



CAMPASPE SHIRE
MUNICIPAL

EARLY YEARS
PLAN
2017-2021



The Shire of
Campaspe is a place
where children
are supported to
reach their potential.



**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
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Isobel (5.4 years)

"This is a picture of me and Archie playing in the rain. Can you see our belly buttons? When you play in the rain you have to wear rain boots don't you?"

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF PARTNERS

Campaspe Shire Council would like to acknowledge the partner organisations who contributed to the development of the Campaspe Early Years Plan.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

The municipal area of Campaspe lies within the traditional lands of the Yorta Yorta, Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Peoples, Council respects and acknowledges the unique Aboriginal cultural heritage within. Council acknowledges and pays their respect to the ancestors and people of the Yorta Yorta, Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung.

A MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR



I am pleased to present the Campaspe Early Years Plan 2017-2021. The plan outlines our strategic direction in the early years to achieve positive outcomes for children aged birth to eight years living in the Shire of Campaspe.

Children are a vital aspect of our community and Council acknowledges the importance of continued investment in the early years. Council is committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children as outlined through our commitment to the Child Safe Standards.

The plan has been developed through community consultation with families and local agencies along with analysis of data and evidence. It aligns with the wider vision and themes of the 2017-2021 Campaspe Shire Council Plan.

Our priorities for the Campaspe Early Years Plan over the next four years will focus on four themes;

- the best possible start
- high quality sustainable services and infrastructure
- support vulnerable children
- family friendly places

On behalf of Councillors and Campaspe Shire Council, I invite you to be actively involved in the plan and join us in achieving our Early Years vision which is that the Shire of Campaspe is a place where children are supported to reach their potential.





INTRODUCTION

The early years provide the foundation for each child's growth and development throughout life.

During the early years, children are shaped by their relationships with family and friends and the physical environments in which they live. When children develop in a supportive and nurturing environment, they develop the capacity to experience, regulate and express emotion, to form close, secure and satisfying relationships and to explore, discover and learn about themselves and the world around them.

However, if a child is exposed to abuse, neglect or lack of affection, this can interfere with their development and result in learning and behavioural difficulties which may have long term implications.

Each child's early years are a time of great opportunity and vulnerability.

This Plan sets out the community's vision and goals relating to children aged 0 to 8 and their families. The vision and themes contained in the Plan were developed in consultation with families and local agencies. The focus is to ensure that families understand the importance of the early years and have the support they need during this critical phase. We will work with families and local organisations, so that each child can reach their potential.

COUNCIL'S ROLE IN EARLY YEARS

Campaspe Shire plays an important role in facilitating the growth and development of children. For example, Campaspe Shire:

- is the **direct provider** of the shire's Maternal and Child Health service.
- **coordinates central enrolment** for the majority of kindergartens in the shire.
- **owns and manages community facilities** which support delivery of services such as kindergartens, long day care and libraries.
- **provides and maintains** public parks, playgrounds and recreational infrastructure such as swimming pools.
- **provides information** to the community regarding specialist services, such as family support and counselling, mental health services and medical services which are available to families with higher needs.
- **brings together all stakeholders** including community groups, families and service providers to discuss issues facing children and advocate on their behalf.



As a service provider, enrolment coordinator and asset manager, Campaspe Shire is uniquely placed to monitor and plan for the needs of families and children.

A number of council's existing assets which support delivery of early years services require maintenance and renewal and some of the services delivered from these assets are poorly utilised. Also, cost pressures and increasingly complex regulatory and compliance challenges have required that council review its role as a direct provider of early years services such as kindergarten and family day care.

Into the future, council will ensure that children and families have access to affordable and appropriate early year's services that meet their needs in a manner consistent with best practice frameworks such as the Victorian Early Years Learning & Development Framework (VEYLDF) and National Quality Framework and Standards. Council will advocate for access to services where gaps exist and work with suitable providers for direct service provision to its communities.

