

Muswellbrook Shire Children's Services Strategic Plan 2013 to 2015

Including:

Implementation recommendations
for consideration by stakeholders &

Supporting evidence

31 December 2012

Paul Bullen in consultation and collaboration with Children's Services stakeholders including Muswellbrook Shire Council, Long Day Care Centres, Family Day Care, Preschools, Primary Schools, Community Health Services, Upper Hunter Community Services and other community services, Government Departments, local families and young people and others

Funded by BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal & Muswellbrook Shire Council

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Names & Abbreviations

Service providers

Aberdeen Preschool	
Denman Children's Centre	
Family Insight	
Goodstart Early Learning	<i>Goodstart</i>
Hunter Park Family Centre	
Muswellbrook Shire Council	
Muswellbrook Out of School Hours Care	<i>MOOSH</i>
Muswellbrook Child Care Centre Inc	<i>MCC</i>
Muswellbrook Pre School Kindergarten Inc	<i>MPS</i>
Muswellbrook Public School	
Muswellbrook South Public School	
New Train	
Strathearn	
Tillys Play and Development Centre	<i>Tillys</i>
Toy Box Children's Mobile Outreach Service	<i>Toy Box</i>
Upper Hunter Community Services Inc	<i>UHCS</i>
Upper Hunter Family Day Care	<i>UHFDC</i>
Upper Hunter Cluster Community Health Services	<i>Community Health</i>

Learning frameworks and Standards

Belonging, Being and Becoming The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia	<i>Early Years Learning Framework</i>
National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education & Care	<i>National Quality Framework</i>

Other names and abbreviations

Early Years Development Network	
Long day care	<i>LDC</i>
Family day care	<i>FDC</i>
Occupational Therapy	<i>OT</i>

Terminology

Recommendation

The *recommendations* are *recommendations for consideration by each of the stakeholders*.

This Children's Services Strategic Plan is not owned by one organisation. It was developed by multiple children's services stakeholders working together. This strategic plan can only be implemented if the children's services stakeholders work together on the implementation. All of the recommendations in this report are within this context. They are recommendations from children's services stakeholders to children's services stakeholders.

Some recommendations reflect things already agreed by stakeholders and being implemented, for example the importance of the Early Years Development Network continuing.

Some recommendations are specific actions, for example the expansion of the Muswellbrook Pre-school and the expansion of Tilly's.

Some recommendations are for further discussion and exploration (by multiple stakeholders) for example future capital investment and the South Side Community Services Centre.

Community contribution Community support

Some of the strategies in the Children's Services Strategic Plan will require a community contribution / community support to make them achievable. The terms *community contribution* and *community support* are used generically. They could for example include: Community fundraising, financial contributions to the community from private companies (e.g. The BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal's Community Development Fund), contributions by Government or local community organisations (e.g. Muswellbrook Shire Council or Muswellbrook Pre-School). The contributions and support required in any one instance could be financial and/or non-financial.

South Side Community Services Centre

The recommendations include the exploration of the feasibility of a community services centre on the south side of Muswellbrook. In this report the proposed centre has been called the "*South Side Community Services Centre*". What is envisaged is a Long Day Care Centre combined with space for other community services and spaces for playgroups and for parents to meet. It is not envisaged that this community services centre would include such things a large community hall.

The recommendation in relation to the "*South Side Community Services Centre*" is for further work by multiple stakeholders on a feasibility study.

Preface

A study commissioned by BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal in September 2010 identified a need for enhanced support for, and increased access to, early childhood education, childcare facilities and the associated children's services in the Muswellbrook Shire region.

BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal's Community Development Fund subsequently funded a project to develop a strategic plan for Children's Services in the Muswellbrook Shire. See Attachment 11 for the Project Agreement.

The Project was auspiced by Muswellbrook Shire Council.

The Muswellbrook Shire Council also provided additional financial resources to support the strategic planning process.

The focus of the strategic plan is the Muswellbrook Shire. However, as Aberdeen's children's services are integrally connected with Muswellbrook Shire's children's services, the plan is for Muswellbrook Shire (and Aberdeen).

Paul Bullen, an independent consultant, was contracted by the Muswellbrook Shire Council to develop the strategic plan in consultation and collaboration with children's services stakeholders including Muswellbrook Shire Council, Long Day Care Centres, Family Day Care, Preschools, Primary Schools, Community Health Services, Upper Hunter Community Services (including MOOSH and Toy Box) and other community services, Government Departments, local families and young people and others including mining companies.

During 2012 there have been stakeholder meetings, individual meetings with all service providers, data gathering by long day care centres, family day care, preschools, primary schools and community health services and the release of the ABS Census data in June and October 2012.

Thanks to everyone who participated and contributed.

This is the plan. It has only been made possible with everyone's contributions.

See Attachment 1 for a full list of all the stakeholders involved in the process.

See Attachment 2 for the details of the processes used in developing the plan.

See Attachment 10 for a summary of the Children's Services Strategic Plan.

Note: There is a separate report "Residents, Engagement and Community Building: Muswellbrook" which provides a more detailed description of the Muswellbrook community including reports of focus group of adults and young people and proposed community engagement strategies. It is useful background reading for this Strategic Plan.

Executive Summary

This strategic plan is a collaborative plan for children's services stakeholders in the Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen.

The plan has been developed in consultation and collaboration with Children's Services stakeholders including Muswellbrook Shire Council, Long Day Care Centres, Family Day Care, Preschools, Primary Schools, Community Health Services, Upper Hunter Community Services and other community services, Government Departments, local families and young people and others.

The plan and recommendations are for consideration of these stakeholders. This strategic plan can only be implemented if the children's services stakeholders work together on the implementation.

The Report

The report includes:

- A. A strategic plan for children's services in Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen
- B. Stakeholder implementation recommendations for each of them to consider
- C. Supporting evidence (in the Attachments).

Vision for the community

Underpinning the plan is a vision for Muswellbrook Shire (and Aberdeen) as a place where:

- Children and families are valued
- Early childhood education is valued
- Children are school ready
- Families are able to access the child care they need to enable them to work and have breaks
- Staff working with children and families have the skills they need to do quality work
- Service providers are working together to achieve this.

Goals

Goals to be achieved include, among others:

- a) The community is aware of what makes a child friendly environment, the importance of quality pre-schools and long day care and what services are available.
- b) Children's services are equally accessible by all (including Aboriginal, CALD, children with disabilities, shift working families, and others experiencing barriers to access).
- c) There are sufficient child care places (including centre based, family day care and out of school hours care) to meet current and medium term future needs.
- d) There are sufficient preschool places to meet current and medium term future needs.
- e) Staff are available with the skills required to ensure the quality of the services provided and the children's services system runs to full capacity.
- f) Each service in the children services system provides a point of information/referral for other parts of the children's services system.
- g) Children and families can access the specialist services they require.

Strategies

There are five interconnected strategies for improving the children's services system to better meet the needs of children and families in the Muswellbrook Shire (and Aberdeen). They are:

1. **Early learning aware community** - community awareness and information
2. **Engagement of the whole community** - community engagement strategies to ensure families and children are able to engage with out of home opportunities
3. **Care and early learning opportunities for all children before school and at school (services available)** - increasing long day care places, family day care places, preschool places, specialist services and access to services
4. **Agencies working together** - to achieve the other strategies
5. **Adequate infrastructure** - to achieve the other strategies.

