

Executive Summary**12.9 Langwarrin Child & Family Centre and Response to Long Street Reserve Petition**

*Enquiries: (Claire Benzie: Communities)
(Karen Wheeler: Communities)*

Council Plan

Level 1: 1. Healthy and Safe Communities

Level 2: 1.1 Engage families to promote the importance of early childhood education and health

Purpose

To update Council on the Langwarrin Child & Family Centre findings and respond to the Long Street Reserve petition.

Recommendation (Director Communities)

That Council:

1. Notes the engagement findings of the Langwarrin Child & Family Centre project at Long Street Reserve, including the strong community interest;
2. Notes the additional site investigations carried out in Langwarrin, including previous sites already investigated and those submitted by community, and notes the delay in response to the Long Street petition to investigate all possible options prior to a decision;
3. Notes the time limited additional funding offer from State Government for the Langwarrin Child & Family Centre and that this is subject to establishing a Building Blocks Partnership Agreement with State Government and maintaining the existing Long Street kindergarten for provision of kindergarten;
4. Subject to Ministerial approval and funding of \$6.75M, approves the Langwarrin Community Centre to be the location for the Langwarrin Child & Family Centre and for communication to be disseminated to community and stakeholders in August;
5. Approves officers to investigate the upgrade of Athol Reserve, including project scope of works and budget allocation, noting the upcoming increased utilisation of this reserve. A report is to be tabled with Council at the appropriate time;
6. Subject to the project being endorsed by the Minister, commits an allocation of \$75,000 to the Langwarrin Community Centre for the 2023-24 financial year to support the initial planning and transition to the new operational model, and for payment of a recurrent site management fee of the same amount (plus CPI) to be reviewed annually and subject to the standard annual budget planning processes;
7. Notes that additional interim financial support may be sought by the Langwarrin Community Centre to support their financial sustainability if it is found there is a period during the re-development of the facility that they are required to cease or significantly reduce their operations;
8. Subject to Ministerial approval (including a funding allocation of \$6.75M) of the Langwarrin Community Centre site, cease all planned work on the new Langwarrin Child and Family Centre at the Long Street Reserve in Langwarrin; and
9. Authorises Council officers to notify the Head Petitioner of the outcome of the petition.

Executive Summary

Key Points / Issues

- At the Council briefing on 8 May 2023, officers presented information pertaining to recent additional funding offers from the State Government and high level findings of the Langwarrin Child & Family Centre engagement. The Kindergarten Strategy and upcoming projects were also discussed.
- At the Council briefing on 29 May 2023, officers presented the detailed findings of the Langwarrin Child & Family Centre engagement and other sites investigated.
- At the Council briefing on 24 July 2023, officers presented information on investigations carried out at a new alternative site for the Langwarrin Child & Family Centre.
- At its meeting on 30 January 2023, Council received a petition from Head Petitioner Jason Toomer containing 1751 signatures. The petition requested:

“We the undersigned hereby petition Frankston City Council to stop the demolition of Long Street Reserve. Frankston City Council are proposing to construct a new Child and Family Centre comprising of 3 kindergarten rooms, 2 Maternal and Child Health consultation suites and a playgroup/parent education room as advised in the Council letter from 9th December 2022: reference A4811398.

Long Street Reserve isn't only an important place for the surrounding residents but the whole of the Langwarrin community. It is a meeting point for friends and family, a place for dogs to run around, home to many Australian native flora and wildlife. It is a safe playground accommodating for children of all ages, which is hard to find in Langwarrin.

Long Street itself is a single laned street. It is a quiet street with no public transport route and majority of the streets off Long Street don't even have footpaths. The Frankston City Council proposal only allocates for a maximum of 27 car parks which is simply not enough for the quantity of children/adults the building will facilitate.

This proposal will transform our safe and quiet neighbourhood to a high-risk area due to the increased traffic. We, the undersigned, are the advocate for the neighbourhood, our children, nature and wildlife and we request that the Frankston City Council stop this proposal.”

- Langwarrin Child and Family Centre Community Engagement Findings

Community engagement for the Langwarrin Child & Family Centre commenced early December and concluded on 26 March 2023. It focussed on gathering feedback on the two concept plans suggested.

