the creation of a sustainable model.

Details of Submission

West Wimmera district has a great need for reliable child care for the region.

Currently there is one registered Family Day Care operating out of the kindergarten building and managed by Wimmera Uniting. This Family Day Care service is able to care for a maximum of 4 children under the age of four.

A recent survey of local community members held by EDMH found that there are 38 children currently requiring some form of child care.

EDMH has held discussions with Wimmera Uniting to discuss opportunities for expanding this service. However Wimmera Uniting have advised that due to the population numbers in Edenhope they would not be financially able to do this (Based on 2011/16 Census data).

It is our belief that the 'population number' Wimmera Uniting is referring to is from these out of date/census figures. The same census figures which show approx. 109 vacant houses in Edenhope. Furthermore these figures likely do not include the entire catchment area of the West Wimmera including Apsley, Goroke, Harrow etc.

Aside from this service, the only options available to local families are home based 'baby-sitters' which are un-regulated and uninsured services run by local community members who are often raising families of their own.

Unfortunately, Wimmera Uniting have advised that they will not be progressing any plans to expand their services in Edenhope.

Local community members, The Edenhope and District Memorial Hospital, Edenhope College and a West Wimmera Councillor have met and discussed alternative viable options. Contact is being made with private providers already operating within the region, however the initial set-up cost of this is likely going to be prohibitive.

The Edenhope College has agreed in theory to provide the space for a childcare service, however they do not currently have the staff skill set available to be able to move this forward. Edenhope and District Memorial Hospital may also be able to assist with a building for the creation of a service, or with providing administrative and regulatory support with the running of the service. In order to ensure the most sustainable business and partnership model is harnessed, a thorough feasibility study needs to be undertaken and a detailed business plan created. We are asking West Wimmera Shire Council to commit \$50,000 to undertaking this feasibility analysis and business planning.

Providing appropriate childcare services for families would create a number of opportunities for the region including:

- There are many families across the West Wimmera region that would use Edenhope as a hub. Taking the opportunity to access other services and facilities in the town (i.e. the supermarket, post office, chemist, medical clinic and Primary Health services available at EDMH) due to the convenience
- Numerous local businesses who are reporting significant difficulties in recruiting both skilled and unskilled staff would be able to draw prospective employees to the region with the promise of childcare (as well as affordable property prices).
 - o Financial and emotional impact on these businesses and is a real handbrake on the growth and sustainability of these businesses.
- Improving the recruiting ability of EDMH would result in increased health options for the local community as they would be able to recruit specialist health providers
 - o See attached supporting document from EDMH
- Local schools would more easily be able to recruit teaching staff, resulting in better outcomes for local students and the capacity to be able to increase enrolment numbers
- Full time parents would be able to return to work resulting in numerous flow-on benefits including
 - o Increasing the family income, reducing financial stressors and allowing for more local spending and investment
 - o Increasing mood and benefiting the mental health of parents who have felt unable to return to the workforce
 - o Displaying positive role models of women in the workforce to the local children and young people
- A Child Care service could assist VCE students attain their qualifications by providing opportunities to undertake learning units at the service
- Shift workers including nursing staff would have more opportunity for shifts if they could access before and after school care
- We would be able to attract more seasonal workers to the region, assisting local farming businesses with their peak seasons of shearing and harvest etc
- Seasonal workers would be accessing other local services including accommodation and food services, boosting the local economy
- Local farming families would be able to operate at their full capacity during peak seasons as they will be able to place their children into occasional care as needed

A significant number of the benefits listed above, fit within the Council's Health and Wellbeing plan and liveability framework.

Previous budget submissions regarding this issue have been seen to be 'not council business'. It is our belief that should the council fail to act on this matter, the negative impacts will compound throughout the West Wimmera community.

Some of the current impacts on families who are unable to access childcare locally

- Required to travel to Horsham or Naracoorte, reducing the time spent together as a family
 - o Minimal places available in Naracoorte, with long waiting lists
- Unable to return to the workforce after taking parental leave
 - o further reducing the number of skilled workers in the region
 - o Increased reliance in mental health services

- Reliance on support from family and friends
 - o Not always reliable
 - o Large number of people do not have family support living close by
 - o Family members getting burnt out and their resulting increased need for health and mental health support services

Not having reliable child care affects every family differently. Attached are letters from businesses and families from the community about how not having child care impacts them personally.

Failure to take action on this critical issue will ultimately result in more and more families leaving the region to work, buy property and access services elsewhere. The flow on effect of this is the closure of local businesses and services including, eventually, the Shire itself.

