

# Have Your Say on Darebin's new Early Years Infrastructure Plan



Darebin City Council is developing a new Early Years Infrastructure Plan. This is a long-term plan for the buildings and spaces we will need so that young children and families can get the services they need to thrive. This includes buildings for maternal and child health, long day care, kindergarten, occasional care, playgroups and toy libraries.

We are now seeking feedback on our draft Early Years Infrastructure Plan. Help us understand and respond to your priorities.

## Why is this important?

The early years are a crucial period in children's development, with impacts that can last a lifetime. High quality, inclusive and accessible services for children and families from birth to the time they enter school play an essential role in providing children with a good start in life.

Council plays an important role in planning for, providing and maintaining high quality early years facilities to support families to access the services they need. It is important to have a long-term plan for these facilities. Changes such as population growth and the introduction of funded kindergarten for three-year-olds mean Council needs to develop a new Early Years Infrastructure Plan to ensure Darebin has the early years facilities it needs over the next 20 years.

## Guiding Principles

The draft plan includes 12 principles to guide Council's decisions about early years building and spaces:

- ✓ **Equity** – we aim to ensure that all children and families have access to the services they need to thrive.
- ✓ **Access** – all early years facilities and services should be accessible for all children and families.
- ✓ **Diversity and inclusion** – facilities and services should be welcoming, culturally safe and inclusive for all children and families.
- ✓ **Choice** – families should be able to choose services that suit their circumstances, preferences and needs.
- ✓ **Quality** – high quality physical environments are critical to enabling high quality service provision and providing the best possible experiences for children and families.
- ✓ **Integration** – we aim to enable children and families to access a range of services at the same location and to support collaborative and integrated service planning and programming.
- ✓ **Whole of community approach** – Council's early years facilities should be active community spaces that bring the community together across generations.
- ✓ **Community engagement** – the planning and design of facilities must be informed and guided by strong community engagement that represents diverse perspectives.
- ✓ **Environmental sustainability** – we aim to ensure that current and future facilities are sustainable, have low emissions and are resilient to changing climatic conditions.

- ✓ **Access to natural environments** – facilities should support children to engage with nature as a critical contribution to their healthy development.
- ✓ **Arts and creative culture** – facilities and services should support children to connect to creative and cultural expression to support their learning and development.
- ✓ **Economic development** – Council’s investments in early years facilities will aim to deliver social, economic and environmental value and benefit for our community.

## Proposed Actions

The draft plan includes 18 actions to deliver the early years infrastructure Darebin needs for the future. In summary the key actions are:

- ✓ Ensure existing early years facilities are used to the optimum level to provide more services and community use.
- ✓ Address functionality issues at Council’s existing early years facilities.
- ✓ Expand existing early years facilities to provide additional capacity where required.
- ✓ Re-purpose other Council properties for early years service delivery where feasible.
- ✓ Plan to build new Council facilities in areas of high demand, including new Intergenerational Hubs and Early Years Hubs.
- ✓ Pursue advocacy and partnership strategies to deliver investment in early years facilities from a range of public and private sources.
- ✓ Consolidate Maternal and Child Health (MCH) locations so all MCH services are located at two-room facilities integrated with other services.
- ✓ Review demand for Occasional Care and identify options to increase supply if required.
- ✓ Review demand for playgroup spaces and identify options to increase supply if required.
- ✓ Address infrastructure needs identified by the Toy Library review.

## Have Your Say

For more information and to complete an online survey please visit

[www.yoursaydarebin.com.au/eyip](http://www.yoursaydarebin.com.au/eyip) or call the Families, Youth and Children Department on 8470 8419. The survey closes on **9 March 2022**.