An estimated total of 514 people participated in the engagement:

- 290 online surveys via Engage Frankston
 - Engage Frankston activity feedback:
 - 32 - environmental mapping activity
- 25 - traffic specific questions.
- 122 unique emails written to Council – the majority wrote in objection with 3 in support of the location
- 22 unique hand written letters of objection

12.9 Langwarrin Child & Family Centre and Response to Long Street Reserve Petition
Executive Summary

- 23 unique objections at the community pop up event. There were approximately 70 to 90 people at the event – all objections received at the event were cross matched with other submitted material to ensure all were unique.

The overall findings include:

For the online survey preferred concept options:

- 37.6% - Option 2 (building at front of block) as their preferred placement
- 36.9% - Did not select either option
- 25.5% - Option 1 (building in middle of block)

Overall outcome for the online survey:

- 65.9% - support the project
- 24.5% - oppose the project
- 9.6% - unclear

Total engagement including written feedback:

- 38.1% - support the project
- 54.9% - oppose the project
- 7% - unclear

The community provided feedback on:

- Project site look and feel inclusive of; colour, plantings, design elements, car parking, playground importance and design
- Early childhood and other services located together
- Concerns ranging from loss of open space, biodiversity, wildlife, vegetation, impact on traffic and parking, suggestions for other community infrastructure, to Council's engagement and decision making processes
- Additional suggestions for improved safety and amenity were received, some of the items included a drinking fountain, BBQ, dog waste bin and park benches

The full Engagement Report is attached as 'Attachment A' and separate feedback document is also attached as 'Attachment B'.

While not part of the organised Community Engagement process, a petition with 1751 signatures was received by Council at the 30 January 2023 Council Meeting.

- Long Street Reserve Feasibility Assessments

As part of the infrastructure project planning phase, Council carried out three feasibility assessments to ascertain if the Long Street Reserve is suitable for the new early years facility. The three assessments carried out are:

- Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Desktop Assessment, attached as 'Attachment C'
- Ecological Assessment, attached as 'Attachment D'
- Transport and Traffic Assessment, attached as 'Attachment E'.

12.9 Langwarrin Child & Family Centre and Response to Long Street Reserve Petition
Executive Summary

All assessment reports detail the site findings and provide recommendations. Overall all, these three assessments have not presented any issues or concerns that cannot be addressed and incorporated into the next phase of the project and delivery. This means that the Long Street site is feasible for the new facility.

As part of the Ecological assessment, the consultant carried out a brief visual assessment of fauna habitats within the Reserve, with no exclusive fauna identified from an environmental perspective. Some birds and mammals were observed within the Reserve, however these can be facilitated to move from the Reserve to another habitat as part of the development of the site.

The Traffic report recommendation to increase onsite car parking from 27 spaces to 30 spaces can be achieved by constructing an additional three car spaces on the site in a tandem arrangement. The tandem parking option has been discussed and agreed with staff at the Langwarrin Pre School to ensure this is a practical parking solution for staff and families.

The additional car spaces has marginally increased the overall footprint of the concept option 2 from 31.9% to 33% and concept option 1 reduced from 39.6% to 35% due to reducing the size of the licenced outdoor place space. The revised concepts now include the additional car spaces and are attached as 'Attachment F and G'. The updated concepts that show square metre site coverage are also provided attached as 'Attachment H and I'.

- Additional Site Investigations Suggested by Community

In March 2023, Council received a letter from a community member with a number of suggested alternative sites for the new Langwarrin Child & Family Centre.

In April 2023, Council's Mayor Conroy, CEO - Phil Cantillon, Director Infrastructure & Operations – Cam Arullanatham, Director Communities – Angela Hughes and Manager Family Health Support Services – Claire Benzie, attended a number of existing Langwarrin kindergarten sites and other sites suggested by community. One of the sites had previously been investigated, several sites were not in the area of demand and were privately owned or in heavily vegetated sites with significant biodiversity value.

A list of these sites including a summary of the investigation is attached as, 'Attachment J'.

- Other Potential Sites Investigated

During the site tour across Langwarrin detailed in the dot point above, a number of other sites were discussed and identified for further investigation. Officers explored the options to increase the capacity of Langwarrin Pre-School, Wonnai Kindergarten and Bayport through re-development.

The Langwarrin Pre-School and Wonnai Kindergarten sites are too small to provide the additional 3 rooms required and Bayport is not within the area of demand.

The other sites investigated included two sites within Lloyd Park and a new site that borders between three local areas, again each of these sites presented a number of challenges and planning issues.