18 May 2021

EDMH; Primary Health Unit is funded by both the State Government [HACC PYP] and Federal Government[CHSP] to provide information, support and practical assistance to people who are eligible for services. One of the streams of funding is for Allied Health Services; Podiatry, Physiotherapy, Speech Therapy, Dietetics and Occupational Therapy to name a few. Each has specific areas of expertise and together they assist people with chronic conditions, frail aged, people with dementia, people living with a disability and those that have had an acute episode that has affected their current health, maintain and /or improve their health status.

To ensure people of all ages are safe at home and within their communities they will sometimes require an intervention from an Allied Health Professional. EDMH has funding for Podiatry, Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy [OT]. After more than 10 months of advertising for an OT, we were still unable to fill the role. We had 2 candidates that could have been given the role but they needed child care to be able to return to employment and without a reliable service they couldn't accept the role. One is now working at Horsham and the other in Nhill because they can access child care.

The benefits of having an OT service, may include home modifications to improve safety and independence in daily tasks such as;

- Bathroom modifications to improve safety and independence in hygiene for consumer and/or carer;
- Modifications to assist visually impaired consumers;
- Modifications to enhance functional wheelchair mobility and support participation in daily living activities.
 - Access e.g. recommendations for ramps, rail installation that maximise the consumers' safety and independence.
 - Equipment e.g. functional assessments are carried out to identify aids/equipment which support consumer participation in activities. This may include equipment that supports bathing and toileting, eating or cooking (adapted cutlery and kitchen utensils), gardening (gardening tools), visual aids or prompts to assist consumers with cognitive changes.
 - Falls e.g. falls risk assessment and recommendations to minimise risk factors. The recommendations may include home modifications, education, falls prevention strategies or referral to other allied health disciplines
- Functional assessment to determine the consumer's capacity to safely and independently manage their personal care. This may include equipment (shower chairs, toilet frames, and hoists),
- Home modifications (rails, shower recess access modifications, wheelchair access and modifications),
- Education for consumers and carers in strategies to build on consumers' capacities which promote independence and quality of life.
- For consumers with cognitive changes such as dementia the strategies may include simplifying the task, providing visual cues, verbal prompts or supporting routines.
- Assessment of tasks that are meaningful to the consumer in their home environment: can include such things as meal preparation, laundry, gardening e.g. for a consumers with chronic illness this may involve fatigue management strategies.

Without child care we will not be able to provide the support required or the interventions and or modifications to ensure everyone is able to stay safe in their homes and in their community. This is a virtual service that has already been missing for months and because of this we now have consumers at risk of early admission into long term care.

Robyn Salt

Primary Health Operations Manager
Edenhope and District Memorial Hospital

53 Conlans Road

Edenhope 3318

VICTORIA

Thursday 20th May 2021

To Whom It May Concern,

The lack of childcare is an incredibly significant problem for the Edenhope community; it is something that needs to be urgently rectified.

Without childcare, there are a number of families, including my own, who are suffering financially and emotionally, as both adults are often unable to work in their professions, as they have no way of having their children being cared for while they are working.

I know firsthand that this makes it extremely difficult for a number of larger employers, such as Edenhope College, to find enough staff to cover their basic needs. The best people for the jobs cannot come and take them up, as they often have young families, but there are not the care options available for them to be able to do this.

Owning a farm is an expensive enterprise, but without the opportunity to obtain off-farm income, due to a lack of childcare options, it makes it even more challenging and is significantly detrimental to the business.

Personally, without the regular availability of childcare, it has made it very difficult to be a professional, working parent. It would be lovely to be able to return to work – professionally, financially and for my own personal wellbeing – but this is essentially impossible with three young children, due to a lack of childcare options.

Without the ability to return to work for a number of years, it compounds the financial difficulty and is professionally detrimental.

It is necessary for childcare to be made a priority, as it is significantly harming the community as a whole.

Thank you for your time.

Yours Sincerely,

Jennifer Altmann

20 May 2021

To Whom It May Concern,

Our day care lady is a single mother with 4 children and lives in another town attempting to run daycare in Edenhope.

We can not remember the last week that we had a normal week with no days off from our daycare lady. We usually get notified the night before when there is no daycare leaving it impossible to find an alternative arrangement the next day. We have had to cancel appointments and change our jobs for the day in our business resulting in unnecessary stress.

Our son gets very upset when he wakes up in the morning realising that he is not going to daycare that day. We have noticed a change in him when he goes to daycare and he is not as excited as he usually is in the past 2 weeks.

Please give us reliable day care in Edenhope both for the parents and for our children.

Thank you for reading my email.