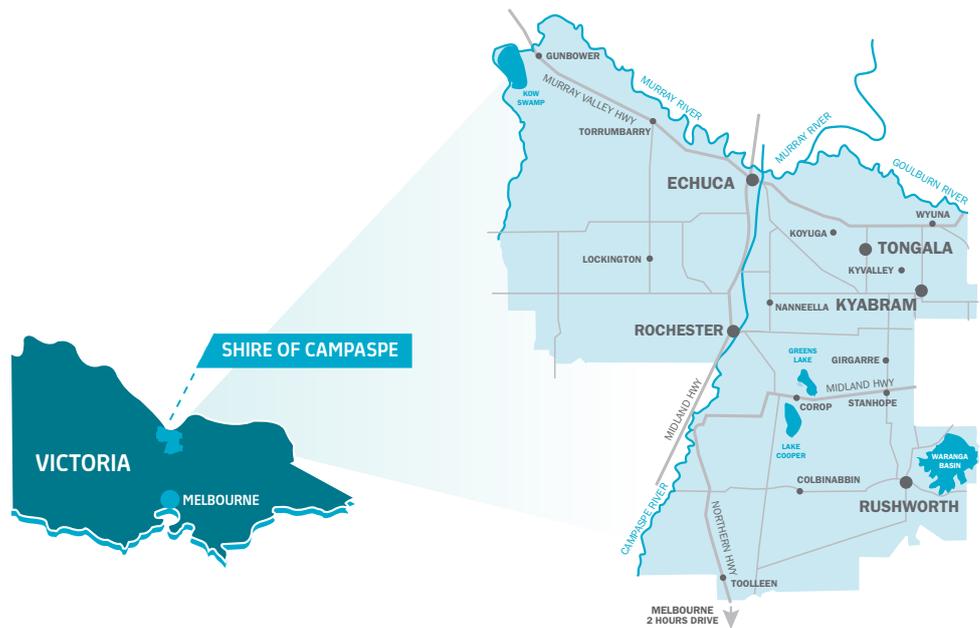
In addition, council will employ asset management strategies that ensure early year's infrastructure can be provided in a cost effective and financially sustainable manner. The use of new or existing infrastructure on school sites will be explored as a strategy to bridge council's asset renewal gap and manage fluctuating demand in smaller communities.



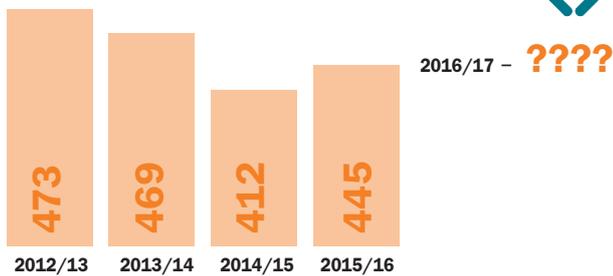
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN CAMPASPE SHIRE

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

The Shire of Campaspe is situated in northern Victoria, and covers 4,519 square kilometres, extending from Toolleen in the south to the Murray River in the north. Our children live a diverse range of settings, including within major urban settlements and smaller towns and on rural properties.



BIRTH RATE IN CAMPASPE



Over time, the proportion of children who live in urban settlements such as Echuca and Kyabram will increase as these areas continue to expand (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Population growth - Children aged 0 to 8 years.

Population	2016	2026	2036	Change (2011-2036)
Echuca	1,609	1,796	1,978	369
Kyabram	878	935	1,043	165
Lockington - Gunbower	466	476	476	10
Rochester	257	264	265	8
Rushworth and District	210	208	201	-10
Stanhope and District	233	232	230	-3
Tongala and District	395	406	421	26
Campaspe Shire	4,048	4,319	4,614	566



WELLBEING AND DEVELOPMENT

The majority of children living in the Shire of Campaspe enjoy stable home environments, which provide a sound basis for healthy development. Campaspe Shire will assist families to build on their strengths and provide children with the best possible start in life. Our aim is to ensure that children living in the municipality grow into confident, capable adults, who can grasp the opportunities that life presents.

We also recognise that a significant minority of children are not receiving the support they need. Issues such as socio-economic disadvantage and family conflict are having a significant and lasting impact on the health and development of children in our shire.

We will work with families and the providers of specialist services to identify children and families who are falling behind as early as possible and assist them to access to the support they need.

THE EARLY YEARS PLAN

The Campaspe Shire Early Years Plan is built around a vision and four key themes and related goals which together create the framework for the development of annual Implementation Plans. Each year, annual plans will outline the actions that council intends to take with its partners towards the achievement of the vision and goals.