Recommendations

There are recommendations through the plan on how children's services stakeholders working together can achieve the goals by implementing the strategies. They are grouped by **strategy** in the *A. The Strategic Plan* and by **stakeholder and/or function** in *B Implementation Recommendations*.

This Children's Services Strategic Plan is not owned by one organisation; it is a plan by children's services stakeholders for children's services stakeholders. They are recommendations from children's services stakeholders to children's services stakeholders.

Some recommendations reflect things already agreed by stakeholders and being implemented, for example the importance of the Early Years Development Network continuing.

Some recommendations are specific actions, for example the expansion of the Muswellbrook Pre-school and the expansion of Tilly's.

Some recommendations are for further discussion and exploration (by multiple stakeholders) for example future capital investment in children's services and the South Side Community Services Centre.

Next steps

The next steps are stakeholders considering the recommendations and continuing implementation of the plan. This includes:

- a) The Early Years Development Network continuing to meet and develop.
- b) Upper Hunter Community Services taking on the lead role for the Community Engagement strategy.
- c) Community Services Muswellbrook Shire Council continuing with the lead role for the Early Years Development Network and facilitating other meetings as necessary
- d) Muswellbrook Shire Council considering the recommendations for further discussion and exploration of a South Side Community Services Centre and public discussion of future capital investment in children's services.
- e) Other stakeholders working on their priorities including identifying possible sources of funding/ community support to achieve relevant priorities including:
 - Tillys proposed expansion to 71 LDC places
 - Upper Hunter Family Day Care expansion by 6 Educators
 - Muswellbrook Public School additional room
 - Denman's Children's Centre re-development
 - Community Health working further on Speech Pathology and OT options
 - Community preschools and LDC explore governance and management support options.

A. The Strategic Plan

a) Introduction

Organisations typically have strategic plans to help them chart a course through a changing context in such a way as to better achieve their purpose.

This strategic plan has similarities and differences to an organisational strategic plan.

It is similar in the sense that it is about how children's services in the Muswellbrook Shire (and Aberdeen) can collectively chart a course through a changing context in such a way as to better meet the needs of children and families in Muswellbrook Shire (and Aberdeen).

However it is different because it is not owned by one organisation.

This strategic plan can only be implemented if the children's services stakeholders work together on the implementation.

At the same time as Children's Services are collaborating together on working on this plan some of them are also competitors in the market place of long day and preschool places. At times there may be a conflict of interest between what's in the interests of the community as a whole and what's in the interests of the individual stakeholders and their communities.

b) Vision, values and beliefs

Vision

Muswellbrook Shire is a community where:

- Children and families are valued
- Early childhood education is valued
- Children are school ready
- Families are able to access the child care they need to enable them to work and have breaks
- Staff working with children and families have the skills they need to do quality work
- Service providers are working together to achieve this.

Values and beliefs

We value:

- The family in all its diverse forms
- Maintaining and building the independence of families
- Treating families fairly and equitably
- Every child and parent treated with the same care, consideration and respect
- Equity of access for all families
- Excellence in what we do.

We believe:

- The family is the core of society
- Relationships within a family are at the heart of how a family functions and create early learning opportunities for children
- Every child has the ability to learn and families have responsibilities to enable children to learn
- Every family should have access to the quality long day care they need

A. The Strategic Plan

- Every child should have the opportunity to attend a quality preschool program (whether at long day care, family day care or preschool)
- Every child should have the opportunity to access the assessment and treatment options within health services they require (e.g. Speech Pathology, OT, audiometry, immunisation, etc).
- To thrive families need to be well connected with their communities and the services in those communities
- Child Care Centres and Preschools play an important role as hubs for families' community connections and support and connections with service providers; community run centres have an added responsibility in this
- Government, community and private organisations need to work together to provide the best possible services for the community.

c) Situation and changing context

Situation

The following provides a brief outline of:

- The number children in the community
- The current service providers
- Long day care places available and required
- Preschool places available and required.

See Attachments 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, & 8 for further details.

Note: In the following statistics the number of children and families using centres, preschools and family day care is based on the census of families and children that was undertaken in May 2012 by service providers for this strategic planning project.

In the **Muswellbrook Shire (and Aberdeen)** some significant points are:

<i>Children under 5 (ABS Census 2011):</i>	
Muswellbrook Shire LGA 2006 Census:	1254
Muswellbrook Shire LGA 2011 Census:	1246
Aberdeen (Suburb) 2006 Census:	134
Aberdeen (Suburb) 2011 Census	147

<i>Children 5 and under by age group Muswellbrook Shire (and Aberdeen) combined (ABS 2011 Census)</i>		
	<i>Age</i>	<i>Number</i>
	<1	273
	1	279
	2	289
	3	266
	4	287
	5	319
	Total 4 and under	1394
	Total 5 and under	1713

A. The Strategic Plan

Long day care centre providers:

<i>Provider</i>	<i>Places</i>	<i>Children</i>
Denman Children's Centre*	19	48
Goodstart Early Learning	76	139
Muswellbrook Child Care Centre Inc	29	56
Tillys Play and Development Centre	48	108

* Note: Denman Children's Centre is licensed as a preschool and within that meets a diverse range of care and preschool needs. Their 39 places have been arbitrarily split here between long day care and preschool to indicate the diversity of services provided.

Family day care providers:

Upper Hunter Family Day Care

Educators (within Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen)	14
Families	92
Children	113

The equivalent in hours of care of a LDC Centre of approximately 50 places

New Train

Educators (within Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen)	5
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The equivalent in hours of care of a LDC Centre of approximately 15 places

Preschool providers:

<i>Provider</i>	<i>Places</i>	<i>Children</i>
Aberdeen Preschool	30	74
Denman Children's Centre*	20	50
Muswellbrook Pre School Kindergarten Inc	80	216
Warrae Wannu (School Readiness program)**	20	59

** Note: Warrae Wannu is a School Readiness program and not a Preschool (that is required to meet the National Quality Framework standards). In this plan Warrae Wannu's places are counted with the preschool places.

Primary schools 2012 Kindergarten intakes (for larger schools) and total enrolments

<i>School</i>	<i>2012 Kindergarten intake</i>	<i>2011 Total students</i>
Muswellbrook Public School	83	563
Muswellbrook South Public	73	366
St James Primary School	57	297
Denman Public School	24	209
Muswellbrook Christian School	na	23
St Joseph's Primary School	na	76
Martindale Public School	na	15
Sandy Hollow Public School	na	50
Total		1599

Playgroups

There are 6 playgroups in Muswellbrook; several are supported playgroups.

Long day care places available and required

The current long day care places equivalent is: 237 places

This includes long day care centre places, 19 of Denman Children's Centre places and the family day care equivalent places

The number of long day care equivalent places needs to increase by approximately 55 to 65 places to be commensurate with the rest of NSW and by 75 to have marginally more places than the rest of NSW to meet the needs of the existing population.