A list of these sites including a summary of the investigation is attached as, 'Attachment K'.

12.9 Langwarrin Child & Family Centre and Response to Long Street Reserve Petition
Executive Summary

- Recent New Alternative Site - Langwarrin Community Centre (New preferred site)

The Langwarrin Community Centre Incorporation recently approached Council to explore the opportunity to provide early years services at the Langwarrin Community Centre. The Committee run Community Centre currently provides a number of community development programs, Occasional Care, outside school hours care (OSHC) and also maintain a community garden.

The Centre's outside school hours service recently reduced prompting the Committee to re-evaluate their strategic direction and reach out to Council. Considering the current proposal for the Langwarrin Child & Family Centre at Long Street Reserve and the strong community interest, this presented an opportunity to investigate the Langwarrin Community Centre as an alternative location for early years service provision.

Feasibility assessments were carried out to investigate if this location is suitable to accommodate the required early years services at this location. Planning controls and requirements are considered to be minimal as Frankston City Council is the existing building and land owner and the building works will be carried out by Council. The location is not within a bushfire prone area.

There are several trees along the neighbouring fence line within the area of proposed works however, adequate set back/distance has been provided, including requirements for tree protection zones. The location of the Community Centre is not listed as being in an area of cultural sensitivity and the majority of works remain within the existing building envelope.

A traffic and parking assessment was undertaken. There are 49 car spaces onsite and the report recommendation is to increase the existing car spaces to 51 (including 2 accessible bays). The additional 2 car spaces required can be accommodated onsite and so this will meet the report recommendations. A survey of traffic volume was carried out and the report details a potential increase of 7%, this is considered minimal and no significant impact is expected on the operation of Lang Road and Warrandyte Road.

All feasibility assessments have confirmed that the Langwarrin Community Centre is feasible to accommodate the early years services.

Officers have worked collaboratively with the Langwarrin Community Centre Committee to reach an in-principle agreement on proposed changes to the space within the Centre.

- Athol Reserve – 60R Warrandyte Road, Langwarrin

Athol Reserve in Langwarrin is just over 2,000m² and is within walking distance of the Langwarrin Community Centre. The small reserve contains a playground with one swing set. There is a bus stop directly in front of the reserve on Warrandyte Road. There are no other services or structures within the reserve. If an early years service was provided at the Langwarrin Community Centre site, then this may increase the utilisation of Athol Reserve. As such, an upgrade to the playground would provide a more engaging environment for the children, encouraging their physical activity, social interaction, and overall development.

Financial Impact

Subject to the project being endorsed by the Minister, Council commits an allocation of \$75,000 to the Langwarrin Community Centre for the 2023-24 financial year to support

12.9 Langwarrin Child & Family Centre and Response to Long Street Reserve Petition
Executive Summary

the initial planning and transition to the new operational model, and for payment of a recurrent site management fee of the same amount (plus CPI) to be reviewed annually and subject to the standard annual budget planning processes. Noting that additional interim financial support may be sought by the Langwarrin Community Centre to support their financial sustainability if it is found there is a period during the re-development of the facility that they are required to cease or significantly reduce their operations.

Notwithstanding the lease provisions to be established for each Committee operator, it is intended that Council would engage LCC in an ongoing management contract arrangement to take on the role and responsibility as the over-all site manager. As the contracted site manager, Langwarrin Community Centre's responsibilities would include (but not limited to):

- Ensuring the site and services all operate in an effective and integrated way, providing a positive and intuitive customer experience for all site users.
- Delivery of the reception / front of house area, ensuring a positive and warm experience whereby community members get the support and way-finding assistance that they may require.
- Any additional entry/foyer area not directly monitored, LCC staff will be available to respond and assist to issues as required so that burden does not fall to staff who are occupied delivering kindergarten and MCH services.
- Leadership and development of the customer-first philosophy/culture of the centre, planning and facilitating whole of site team engagement and planning.
- Management of front desk phones and direct calls for the kindergarten and MCH as needed along with their own programs.
- Information provision. LCC staff will be familiar with all site services and processes so that community experience a 'no wrong door' approach and can make appointments, complete forms, pay fees in support of the early years and MCH services.
- Site maintenance / liaison with Council facility teams. LCC will receive and manage all reports regarding facility issues, and coordinate this as needed with Council staff.
- Management of room bookings/payments across the site and meeting room preparation, monitoring and quality along with providing site support for relevant equipment and IT issues etc.
- Direct management of shared use areas, their aesthetics and the associated cleaning and compliance requirements (the management & cleaning of the dedicated areas leased to kindergarten will be coordinated by the kindergarten unless otherwise arranged).
- Facilitation of regular site meetings, and the maintenance of effective internal communication channels for all services providers on site.
- General management of OHS, emergency procedures and compliance as it relates to the site.