The vision and themes reflect the desired outcomes outlined in the Council Plan, namely:

- Strong & Engaged Communities - Services, programs and advocacy enable improved health, wellbeing and safety of our community.
- Healthy Environment - A healthier environment for current and future generations
- Balanced Services & Infrastructure - Services and assets meet current and future community need

COUNCIL PLAN - VISION: We are strong, supportive, vibrant and sustainable

Strong and Engaged Communities 	Resilient Economy 	Healthy Environment 	Balanced Services and Infrastructure 	Responsible Management 
<p>Services, programs and advocacy enable improved health, wellbeing and safety of our community</p>	<p>Diverse and growing economy with increased employment and investment opportunities, economic prosperity and community development</p>	<p>A healthier environment for current and future generations</p>	<p>Services and assets meet current and future community need</p>	<p>Strong leadership, advocacy and good governance An organisation that is responsive, flexible, honest, accountable and consistent</p>

EARLY YEARS PLAN - VISION: The Shire of Campaspe is a place where children are supported to reach their potential.

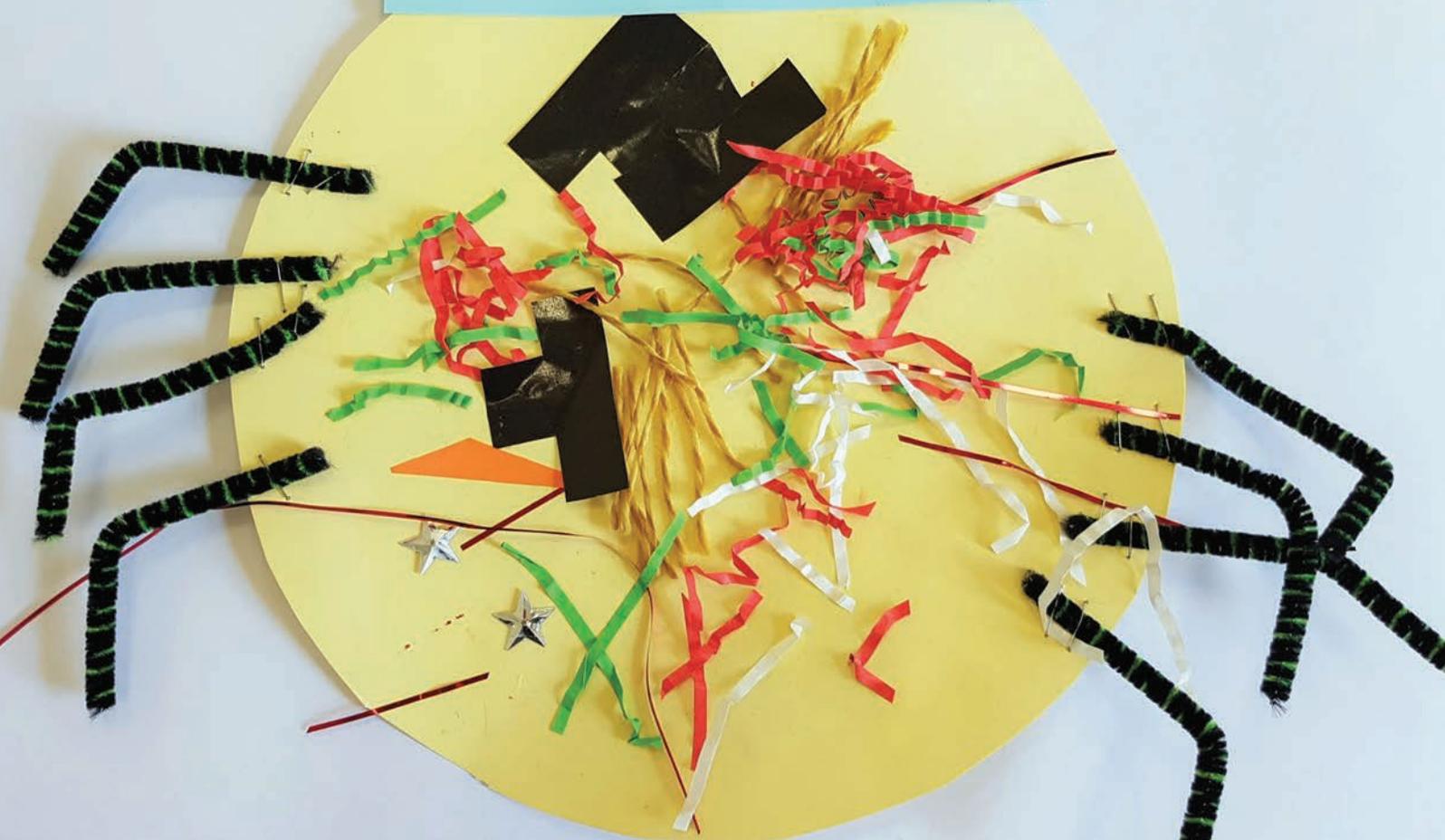
The Best Possible Start 	High quality sustainable services & infrastructure 	Support vulnerable children 	Family friendly places 
<p>Children have the opportunity to grow and develop in a rich and nurturing environment.</p>	<p>Plan for, monitor and evaluate services and facilities to meet community need.</p>	<p>Families in which children may be vulnerable are identified and assisted before things become critical.</p>	<p>The physical environment of the shire supports the growth and development of children and families.</p>