If the number of children in Muswellbrook grew by 10% in the future a further 20 places would be required.

Preschool places available and required

The current preschool places is: 150 places

To meet the needs of the existing population the number of preschool places needs to increase by approximately 20 to 50 places to:

- a) ensure that each child in preschool is able to attend preschool for as much time as the average for the rest of NSW and
- b) a small number of children currently missing out on preschool are able to attend.

Note the number of children attending preschool is proportionately higher than in the rest of NSW but the number of hours they attend is on average less than the rest of NSW.

If the number of children in Muswellbrook grew by 10% in the future a further 20 places would be required.

The Children's Services system

The children services system operates across the whole Shire and beyond as an integrated whole. Changes in one centre or preschool will effect other centres and preschools.

Tillys, Goodstart and Muswellbrook Child Care each, for example, provide services to people from Muswellbrook, Denman, Aberdeen, other towns (such as Scone) and people living out of town.

If for example, changes are made to the services provided in Denman, those changes will impact on all of the other services.

Changing context

Some of the significant changes in recent years impacting on children's services in Muswellbrook Shire (and Aberdeen) are:

- Introduction of the National Early Learning Framework: *Belonging, Being and Becoming The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*
- Introduction of the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education & Care
- Changing workforce patterns and the need for increased long day care
- Increasing parent expectations about the importance of preschool education and the amount of preschool education - for example, changing expectations from 1 day of preschool education a week to 2 or 3 days of preschool education per week.
- Strathearn's proposed 90 place long day care Centre in Scone.

d) Challenges and opportunities

Challenges

In the Muswellbrook Shire (and Aberdeen) there are significant challenges to achieving the vision within the current context including:

- Shortage of preschool places
- Shortage of long day care places
- Shortage of specialist services such as Speech Pathology and OT for children
- Children not as school ready as hoped
- Lack of access to services (because of families lack of awareness of available services, lack of availability of services, families not taking opportunities outside the home, or other barriers including lack of adequate infrastructure)
- The current NSW State and Commonwealth budgetary situations.

Opportunities

There are opportunities to:

- Take a whole of Shire approach to children's services - Muswellbrook Shire (and Aberdeen) is small enough for all stakeholders to understand the whole
- Engage all families with young children
- Further develop strategies for agencies working together
- Pool resources
- Redevelop infrastructure to better meet community needs
- Build on the investment that BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal has made in the community with the funding of a four year community development initiative from mid 2012 which provides additional staff for Upper Hunter Community Services and Community Services Muswellbrook Shire Council.

e) Learning Framework and Quality Standards

The Children's Services Strategic Plan for the Shire is within the context of:

- Belonging, Being and Becoming The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia
- National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education & Care (and related regulations)
- Children (Education and Care Services) Supplementary Provisions Act 2011 (for those services not covered by the National Quality Framework (e.g. home-based, mobile and occasional care services).

Early Years Learning Framework

The Early Years Learning Framework identifies five learning goals for all children:

- 1: Children have a strong sense of identity
e.g. children feel safe, secure, and supported; children develop their emerging autonomy, inter-dependence, resilience and sense of agency
- 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world
e.g. Children develop a sense of belonging to groups and communities and an understanding of the reciprocal rights and responsibilities necessary for active community participation, children become aware of fairness

3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing

e.g. Children become strong in their social and emotional wellbeing; children take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing

4: Children are confident and involved learners

e.g. Children develop curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, imagination and reflexivity; children develop a range of skills and processes such as problem solving

5: Children are effective communicators

e.g. Children interact verbally and non-verbally with others for a range of purposes; children engage with a range of texts and gain meaning from these texts; children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media.

National Quality Framework

National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education & Care (and related regulations) aims to raise quality and drive continuous improvement and consistency in education and care services through:

- a national legislative framework
- a National Quality Standard
- a national quality rating and assessment process
- a new national body called the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority.

The National Quality Framework took effect on 1 January 2012 with key requirements being phased in over time. Requirements such as qualifications, educator-to-child ratios and other key staffing arrangements will be phased in between 2012 and 2020.

The National Quality Standard sets a new national benchmark for the quality of education and care services. The National Quality Standard is divided into seven Quality Areas:

- Educational program and practice
- Children's health and safety
- Physical environment
- Staffing arrangements
- Relationships with children
- Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
- Leadership and service management.

Approved Services will be assessed and rated against each of the seven Quality Areas. Assessments for existing services commenced in mid-2012. The National Quality Framework replaced the National Childcare Accreditation Council.

f) Goals

Goals for the children's services system in the Muswellbrook Shire (and Aberdeen) include:

- a) The community is aware of what makes a child friendly environment, the importance of quality pre-schools and long day care and what services are available.
- b) There are sufficient child care places (including centre based, family day care and out of school hours care) to meet current and medium term future needs.
- c) There are sufficient preschool places to meet current and medium term future needs.
- d) Staff are available with the skills required to ensure:
 - o quality of the services provided
 - o the children's services system runs to full capacity.
- e) There is a process for monitoring school readiness and service providers working together to address ways of improving school readiness as necessary.
- f) Primary schools engage with families in their communities prior to their children commencing school through transition to school and other strategies.
- g) Long Day Care Centres and Preschools, particularly those that are community based, act as hubs for families connecting with other families and families connecting with services.
- h) Each service in the children services system provides a point of information/referral for other parts of the children's services system.
- i) Children and families can access the specialist services they require.
- j) Children's services are equally accessible by all (including Aboriginal, CALD, children with disabilities, shift working families, and others experiencing barriers to access).
- k) Each service in the children's services network is managed well and operates efficiently.
- l) The children's services are professionally managed with longer term goals, plans and financial plans that ensure sustainability of services and the availability of future capital required for future growth.

g) Stakeholder's roles

There are different kinds of stakeholders involved with children's services, including:

- Not for profit community based services (e.g. Aberdeen Preschool)
- Not for profit but not community based services (e.g. Goodstart Early Learning)
- Private services (e.g. Tillys)
- Local Council
- Government
- Private businesses.

The roles of these stakeholders have some similarities and differences. For example, all stakeholders providing services are required to meet Early Learning Framework goals and National Quality Framework standards (and related regulations) and accreditation requirements.

Stakeholders also have quite different roles, for example:

Community based services have a special responsibility to build community as well as provide services.

The Local Shire Council has a responsibility for working in the best interests of the Shire community as a whole.

Government departments have a responsibility to provide services, e.g. NSW Health providing health services.

Private services have a responsibility to the owners of the business.

Private businesses also have a responsibility to be good social corporate citizens.

To achieve what's in the best interests of children and families all stakeholders need to do their role well and work collaboratively with other stakeholders.

All other things being equal there is a benefit to the whole community if there is a mix of different types of service providers [i.e. not for profit community based services (e.g. Aberdeen Preschool); not for profit but not community based services (e.g. Goodstart Early Learning); and private services (e.g. Tillys)].