In recognition of the role and responsibilities to be carried by LCC, it is proposed that an annual management fee of \$75,000 (plus CPI) be allocated on a recurrent basis (subject to performance reviews, standard contract management and reviewed annually as part of Council's annual budget process).

12.9 Langwarrin Child & Family Centre and Response to Long Street Reserve Petition

Executive Summary

This fee will supplement the existing grant revenue received by LCC from Council and the State Government and ensure they have the additional EFT to perform these further functions. The management fee will also help to off-set potential loss of revenue that LCC would experience due to the reduction of their hireable spaces, and the loss of an Occasional Child Care Room (that has needed to be reallocated for use by the kindergarten and MCH services).

State Government Additional Funding Offer

Council recently received correspondence from State Government regarding a major additional funding boost for the Reform rollout. Funding amounts for Building Blocks Capacity Grants and Building Blocks Partnerships (BBPs) have increased significantly to support the delivery of additional infrastructure capacity. This time limited offer is available for all projects that are yet to commence, and due to be completed by 30 June 30 2026. This major funding boost is applicable for the Langwarrin Child & Family Centre. This project has been identified and agreed in principle via the Building Blocks Partnership as an area of high need for additional kindergarten places.

Indicative State Government funding for the project is 6,750,000 and this is subject to establishing a Building Blocks Partnership Agreement with State Government and maintaining the existing Long Street kindergarten for the provision of kindergarten to not reduce the number of kindergarten places overall. These items will be progressed as part of the Building Blocks partnership ongoing meetings.

Updated Budget Allocation for Langwarrin Child & Family Centre

Project	Total Budget	Rates	Income	Grants	Loans
Langwarrin C&FC	8,400,000	300,000	8,100,000	6,750,000	1,350,000

Consultation

1. External Stakeholders

The following external stakeholders were consulted on the planning and delivery of the projects:

- Langwarrin Community Centre Incorporation
- Langwarrin Pre-School Committee
- External Architect
- Department of Education
- Victorian School Building Authority

2. Other Stakeholders

The following internal teams were consulted on the initial planning and feasibility of kindergarten/early years projects:

- Building and Facilities
- Capital Works Delivery
- Traffic Engineering
- Environment and Planning

12.9 Langwarrin Child & Family Centre and Response to Long Street Reserve Petition
Executive Summary

- Open Space
- Development Services
- Sustainable Assets
- Finance
- Property Services
- Social Policy and Planning

Analysis (Environmental / Economic / Social Implications)

There is a known existing demand for kindergarten places in Langwarrin, specifically within the area of the existing Langwarrin Pre-School on Long Street. The introduction of funded three-year-old kindergarten commencing this year and an increase in program hours for four-year-old kindergarten in the future will further increase this demand. It is essential that any new or re-developed kindergarten be established within the known area of demand to ensure long term viability and community needs are met.

There is significant research showing that quality early childhood education improves children's outcomes before, during and after the school years, and that two years of kindergarten have a greater impact than one, it is also important to note that integrated early years services is the best practice model.

Investment in early learning can also have significant benefits for society, including greater social cohesion, reduced inequality, and a healthier, happier and more resilient community. There is a high social and economic return on investment in the early years.

It is important that Council supports the reform changes and additional infrastructure projects to give the children in Frankston City the best start in life.

Ultimately, if infrastructure projects are not supported there may be fewer families moving into Frankston City, more families moving out of the area to access free early years education, and poorer future outcomes regarding mental health, social and economic, increased vulnerability and health and wellbeing issues.

Legal / Policy / Council Plan ImpactCharter of Human Rights and Responsibilities

All matters relevant to the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities have been considered in the preparation of this report and are consistent with the standards set by the Charter.

Legal

Local Government is a key stakeholder in the Victorian Government Kindergarten Reform. The Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan (KISP), although not legally binding, is an agreement co-signed by the Department of Education and Training (DET) and Frankston City Council to support the Kindergarten Reform. It is a commitment to work together to improve joint planning to deliver more kindergarten places to better support children and families wherever they live.