IMPLEMENTATION

The vision and themes of the Early Years Plan creates the framework for the development of annual Implementation Plans. Each year, annual plans will outline the actions that council intends to take with its partners towards the achievement of the vision and goals.

Walt (4.8 years)

"Well sometimes when I am playing outside I discover lots of things. I look for things to take to show and tell, like leaves and birds nests. Not with the birds or eggs in it though. Sometimes I see spiders but I don't touch them. Did you know that spiders can bite you with their great big teeth? You can't see their teeth though, they hide them."

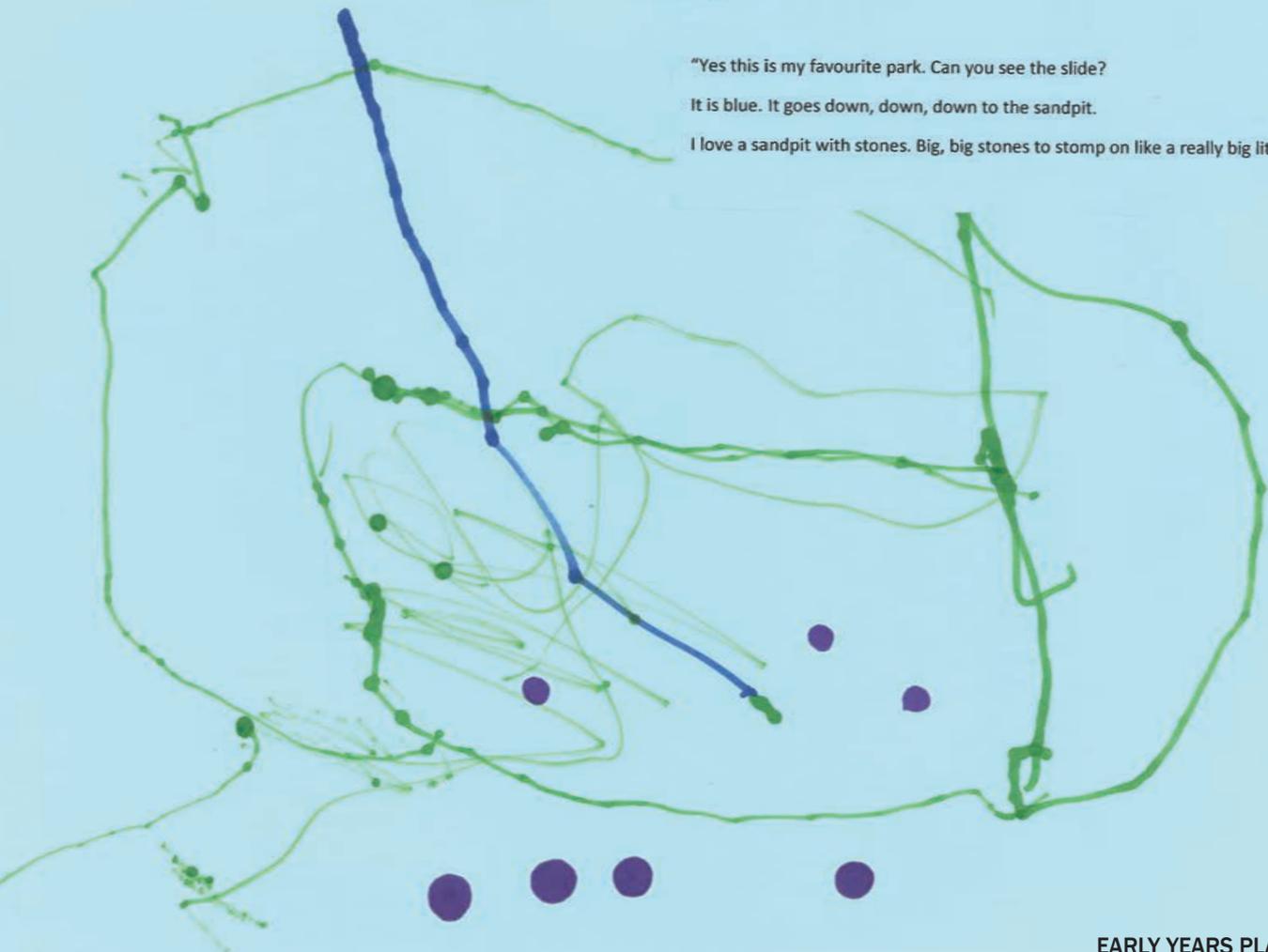


Lillian (3.4 years)

"Yes this is my favourite park. Can you see the slide?

It is blue. It goes down, down, down to the sandpit.

I love a sandpit with stones. Big, big stones to stomp on like a really big little lizard."



THEME 1



THE BEST POSSIBLE START

THE BEST POSSIBLE START

Children have the opportunity to grow and develop in a rich and nurturing environment.

Work undertaken under this theme is linked to council's desired outcome for the community: Strong & Engaged Communities.

GOALS FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS

- Families are informed about current research on childhood development and the conditions which are required for children to grow and develop to reach their potential.
- Monitor the wellbeing of the community and address barriers which limit children's health, wellbeing and development.
- Universal services delivered in the shire assist families to identify and build on children's strengths.
- Children and families have access to a wide range of activities and experiences, including arts and cultural experiences, and educational and recreational programs.

THEME 2



HIGH QUALITY, SUSTAINABLE SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

HIGH QUALITY, SUSTAINABLE SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Plan for, monitor and evaluate services and facilities to meet community need.

Work undertaken under this theme is linked to council's desired outcome for the community: Balanced Services & Infrastructure.

GOALS FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS

- The community's service needs and aspirations are understood.
- Families are informed about existing services and facilities available within the shire, and how these may enable children's growth and development.