Regards

Scott Altmann

0407 262 577

21 May 2021

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Brooke and my partner and I have a beautiful 2 year old girl named Zara. Both my partner and I attempt to work so that we can give her the best things In life. We currently have a position in the family daycare run through Uniting Care and to say it's utterly unreliable is an understatement. In the last month alone there has only been 4 days of care for our family, leading to a loss of wages, lack of social interaction for our daughter and meaning that we both cannot go to work so that we care for Zara.

My family are all interstate so we don't have family to bounce back on these occasions where care is cancelled at 10.45pm the night before or where there is no care for a week due to the carer's personal life. Last week alone we lost nearly \$400 due to a loss of wages because there was no available care for Zara, meaning one of us stayed home instead of going to work and earning a wage for our family.

If the Shire did invest more money into a reliable and more family friendly initiative, it could mean we could actually return to work properly without having to call in sick because of a lack of care. Work not only helps with our income, but helps us balance our life, helps us with our mental health, helps connect us to our community.

If things don't change soon and this pattern of lack of concern and compliance regarding the lack of care available to Edenhope families, people will start moving away to find jobs and areas where care is available. I know alone at the hospital (where I am currently employed) there has been a number of staff not able to work, including my manager at times, because of no childcare. Over 40 children are in need of care according to the survey put out by the hospital earlier in the year. It's beyond a joke now.

Please invest in building a safe and reliable childcare setting so that we can help the families of Edenhope, including us.

Regards,

Brooke Claridge

May 20, 2021

David Bezuidenhout

Chief Executive Officer

West Wimmera Shire Council

Dear Mr Bezuidenhout,

We wish to add our voices to the chorus of parents, business owners and organisations calling for a childcare centre in Edenhope.

Between the three of us, we have eight children under the age of six (with another due any day!), which we are struggling to balance with businesses, careers and study.

Access to childcare would transform our lives, with flow on effects for the wider community.

Our stories are representative of dozens of women, who are desperate to build careers and businesses in West Wimmera shire.

We have the skills, passion and potential to contribute great things to our community, but many dreams have been put on hold while we await a local childcare solution.

Jessica Mulraney

*Mulraney Mobile Crutching

*Clips by Jess' dog grooming

*Mulraney Faecal Egg Counts

*Qualified Veterinary Nurse

*Qualified Ambulance Community Officer

*Horse Riding Instructor

My professional skills are all in high demand across the wider Edenhope region.

Without access to childcare it is impossible to establish a stable working week and offer consistent service in dog grooming, horse riding lessons or faecal egg counts.

I have no option but to balance the requirements of our successful crutching business with our three children, which sees me organising payroll, rosters and client correspondence late into most evenings.

I often feel a responsibility to assist the region's short-staffed veterinarians and must phone around family members and friends to care for my children so I can take on extra shifts.

In order to be a reliable business operator, employee and parent, I require reliable childcare.

Danielle Grindlay

*Journalist/Communications

*Psychology Student

*Irving Partners

I am ready and eager to embrace the next phase of my working life, which is entirely dependent on sourcing local childcare. There are strong job opportunities that match my qualifications in Edenhope, but I have been forced to knock back several requests.

Without any local relatives to assist with child rearing, I must complete my Bachelor of Psychological Science studies after our children have gone to bed, which is exhausting and unsustainable.

My ambition is to eventually help fill the large mental health services gap in West Wimmera shire.

It is also difficult to manage farming responsibilities, such as cooking for shearers or assisting with sheep work, while balancing three young children.

I cannot overstate how much childcare would benefit our family, by opening up my future as a contributing professional in the local community.

Katelyn Kelly

*Kelly Shearing Services Pty Ltd

*Qualified Dental Nurse

Our shearing contracting business employees up to 30 staff at one time, servicing farmers across western Victoria.

While it is difficult for me to balance all the requirements of a demanding business with young children, I am more concerned about childcare for our employees.

There is a severe shearer shortage across southern Australia and we are feeling it locally; the lack of childcare services has meant we have lost staff or failed to attract potential shearers and their families.

A childcare centre would not only transform our family's life directly, but also that of our employees and therefore our business, enabling us to service more farmers.

Fortunately, our skills are unremarkable in this incredible community; we are surrounded by professional, talented women with great visions just waiting to be realised.

Unfortunately, our isolation and inability to access childcare services means we are unable to fulfil our potential.

We adore being mums, but do not have the luxury or desire to abandon our professional pursuits.

A childcare centre is the key to the future we are all waiting on!

Sincerely,

Jessica Mulraney, Danielle Grindlay and Katelyn Kelly

0409 215 696

21 May 2021

The Chief Executive Officer,

My name is Cassandra Stringer. I am a local business owner and employee of Edenhope College. I grew up in Edenhope and 6 years ago decided to move our family back to my hometown to raise our children. I love this community and what it has to offer however the lack of family assistance and day-care services leaves many in the community unable to return to work.