The recommendations in this strategic plan are premised on maintaining the mix of types of service providers. If this premise were changed some recommendations would also change.

h) Strategies

There are five interconnected strategies for improving the children's services system to better meet the needs of children and families in the Muswellbrook Shire (and Aberdeen) and in particular achieve the goals above:

1. **Early learning aware community** - community awareness and information
2. **Engagement of the whole community** - community engagement strategies to ensure families and children are able to engage with out of home opportunities
3. **Care and early learning opportunities for all children before school and at school (services available)** - increasing long day care places, family day care places, preschool places, specialist services and access to services
4. **Agencies working together** - to achieve the other strategies
5. **Adequate infrastructure** - to achieve the other strategies,

Within each strategy there are priorities. Some priorities can be implemented at no additional cost. Some priorities require additional resources beyond those within the existing services. See *Section B. Implementation recommendations* for details about how priorities can be implemented and the relative priorities if additional resources were available.

The strategies are interconnected. For example, priorities for engaging the whole community require agencies to work together and also require adequate infrastructure. Read the strategies as an integrated whole. Do not read them in isolation.

Strategy 1: Early learning aware community

From the consultations and focus groups it is evident that not everyone in the community with young children knows what services are available, understands the value of early learning and the importance of removing barriers to early learning. This strategy could be led and coordinated through the Early Years Development Network.

The priorities are:

1. A Community information strategy that includes

- a) An “Early Learning Connections” professionally produced booklet/magazine (and supplements that could for example come out once a term) containing key messages, for example:
 - Children have development stages and mile stones - if they are missing them then do this....
 - Ideas for early learning at home
 - Information about family and children community events
 - Play group opportunities
 - Importance of pre-school education
 - Long day care, Preschools and Family day care all include pre-school education programming for preschoolers
 - The availability of services - a list of all long daycare, family day care, preschools and specialist services available.
- b) The content of the booklet/magazine and supplements available on the internet with more detailed information, resources, etc relevant to Muswellbrook Shire (and Aberdeen).
- c) All children’s services and other relevant services distribute the same booklet/information (e.g. doctors and other health professionals).

2. Community awareness strategy that could include local newspaper stories, local radio, etc.

The specific community awareness strategies require development. This could be coordinated and resourced through the Early Years Development Network.

These strategies could be resourced through pooling existing resources.

Strategy 2: Engagement of the whole community

All children require care and early learning opportunities before starting school. These opportunities are in the home. They are also outside of the home.

Everyone in the community needs support and resources to provide the best early learning opportunities in the home. People also need to take opportunities outside the home.

From the consultations, focus groups and other data it is evident that there are groups of people in the community who may benefit from being better connected with resources and opportunities outside the home.

There are some specific gaps and opportunities that have been identified to date as part of the children's services strategic planning process including:

- Single parent families - Are single parents able to take the out of home opportunities they need? Barriers? Possibilities?
- Transient families - Are new families coming to the community quickly connected with the community?
- Children starting school who have not attended child care, preschool or a school readiness program - Has everyone the opportunity to attend a preschool program of some kind in the year before school?
- Children who are not school ready - What opportunities would these families have required to have their children school ready?
- Children starting school with Speech Pathology and OT difficulties - How could these needs have been identified earlier to get services earlier (even given the long waiting lists for service assessment and delivery)?

See Attachment 7 for further details.

Further engagement issues and opportunities are also identified in a separate report "Residents, Engagement and Community Building: Muswellbrook" which provides further evidence and explores engagement of the whole community in more detail.

While each agency has responsibility to provide services to everyone in the community who is eligible, each agency does not necessarily have the resources to engage the whole community particularly families who are more isolated or less ready to engage with opportunities outside the home.

The priorities are:

1. *A community development engagement strategy for engaging the whole community, especially those less ready to engage with opportunities outside the home.*

This community development engagement strategy will be coordinated and driven by Upper Hunter Community Services in collaboration with all the other relevant stakeholders.

This strategy will focus on community engagement with families with children, especially those with young children 5 years of younger and also families with children 6 to 12 years of age.

2. Services sharing information (with permission) so people can be personally invited to opportunities outside the home.

If there were a community development engagement strategy there would be opportunities for agencies (with permission) to pass information to the community engagement worker/strategy about families who may need some support to engage with out of home opportunities. This could include for example, a system for identifying families with new children and families who are new residents.

3. Spaces for families and children to meet and build connections with other families and connections with services

If the community development engagement strategy is successful then there will be a need for places for groups of parents and children to meet that ideally also connect with the other services and opportunities. For example:

- a) All children come to primary schools. The engagement with families before they come to school and the transition to school could be improved if primary schools had a room that could be used for parent and community activities (rather than teaching classes). These activities could for example include:

Meetings of parents

Supported playgroup (where the school space may be used by another organisation to run the supported playgroup)

Transition to school.

Muswellbrook South Public School has such a space. Muswellbrook Public School requires such a place.

- b) Community based preschools and long day care centres have a particular responsibility to the community to be a meeting space for families and children where they can make connections with each other and community services.

To meet this particular responsibility community based preschools and long day care centres will require spaces for these activities in addition to the space required for the long day care and preschool places.

- b) Existing child care centres and preschools maximise the opportunities for parents meeting and information/referral to other services
- c) New buildings for child care centres and preschools (especially community run centres) are designed so that there are spaces for community use (e.g. playgroups, parent education and visiting services).

4. Services being more easily accessible to the community, for example, by taking their services to multiple locations.

For example, Community Health currently provide some services at Hunter Park Family Centre. The current infrastructure of centres does not enable this kind of approach in other places.

A priority within Muswellbrook town is a community services centre on the south side of town that, among other functions, could fulfil this role.

Strategy 3: Care and early learning opportunities for all children before starting school and at school (services available)

Rationale: What's in place and what's needed

Currently the services available are not sufficient to meet community need. There is a shortage of:

- Long day care (at Long Day Care Centres and/or Family Day Care)
- Preschool places (for those not at long day care)
- Specialist services such as Speech Pathology and OT.

Given the likely future growth of Muswellbrook and Denman there will be an ongoing shortage of services in the Muswellbrook Shire unless there is a significant increase in services.

In relation to long day care and preschool places, Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen are one integrated services network and so the recommendations in relation to long day care and preschool places are for Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen combined.

Determining the number of long day care places and preschool places needed in a community and likely to be needed in the future is complex.

The essence of the approach taken here has been to:

- a) Map all the existing long day care and preschool providers and take a census in 2012 of the families and children using those providers and the amount of care/preschool education provided to each child.
- b) Compare Muswellbrook services, families and children with national and state data about the availability of long day care, family day care and preschool places across Australia and within NSW (data provided by ABS). At the same time acknowledging that there is a shortage of care in NSW and nationally and that the national and state data describe what is (a useful point of comparison), not what is required.
- c) Review the ABS Census data to explore the similarities and differences between the Muswellbrook Shire community and the NSW and Australian communities (in particular any differences that impact on the amount of long day care, family day care or preschool places required to meet community need).
- d) Take into account changing community attitudes in relation to preschool education. For example, a number of years back there was less community importance placed on preschool education than there is now. The number of days on which parents want preschool education has also increased.
- e) Take into account the likely long term growth in the Muswellbrook Shire in the next 5 to 10 years while also acknowledging the uncertainties about aspects of this. Housing estate releases are planned for both Muswellbrook and Denman. However the impact of these releases on the number of children under 5 is not clear. For example, from 2006 to 2011 the total population in Muswellbrook increased but the number of children under 5 decreased. Nonetheless the implication is that any new long day care or preschool buildings should be designed in such a way as to allow for future expansion, e.g. an additional room added to a long day care development at a later date.
- f) Recognise that there are a proportion of children who attend both long day care and preschools (about 10% nationally) and so the total number of children in long day care centres and the total number of children in preschools adds up to 10% more than the total number of children in long day care and/or preschools.

