

COHUNA CHILDCARE ADVOCACY

Project

A new Cohuna Integrated Early Childhood Centre, to be located at the Cohuna Consolidated School.

It will comprise one 33 place pre-prep room that can also be used for after school care; one 33 place multi-age room for three-year-old kindergarten, and outside kindergarten hours childcare; one 33 place dedicated childcare room and one Maternal and Child Health office.

Why

Cohuna is a major township within Gannawarra Shire and is an education, health, industry and business centre. It has a high employment rate and a growing population of children aged 0-11 (17% growth between 2016 and 2021). Local children, however, experience high developmental vulnerabilities compared with shire, state, regional and national levels. This concerning developmental gap needs to be addressed.

In Cohuna, fifteen hours weekly of kindergarten can only just be provided now - for the 50 three and four year-old enrolled children in the ageing, standalone, one room kindergarten facility. However, when four-year-old kindergarten extends to 30 hours weekly post 2025 (pre-prep), the facility will not meet the new requirements for the projected 53 children who will need it.

The community has an ongoing and vigilant interest in early childhood education and care provision as there is currently no Centre-based childcare in Cohuna.

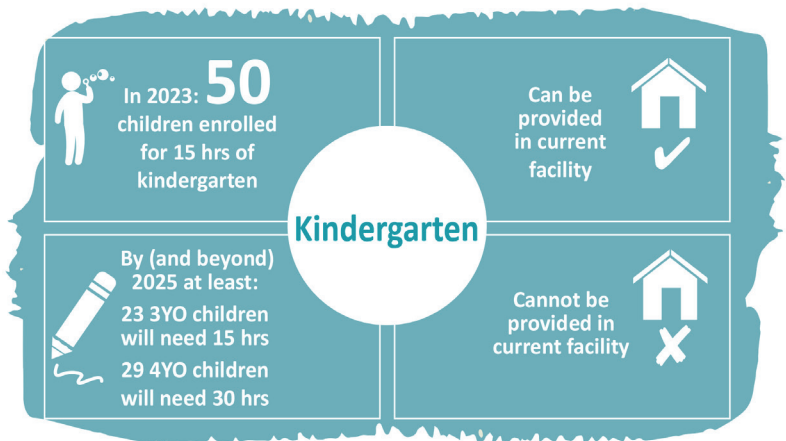
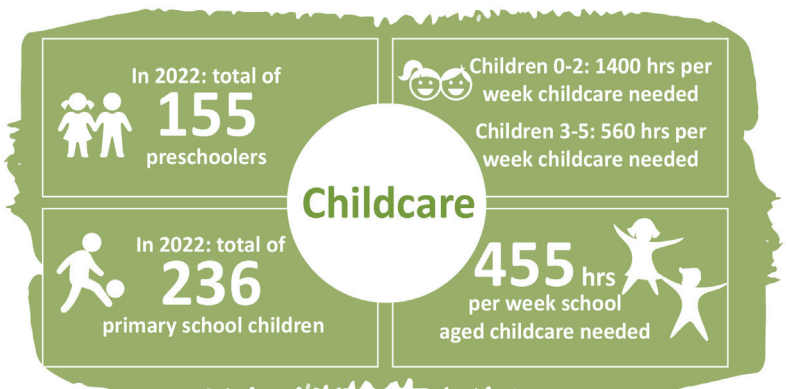
Cost

\$2.5M (approx.)

Timeline

Project to be completed by January 2025.

Year	Kindergarten 4-year-old: places needed	Childcare 4YO outside pre- prep hours: places needed	Kindergarten 3-Year-old: places needed	Childcare 3YO outside kinder hours: places needed	Childcare 0-2: places needed	School aged childcare: places needed
2025	22 (30 hrs pw)	10 (20 hrs pw)	29 (15 hrs pw)	13 (35 hrs pw)	26 (50 hrs pw)	35 (12.5 hrs pw)
2026	29 (30 hrs pw)	13 (20 hrs pw)	23 (15 hrs pw)	10 (35 hrs pw)	26 (50 hrs pw)	35 (12.5 hrs pw)



THE FACTS

Every child deserves to have their learning, health and wellbeing needs met and a facility in Cohuna would provide security for families across Gannawarra to know their child's basic needs are being met.

There is significant evidence that providing children with quality education and care services boosts their physical, mental and social development, which are all areas children in Gannawarra are developmentally at risk.

Education and Care services allow parents to work, contribute to their community and take care of their own needs.

Studies have shown women's workforce participation across Loddon Mallee is significantly lower due to unavailability of childcare. Lack of childcare is the biggest barrier to workforce participation, particularly for women.

Agriculture, tourism, health and education across the region are experiencing significant shortages with many skilled workers unable to return to the workforce because of a lack of childcare options.

For families access to childcare has the potential to improve a family's disadvantage by allowing adults to return to the workforce.

"High quality early education and childcare has a dramatic positive impact on children, families and the economy"
- Creating Viable Rural Childcare Services Regional Development Australia Loddon Mallee



the Gannawarra

From 2016 to 2021, Gannawarra Shire's population increased by 124 people to 10,683. With a booming local economy Council expects this population growth to rise significantly over the coming 5 years, placing additional pressure on local health and education services, residential housing, childcare, employment and professional services.

The Gannawarra Shire Council has a clear vision and ambition and is pro-active in setting Gannawarra up for success. A key part of this is planning for population, housing and employment growth. This growth is underpinned by the region's rapidly evolving agriculture sector, its natural environment, and significant investments in mineral sands mining and processing, electricity transmission and renewable energy generation.

"Every \$1 spent on childcare returns \$1.32 in benefits"
Creating Viable Rural Childcare Services Regional Development Australia Loddon Mallee