I have recently cut back my hours in my own dog grooming business and have only been able to return to teaching part time as I cannot get the childcare needed to allow me to go back to work fulltime. I have lost many clients due to my reduced hours at Edenhope Pawfection and the financial stress of finding a carer puts into question whether returning to work is beneficial to my family in the long run.

Returning to work after having children has been a very stressful experience. With no secure childcare I have had to rely on family and friends to watch after my children while I teach at the local school. The cost of having to pay for care (outside of childcare which the childcare rebate covers the majority of the cost) makes working almost not financially worth it; more than two-thirds of my daily pay goes to babysitters. I am fortunate to have my daughter in care 3 days a week at the family day-care however, the current childcare is unreliable with the instructor calling in sick/family issues multiple times a term, leaving me once again without care for my daughter.

The stress and anxiety I have felt trying to find carers has left me in tears and questioning my choice to return to work. The constant anxiety of always having to have a backup sitter or finding someone on very short notice (usually less than 24hrs) puts pressure on my family and my relationship. I love my job and I love being part of the community, teaching the next generation how to be positive citizens of our community. If the childcare situation does not improve, I will be forced to leave my job. The community of Edenhope needs better childcare facilities if it is to continue to grow and prosper.

Please support our community and their families. Commit to starting a Centre Based Child Care service.

Regards,

Cassandra Stringer

Jessica Nelson

45 Mollison St

Edenhope 3318

21/05/21

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in support of better childcare facilities in Edenhope.

Since moving to Edenhope in 2014 I have struggled to have my children in care. I have often had to leave my job early or put off important work and opportunity because I have had my small children home with me instead of them being in care.

I have 3 children and run a fast-growing business that requires a lot of my husbands and my time. My 4 year old daughter is often left to watch TV or create her own entertainment so that we can go about our business if I cannot find anyone to care for her while we are working. This is unsafe and not how I want to raise my family. She absolutely thrives being with peers and having a fun day where she is safe creates a happier home life when we all wind down at the end of the day.

As it stands we have no after school care facilities and an unreliable daycare system as the current care facilitator has small children of her own and has no one to support her when she needs time off. I am aware that she has investigated putting on extra hands. This would also create spaces to provide care for more than the allocated 4 children but she has been pushed back more than once. Which I find quite discouraging for another small business wanting to grow in the area being put on the back foot.

As an Employer the daycare situation also poses issues as staff cannot work hours needed when they need to pick up their kids from care or can only drop them at 9am. Our work day starts at 7am. Many work opportunities for single parents are being missed as they cannot get the care they need for their children to help them support their families.

We need a change! We want young families in our town and we want to be able to support the towns growth and to facilitate that we need better daycare for our children.

Yours sincerely

Jess Nelson

048220285

21 May 2021

Dear West Wimmera Shire

RE: Daycare

In 2013 my Husband and I bought a local business in Edenhope and proceeded to move our young family.

My children were 7 and 1 years old at time. Taking on such a busy business we really struggled with having no daycare in town for a long time and having a toddler at our automotive business was extremely dangerous. Finally, after some time the Edenhope Family Daycare started up at the Kindergarten which was fantastic but also limited as there could only be 4 children per day and a long list of children waiting. In that time, we went through from memory 2 different educators and in between them months of no one to fill in.

Then in 2018 I had my 3rd son Start up daycare with Tina and we could get 2 days a week which was great but still not enough. After Tina left, we went for an exceptionally long time with no one. We tried rallying to get proper daycare in town and it went nowhere. We ended up with another lady who worked 4 days a week, so I was able to get 2 days but then corona hit and ever since then the reliability of the service has been terrible. If I did not own my own business, I would be out of a job. Edenhope needs a proper facility with more than one educator and reliability. My 4-year old's birthday is in April and if there was a proper daycare facility by next year, I would choose to hold him back another year from school giving him the chance to excel and be more prepared for school but at this stage I am going to have no choice but to send him early and hope for the best as having unreliable daycare is taking its toll not only on myself but also our business.

Giving mothers and fathers the option to be back out into the workforce is so important for mental health and family income, having to live on one wage is not viable in most cases today.

From an Employers perspective it is also such an important issue that needs to be addressed. It is extremely hard to find workers in our field and the daycare issue may lead to us losing our apprentice auto electrician who is a newly single father and is struggling keeping his work commitments due to having 3 young children 50% of the time and temporarily must rely on his ex-parent in laws to help.

Thanks

Kalla Colgate
kalla@edenhopeautoelectrical.com.au
0427094103