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- g) Acknowledge that the children's services system in Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen also provides services to people outside these areas and that development of additional services outside these areas will also impact on services within Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen. At present about 5% to 8% (max) of children in care and preschools in Muswellbrook and Aberdeen are from outside the Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen (e.g. Scone, Singleton and Merriwa). There is no data available on how many children from Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen are using care and preschools elsewhere. Strathearn is proposing to build a 90 place long day care Centre in Scone and phase it in over time. This will impact on services in Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen.
- h) Anecdotally there are people living and working in Muswellbrook who have not been able to bring their families with them because of a lack of care/preschool places. It is difficult to estimate the number of these families. Nonetheless for the purposes of developing a model of need the equivalent of 1% to 2% of existing places has been allowed. If the number of these families is actually higher than this estimate the number of additional care/preschool places in the model of need would also proportionally increase.
- i) Whether or not care/preschool places are actually needed in any particular location will also depend on many factors not considered here, for example, families perceptions of comparative quality of services available, convenience to work and/or home, comparative fees, services used by family friends, etc. In the final analysis one has to see what families actually want; waiting to see who enrolls for what.
- j) If there are too few care places and/or preschool places there will be long waiting lists and children and families will not get they care/preschool places they need. If on the other hand there are too many care/preschool places services will be under financial stress through maintaining vacant places.

So it is important to maximise flexibility particularly in designing any new buildings. For example, rooms to be such that they can accommodate 20 or 25 (or 30) as needs change. Community based centres to have a community room that could be used on a flexible basis for care/preschool while numbers were increasing before a new permanent room might be added.

Taking all these factors into account across Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen a model was developed to determine what care and preschool places would be available in Muswellbrook if it were similar to the rest of NSW.

The model was also adjusted to take account of the goals in Muswellbrook, for example, to have every child attend a preschool or preschool program before school.

See *Attachment 8 LDC and Preschool places for current and future needs* for a description of the model and all the relevant parameters.

Some of the most significant observations (based on meeting the needs of the people living in Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen (and not elsewhere)) are:

- a) The number of children in LDC is substantially less than one would expect (about 330 compared with 470) based on population alone.
- b) The number of children in FDC is substantially more than one would expect (about 120 compared with 70) based on population alone.
- c) The number of children in LDC and FDC combined is less than one would expect (about 450 compared with 540) based on population alone.

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- d) The gap in LDC equivalent places is age specific (based on the first 40 places to be filled the age distribution for the gap is):

<i>Age</i>	<i>LDC places required</i>
0	4
1	12
2	13
3	12
4	-2
5	1

Note the age distribution for subsequent places above the first 40 additional places will be different.

- e) The average hours in LDC is more than the NSW average (21 hours compared with 19.9 hours).
- f) The number of children in preschools is higher than what one would expect if 85% of 4 year olds were in a preschool or preschool program (about 325 compared with 270)
- g) The average time in preschool is substantially less than the NSW average (12.1 hours compared with 15.9 hours). Adjusting for this time difference would mean that the number of places is required to increase by 31% (an average of 3.8 hours per place).
- h) Taking all this into account there is a **shortage of 55 to 75 long day care equivalent places** (i.e. LDC and FDC combined).
- i) If one wants to give every child in Muswellbrook the opportunity to be in a preschool or preschool program for the amount of time that is typical in the rest of NSW the number of **preschool places needs to increase by 20 to 50 places.**
- j) If Muswellbrook grows in the future the likely increase in places will be:

Growth	LDC Equivalent Places	Preschool Places
Base	237+65=302	150+35 = 185
5%	15	9
10%	30	18
15%	45	27

So if the number of children grew by 5% an extra 15 LDC equivalent places would be required.

How to address these shortages is complex because of the nature of the integrated system of services. For example, people from Denman use long day care in Muswellbrook, people from Scone, Aberdeen and Muswellbrook (and elsewhere) use the preschool in Aberdeen. Some people are using long day care for shorter hours because they don't have a preschool place. Some people are using preschool places when what they need is long day care. Upper Hunter Family Day Care is much larger in Muswellbrook than is typical if one compared it to the extent of Family Day Care in NSW. This suggests that UHFDC is making a significant contribution to making up the shortfall of long day care places.

Priorities

The following are the priorities for addressing the gaps in services (see Attachment 8 for details):

1. Increase long day care places

The priorities for increasing long day care places in Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen are:

- a) *Increasing the amount of Family Day Care places as soon as possible over 6 to 8 months by the equivalent of 20 LDC places. This will require an additional 6 Educators in the Muswellbrook LGA and Aberdeen. If this is successful then continue with further expansion of Family Day Care as required.*

This requires a specific expansion strategy that includes:

Marketing

Identifying educators and overcoming barriers to entry for new Educators

Additional staff on an interim basis to give UHFDC the capacity to put on the additional Educators.

This will require community support to provide additional resources to fund the expansion.

- b) *Tillys to expand as planned from 48 to 71 places (an increase of 23 LDC places)*

Architectural plans have been drawn up. This expansion requires negotiations between Tillys and the landlord to be successfully finalised.

It will then require a DA and Council approval. This expansion is an important priority.

- c) *Muswellbrook Child Care Centre to be redeveloped, relocated and expanded (initially by approximately 20 places (from 29 to 50) with an option of a further expansion of 20 or 30 places to 70 or 80 places in the long term future) ideally located in a community services centre with other community services.*

Muswellbrook Child Care Centre does not have the capital to undertake such an expansion. The expansion would require capital investment from others.

Ideally the redeveloped Centre would be part of the proposed South Side Community Services Centre. See below for further details of this proposed Centre.

In this development Muswellbrook Child Care Centre will:

Remain community based

Expand the number of long day care places

Be part of strategies to outreach to the whole community

Provide a community space for such activities as supported playgroups, meetings of Family Day Care staff, parenting groups.

- d) *Denman Children's Centre to be redeveloped, relocated and expanded (initially by 20 places (from 39 to 60) with an option of a further expansion to 80 places in the long term future).*

Denman Children's Centre is licensed as a preschool with 39 places and within that license it offers limited hours day care, preschool places and preschool extended hours and care for preschoolers outside term time when the preschool is not operating. The quality of the Denman Children's Centre building is poor in relation to its use.

The recommendation is that Denman Children's Centre be redeveloped to enable expanded places and extended hours and operate as both a LDC centre and a preschool (each with their separate license).

If Denman Children's Centre were to provide all the long day care and preschool places required in Denman and the surrounding areas to the east, west and south then

A. The Strategic Plan

approximately 40 long day care places and 20 preschool places would be required (with possible expansion in the future as Denman grows).