Council has many decision making roles under the Local Government Act, and must consider a range of legislation, policies and strategies as part of its decision making.

A key component of Council decision making is to ensure a net community benefit of achieved. To do this, compromise between different strategies, policies and/or views must sometimes be made in the context of overarching governance principles, which

12.9 Langwarrin Child & Family Centre and Response to Long Street Reserve Petition
Executive Summary

include that priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community and future generations and the consideration of financial, economic, social and environmental sustainability.

The Langwarrin Pre-school operating at the existing Long Street location that cannot be expanded have accepted Council's offer to move across to the new alternative location, the Langwarrin Community Centre. With two Committees in operation at the facility a new governance structure is required, noting Maternal and Child Health services will be provided by Frankston City Council at the same location.

It is intended that the aspects of the site requiring dedicated use by the kindergarten will be leased by Council directly to the relevant kindergarten committee/organisation. This committee will retain full responsibility for the operations kindergarten services (quality and compliance). Council will also have a lease directly with the Langwarrin Community Centre (LCC) for the dedicated areas that they would use for programming and service delivery. The leases will include appropriate clauses to effectively manage occupant use of the shared areas within the facility. This proposed governance structure is in line with Council's Property Strategy and Plan and further developments will be in consultation with Council's Property Team.

Separate to the lease provisions, it is intended that Council would engage LCC in an ongoing management contract arrangement to take on the role and responsibility as the over-all site manager. In this capacity, LCC would hold a 'dotted line' of accountability for all services and users on the site (complementary to the lease-related obligations).

The above governance and management arrangement remains subject to further planning processes with all stakeholders. LCC is currently reviewing and re-designing its operational model to determine what changes may be needed to re-establish a sustainable operational model in the context of an integrated Hub arrangement such as is presently being considered.

Policy Impacts

Relevant Council policies include, Open Space Strategy, Housing Strategy, Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan (KISP), Community Infrastructure Plan (CIP), Municipal Early Years Plan (MEYP) and the Council Plan.

A Kindergarten Strategy will commence development in June this year that will guide and support the Kindergarten Reform roll out, community and stakeholders will have various opportunities to be part of the process.

Officer's Declaration of Interests

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no Conflict of Interest in this matter.

Risk Mitigation

The Long Street Reserve site was determined to be feasible for the early years services required in Langwarrin. Whilst the site meets the need for early years service provision and provided opportunity for an integrated service model and a bush kindergarten, it was noted through community engagement this site was opposed by many residents mainly due to the loss of open space and environmental impact. The new alternative site at Langwarrin Community Centre is within 1 kilometre (10 minute walk) of the Long Street Reserve, and whilst there is no opportunity for a bush kindergarten, it does provide an excellent opportunity for an innovative and progressive integration model. This can be achieved by providing access to care for children throughout the whole day, giving families more flexibility in managing their schedules.

12.9 Langwarrin Child & Family Centre and Response to Long Street Reserve Petition
Executive Summary

Creating an inclusive community environment that spans across all ages, provides potential to enhance the overall well-being and development of both children and older community members.

Conclusion

The Long Street Reserve location for the Langwarrin Child and Family Centre has attracted strong community interest, as demonstrated by the results of the community engagement.

Multiple sites in Langwarrin for a new kindergarten have been investigated over a number of years. Additional new and existing sites, including those suggested by community have also been explored as part of the preparation of this report. The Langwarrin Community Centre was recently identified as a possible alternative location, investigations have deemed this site to be feasible to accommodate the early years services and placing these services at this location will also support the Langwarrin Community Centre remain sustainable and be able to continue to deliver highly valuable community development programs and services to the community.

Considering the Long Street Reserve community engagement feedback, including the petition containing 1751 signatures opposing the project, the best outcome that meets all parties' needs is to progress the Langwarrin Child & Family Centre project at the Langwarrin Community Centre.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A:	Langwarrin Community Engagement Report
Attachment B:	Feedback other than concept
Attachment C:	Cultural Heritage Report
Attachment D:	Ecological Report
Attachment E:	Traffic Report
Attachment F:	Option 1 Additional car spaces
Attachment G:	Option 2 Additional car spaces
Attachment H:	Option 1 Square metre coverage
Attachment I:	Option 2 Square metre coverage
Attachment J:	Additional site investigations - community
Attachment K:	Other sites investigated