- Council's service delivery partners provide the community with access to high quality services in accordance with the objectives of the Victorian Early Years Learning & Development Framework (VEYLDF) and National Quality Framework and Standards.
- Kindergarten services are managed through a central enrolment system, to aid service planning, monitoring, demand management and evaluation.
- Early year's infrastructure is delivered in a cost effective and sustainable manner. In this context, the potential of school sites as the location for early years facilities is explored.
- Early years facilities are co-located wherever possible, to encourage collaboration between service providers.
- Service gaps are identified in consultation with the community and action to address gaps is supported.

THEME 3



SUPPORT VULNERABLE CHILDREN

SUPPORT VULNERABLE CHILDREN	GOALS FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS
<p>Families in which children may be vulnerable are identified and assisted before things become critical.</p> <p>Work undertaken under this theme is linked to council's desired outcome for the community: Strong & Engaged Communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Universal services are affordable and accessible for all families.➤ Universal services are equipped to engage with families about the challenges or crisis they are facing, and can direct families to appropriate specialist services.➤ Service providers across the early years spectrum collaborate to ensure the best possible outcomes for children.➤ Specialist early years services that meet the needs of vulnerable children and families are available for those who need them.

THEME 4



FAMILY FRIENDLY PLACES

FAMILY FRIENDLY PLACES	GOALS FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS
<p>The physical environment of the shire supports the growth and development of children and families.</p> <p>Work undertaken under this theme is linked to council's desired outcome for the community: Healthy Environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Urban areas are family friendly.▶ All families have access to public outdoor spaces and physical environments that enable them to socialise, play and learn.▶ Playgrounds are improved and developed in accordance with the Campaspe Shire Playground Strategy.▶ Leisure and cultural services include a variety of entry points and programs which encourage participation by families and children.



CAMPASPE SHIRE COUNCIL

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