The redevelopment of Denman Children's Centre as a community based centre to be premised on the provision of a room for community use, development of community engagement strategies to ensure access for all and expansion in such a way as that it flexibly allows for future expansion. The Centre will provide a community space for such activities such as supported playgroups, meetings of Family Day Care staff, parenting groups etc.

This will require capital investment from the community.

Note: Goodstart has a new building. No new developments are proposed.

2. Increase preschool places

The priorities for preschool places are:

- a) *Muswellbrook Preschool be expanded from 80 places to between 100 and 120 places. Additional expansions may be required in the longer term.*

Muswellbrook Preschool does not have the capital to fully undertake such an expansion. The expansion would require capital investment from others.

Any redevelopment of Muswellbrook Preschool to be premised on:

The redeveloped centre will be designed for future flexible growth, i.e.

New rooms are larger rooms e.g. have the potential to be licensed for 30 places (so they can be used as rooms for 20, 25 or 30 as required by demand and licensing)

Additional rooms can be added later

The space for staff and parents is adequate to cater for future expansion

The Centre will be part of strategies to outreach to the whole community

The Centre will provide a community space for such activities as supported playgroups, meetings of Family Day Care staff, parenting groups.

- b) *Denman Children's Centre to be redeveloped, relocated and expanded to include LDC and preschool places - see above for details.*

Note: If these two developments take place and the proposed new preschool in Scone is built Aberdeen Preschool may lose families from Muswellbrook and Scone to the new developments and be able to focus more on families within Aberdeen (which is also growing).

3. Primary Schools community connections

- a) Because of limited room space Muswellbrook Public School is not able to take the opportunities it would like to take to connect with families in the community before school and in its transition to school program. Muswellbrook Public School has grounds on which a demountable building for these uses could be put. *An additional demountable building would open up a wide range of opportunities for engagement with the community.*

The purchase of the building would require capital investment from the community. The priorities are: i) a new demountable building on site; ii) part time staff person to support the transition to school program; and iii) resources to support the transition to school program (e.g. books).

- b) *Warrae Wannu at Muswellbrook South Public School continue*

Muswellbrook South Public School operates Warrae Wannu, a 20 place school readiness program, on the school site (it is not a licensed pre-school). Warrae Wannu is an important and effective strategy for engaging with children and families who are typically less likely to engage with preschools and schools. No fees are charged. The current program is funded to the end of 2014. The size of the available building limits the program to 20 places.

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Warrae Wannu to continue. There are several scenarios for the future that need exploration with a view to ensuring the sustainability of Warrae Wannu and the development of further strategies to build engagement of the local community with the school and other services .

These include:

- o a joint venture with TAFE,
 - o collaboration with Muswellbrook Preschool and other stakeholders; and
 - o exploration of opportunities that will arise as a consequence if the South Side Community Services Centre recommended elsewhere proceeds (i.e. alternative uses for the existing Muswellbrook Child Care site).
- c) *Play groups: Muswellbrook South Public School playgroup and other playgroups continue*
The recommendations assume that existing playgroups and others in the future will continue and be supported and connected with other strategies including strategies 1. *Early learning aware community* and strategy 2 *Engagement of the whole community*.

4. Improved access to specialist Speech Pathology and OT services

There is a shortage of Speech Pathology and OT services for children. There are long waiting times for Speech Pathology and OT assessments and services. There is a shortage of private practitioners in the local area in allied health services including Speech Pathology and other children's services.

Medicare Locals are a new national network of primary health care organisations. They are able to get funding for primary health care. In 2013 there will be consultations by Medicare Locals covering the local area.

The priorities are:

- a) *Participation in consultations and work with Medicare Locals in relation to children's services allied health needs such as Speech Pathology and OT (including the provision of local data identifying needs); and*
- b) *Working with other children's services on identifying and collaborating on opportunities to make up the shortfall in Speech Pathology and OT services.*

For example, collaborating with schools , long day care and preschools in running "Language Development Partnership Modules". NSW Health charges for these services and so service providers may require financial support to participate.

5. Out of school hours care and vacation care

- a) *MOOSH continue with its existing services as part of the South Side Community Services Centre (recommended for further exploration elsewhere in this report)*
- b) *In Denman, local out of school hours care be explored as one option in the proposed re-development of the Denman Children's Centre acknowledging that Family Day Care also currently provides out of school hours care in Denman.*

Strategy 4: Agencies working together

Agencies include Schools, Long Day Care Centres, Family Day Care, Preschools, Community Services such as, Council, Government Departments and others.

There has been a growth in these agencies working together. Building on this the priorities are:

1. *The Early Years Development Network continue and work on the following priorities:*

- a) The connection between preschool programs in long day care and preschools and the school program
Ensuring that there is mutual understanding of each others' programs and that children's school readiness is maximised.
- b) Staff training
Ensuring that there are adequate trained staff available to ensure the children's services system runs to full capacity by sharing strategies that are working and supporting services to use those strategies. Some opportunities that the Network could share and build on are:
 - o Goodstart and Tillys are both Registered Training Organisations and provide relevant courses, for example Certificate III in Child care.
 - o There are opportunities for centres to provide traineeships.
 - o There are opportunities for working with TAFE.
 - o Centres currently use a variety of strategies for recruiting and maintaining staff with appropriate skills.
- c) Transition to school
Collaborating on transition to school programs.
- d) School Readiness
Monitoring school readiness of Kindergarten intakes on an annual basis for school readiness and identifying where there are gaps and how to prevent them in the future.
- e) Specialist services
Identification of opportunities and strategies for maximising access to specialist services such as Speech Pathology and OT.
- f) Linkages to *Strategy 2. Engagement of the whole community.*
The Early Learning Network will be an important point of connection for Upper Hunter Community Services with other stakeholders as it works on the whole of community engagement strategy.
- g) Identifying emerging issues and incorporating them in the process of reviewing the implementation of the strategic plan.

Note: There are intrinsic difficulties in enabling this group to meet regularly, for example staff availability and the need to possibly replace staff in preschools and long day care centres, health staff appointments schedules, etc. An important priority early in 2013 will be to address these issues to ensure regular meetings (more frequently than once per term) are able to be regularly attended by all stakeholders.

2. *Shared locations and service provision*

That, as more community spaces and offices become available, service providers take the opportunity to provide services that are geographically accessible to families (e.g. in the proposed community room in Muswellbrook Preschool or in the proposed South Side Community Services Centre).

3. *Sharing information (with permission) so that personal approaches can be made to engage families as part of a wider community engagement strategy.*

All service providers put in place systems to ensure all families are connected with the proposed community engagement strategy (to be led by Upper Hunter Community Services).

4. *Centres Directors Meetings*

Regular meetings of centre Directors (e.g. LDC Centres and Preschools) should continue. The Early Years Development Network will not replace the need for this meeting. However with planning ahead these meetings could be scheduled on the same day as the Early Years Development Network to make the attendance at both these meetings more feasible.

5. *Support for governance and management of community based centres*

Each of the community based centres faces shared challenges in relation to governance and management. Muswellbrook Preschool, Muswellbrook Child Care Centre, Denman Children's Centre and Aberdeen Preschool could work together with other stakeholders, for example Community Services Muswellbrook Shire Council could facilitate meetings to explore opportunities for strengthening community governance and community management of these Centres.

Strategy 5: Adequate Infrastructure

Lack of appropriate infrastructure is a major barrier to the provision of adequate children's services in the Muswellbrook Shire.

1. Infrastructure

Infrastructure gaps

Infrastructure gaps include:

- a) Lack of a community services centre on the south side of Muswellbrook that is a focal point for the community and integrates child care, community services, spaces for parents and children to gather, etc. The existing facilities in Skelletar Street do not achieve the goals of such a community services centre, nor does the Hunter Park Family Centre.
- b) Poor quality of the space used by MOOSH and Toy Box.
- c) The lack of space/places in Muswellbrook Child Care Centre.
- d) The poor quality of the Denman Children's Centre in relation to its use, for example, the building structure does not allow adequate supervision lines of sight and the limitations on its size, lack of space for staff and administration and lack of space for parents to meet and interact (e.g. no foyer).
- e) The lack of spaces in Centres and other service providers that are open to visiting services.
- f) The lack of a room/building in Muswellbrook Public School for use by families prior to school and for school transition including for engaging with hard to engage families.
- g) The lack of a room/building in Muswellbrook Preschool for use by the community for a variety of purposes including families prior to school, engaging with hard to engage families, visiting space for community health services, playgroups.

Infrastructure priorities

If one were to take a long term view the priorities in order of priority are:

- a) Development of a Community Services Centre on the south side of Muswellbrook that is a focal point for the community and integrates child care, community services, spaces for parents and children to gather, etc. Muswellbrook Child Care, MOOSH, Toy Box and UHCS and space for visiting services. The recommended location for the Centre is in the vicinity of Rutherford Road / Cassidy Avenue / Highbrook Park as this area is a central point for the south side community and is also the focal point for other uses, e.g. shops, skate park, etc.

This is the most important long term priority and will have the widest community impact in early learning and also in other areas of community engagement and community service provision.

- b) Expansion of Tillys as planned (this does not require a community contribution).

This will immediately increase the number of long day care places.

- c) Room/building in Muswellbrook Public School for transition to school and community uses.

If Muswellbrook Public School had a space it would be able to take the opportunities it would like to take to connect with families in the community before school and in its transition to school program in a similar way to what happens in Muswellbrook South but appropriate to Muswellbrook Public Schools constituency.

A. The Strategic Plan

- d) Expansion of the Muswellbrook Pre School & making available a room for community uses.
- This expansion will enable families to get the amount of preschool they want for their children; it will also allow some additional children to go to preschool. The community use room and space will play a significant role in connecting with families, connecting services to families and supporting other services for example through playgroups, visiting community health services, space for family day carers to meet.
- e) Redevelopment of Denman Children's Centre & making available a room for community uses.
- This redevelopment will bring the Centres buildings up to standard, allow for adequate provision of long day care and preschool places and enable additional strategies for connecting families in the local community with each other and with services.
- f) Redevelopment of existing Muswellbrook Child Care Centre building as a community building to replace Hunter Park Family Centre (once the relocation of the Muswellbrook Child Care Centre is complete).
- This is an important strategy for the local area. This site is not the most suitable site for the South Side Community Services Centre (which as noted above ideally should be in an area central to the community for multiple uses, shops, etc). It is suitable for meeting more local needs including space for playgroups, space for connecting with families with each other and with services. The specific uses would be developed in close consultation with the local community and children's services stakeholders.
- This is an important local community development. It is last in the list of priorities because of timing, as it would have to wait until the South Side Community Services Centre is complete, rather than because it is an inherently lower priority than other initiatives.

Each of these is a priority in their own right. The development of a community services centre on the south side of Muswellbrook is likely to have a major long term impact and other priorities should not be addressed in such a way that one would prevent this from happening. Nonetheless the time frames for implementation are different for each of these priorities. For example, existing work has been undertaken on the Muswellbrook Preschool and so it can proceed soon, an extra room /building in Muswellbrook Public School is relatively straight forward as it would most likely be a demountable classroom.

See *Section B. Implementation Recommendations* below for detailed recommendations for implementing each of the priorities above.

2. Capital investment

Past capital investment

In reviewing the infrastructure needs it is useful to identify where there has and has not been past capital investment:

- Tillys and Goodstart both have quality buildings for their purpose. Tillys is private. Good Start was private and is now non-profit (though not community based).
- Muswellbrook Child Care Centre, Aberdeen Preschool, Muswellbrook Pre School and Denman Children's Centre are all non-profit and community based and will all require additional capital investment (in addition to their own resources) to expand or redevelop.

Future capital investment and community based organisations

As noted above not for profit community based organisations can when they work well:

- Build community support for what's needed in the community
- Build connections between people in the community
- Build connections between their services and other community opportunities and services
- Run services responsive to community needs and
- Be accountable to the local community.

So they bring a lot to the community and have responsibilities to the community beyond what one would expect of a private provider or a non-profit provider that is not community based.

At the same time it seems that in Muswellbrook they have been managed with the immediate benefits to families a priority over long term development and sustainability. For example, none of the community based centres have sufficient capital to redevelop their existing centres without additional community support.

For the future the questions are:

- a) Should there be a Muswellbrook community development fund established that is used for future capital development of community based centres?
- b) Should organisations operating in Muswellbrook go guarantor for capital investment loans that community organisations then use for the redevelopment of their facilities?
- c) Should the existing not for profit community based organisations be required to be putting money aside for their own future development and expansion (and if so what are the implications in the present)?
- d) Should the existing not for profit community based organisations be supported by the community including through Council (e.g. token rent rather than commercial rents, etc) to allow them to extend services to the community in ways one would not expect a private provider to do (e.g. providing space for community use, offering supported playgroups)?

These questions require public discussion.

It would be useful if there were agreed answers to these questions within the Muswellbrook Shire to provide some certainty about future capital development of not for profit community based centres.

A. The Strategic Plan

B. Implementation recommendations

Just as the Children's Services strategic plan has similarities and differences to an organisational strategic plan so do the implementation recommendations.

These recommendations are premised on what is in the best interests of children and families in the Muswellbrook Shire as a whole. Some recommendations require additional resources beyond current organisations resources. Some recommendations require children's services to change their practice.

The recommendations here provide further detail about which stakeholders can do what to improve the children's services system in Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen.

The recommendations are recommendations from children's services stakeholders for consideration by children's services stakeholders.

To facilitate this the recommendations are grouped in this *Section B. Implementation recommendations* by **stakeholder and function** (rather than by **the five strategies** as in the previous *Section A. The Strategic Plan*).

There is therefore some necessary duplication from Part A to Part B. This section includes more detail for many of the recommendations.

B. Implementation recommendations

a) Agencies working together: Early Years Development Network and other strategies

1. Early Years Development Network

The Early Years Development Network arose from a meeting to explore the AEDI results, their implications and how school readiness could be improved in the Muswellbrook Shire.

It is important that the Network is not only a place for sharing information but also a place for collaborating on addressing issues.

Within the context of the children's Services strategic plan seven priorities for the Early Years Development Network are:

i) The connection between preschool programs in long day care and preschools and the school program

Ensuring that there is mutual understanding of each others programs and that children's school readiness is maximised.

ii) Staff training

Ensuring that there is an adequate number of trained staff available to ensure the children's services system runs to full capacity by sharing strategies that are working and supporting services to use those strategies. Some opportunities that the Network could share and build on are:

- o Goodstart and Tillys are both Registered Training Organisations and provide relevant courses, for example Certificate III in Child care.
- o There are opportunities for centres to provide traineeships.
- o There are opportunities for working with TAFE.
- o Centres currently use a variety of strategies for recruiting and maintaining staff with appropriate skills

The Network could collaborate and build on these opportunities to support each service in ensuring there is an adequate number of trained staff in place.

iii) Transition to school

Collaborating on each year's transition to school programs.

iv) School readiness

Monitoring school readiness of Kindergarten intakes on an annual basis for school readiness identifying where there are gaps and how to prevent them in the future. This could be similar to the census of 2012 Kindergarten Intake that was done as part of the children's services strategic planning process.

Data from this census would identify who is not school ready, who is missing out on specialist services, who has not been in a preschool program, etc.

This would then help inform the community engagement and other strategies.

In 2013 a priority in addition of the local census of the 2013 Kindergarten Intake will be reviewing the 2012 AEDI data that will become available in 2013.

v) Specialist services

Identification of opportunities and strategies for maximising access to specialist services such as Speech Pathology and OT. The Kindergarten Intake census would be one set of data to help inform strategies.

This requires creative collaborative and coordinated strategies given the resource limitations.

B. Implementation recommendations

vi) Linkages to *Strategy 2. Engagement of the whole community.*

The Early Learning Network will be an important point of connection for Upper Hunter Community Services with other stakeholders as it works on the whole of community engagement strategy.

As part of the engagement strategy Upper Hunter Community Services would likely bring work to every meeting of the Network.

vii) Identifying emerging issues and incorporating them in the process of reviewing the implementation of the strategic plan.

Recommendations:

- a) The Muswellbrook Shire Council continue to take a lead role in facilitating the Early Years Development Network (including work on the five priorities above) and provide additional resources to this role with the expansion of Community Services (which has been funded by BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal for four years from mid 2012).
- b) The network will focus on achieving specific objectives.
- c) Primary schools will undertake an annual census of Kindergarten intake and this information will be used to monitor progress and direct strategies for addressing issues.
- d) All stakeholders fully participate in the Network and contribute to the work required.

2. Shared locations and service provision

That, as more community spaces and offices become available, service providers take the opportunity to provide services that are geographically accessible to families (e.g. in the proposed community room in Muswellbrook Preschool or in the proposed South Side Community Services Centre).

3. Sharing information (with permission) so that personal approaches can be made to engage families as part of a wider community engagement strategy.

All service providers put in place systems to ensure all families are connected with the proposed community engagement strategy (to be led by Upper Hunter Community Services).

4. Centre Directors' Meetings

Regular meetings of centre Directors (e.g. LDC Centres and Preschools) should continue. The Early Years Development Network will not replace the need for this meeting.

However with planning ahead these meetings could be scheduled on the same day as the Early Years Development Network to make the attendance at both these meetings more feasible.

5. Support for governance and management of community based centres

Each of the community based centres faces shared challenges in relation to governance and management.

Muswellbrook Preschool, Muswellbrook Child Care Centre, Denman Children's Centre and Aberdeen Preschool could work together with other stakeholders to explore opportunities for strengthening community governance and community management of these Centres.

Recommendation:

Community Services Muswellbrook Shire Council convene a meeting of these centres to explore opportunities for strengthening community governance and community management of these Centres.

B. Implementation recommendations

b) Upper Hunter Community Services: Community Engagement Strategy

A community development engagement strategy is required. This community development engagement strategy to be coordinated and driven by Upper Hunter Community Services in collaborating with all the other relevant stakeholders.

This strategy would focus on community engagement with families with children, especially those with young children 5 years or younger but also as part of a wider community engagement strategy with families with children 6 to 12.

This community engagement strategy will build on the existing work of Upper Hunter Community Services and will:

- Focus on the whole of the Muswellbrook Shire (not on sub groups or specific geographic areas)
- Use a variety of strategies; while the specific strategies are yet to be developed examples for illustrative purposes could include, welcoming new residents and welcome packs, playgroups and activities in parks, supported playgroups, parent education opportunities (e.g. cooking), distribution of the Early Learning Connections booklet/magazine and supplements, larger community events such as a community fair, local street gatherings around an activity such as BBQ, kids, garage sales
- Build connections with other services in these strategies, for example, having a community nurse visit a supported playgroup
- Incorporate a variety of strategies to ensure that all families with children under five are aware of events and activities and can be personally invited to events and activities (this would include strategies across a wide range of service providers to inform the community engagement strategy of who's in town (with their permission) so they can be invited to local opportunities).
- Address issues identified in this strategic plan noted above including: opportunities for single parents, new residents making early connections with the community, ensuring all children have the opportunity of a preschool or preschool program before school, earlier identification of Speech Pathology and OT issues and improving school readiness.
- Make connections with and support existing playgroups
- Coordinate and collaborate with all children's services so that each children's services benefits from the engagement strategy.

Further engagement issues and opportunities are also identified in a separate report "Residents, Engagement and Community Building: Muswellbrook" which provides further evidence and explores engagement of the whole community in more detail.

Recommendations:

- a) Upper Hunter Community Services lead and develop the Community Engagement Strategy as part of its expanded community development role (which has been funded by BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal for four years from mid 2012).
- b) All stakeholders collaborate with UHCS in this engagement strategy.
- c) All service providers put in place systems to ensure all families are connected with this strategy.

B. Implementation recommendations

c) Upper Hunter Family Day Care

Upper Hunter Family Day Care had 14 Educators in June 2012. These Educators provided the equivalent amount of care as a LDC Centre of approximately 50 places. The number of long day care places in Muswellbrook Shire is currently insufficient to meet the need.

Given the time frames for building redevelopment in long day care centres an interim strategy is for UHFDC to expand by 6 Educators in the next 6 to 8 months (the equivalent of about 20 long day care places). And if this expansion is successful to then expand further.

To achieve the expansion will require additional resources to overcome significant barriers to expansion including:

- i) marketing ;
- ii) Identifying Educators and overcoming barriers to entry for new Educators; and
- iii) The additional staff time required by UHFDC to put the additional Educators in the program.

This will require investment from the community.

Recommendations:

The recommendation is (if resources were available):

- a) That there be an intensive marketing campaign to both parents and potential educators with key messages:
 - o Family day care has to meet the same standards as long day care and preschools.
 - o People providing Family Day Care are trained
 - o Family day care is flexible
 - o Being a family day care Educator may suit you - and we can help you do it.

This marketing campaign can be part of the Early Learn Opportunities awareness strategy.
- b) That Educators are supported in overcoming some of the barriers to becoming educators. The barriers can include the costs of entry. This support include payment of upfront costs with a grant/interest free loan (depending on the length of time the Educator provides family day care for).
- c) Getting educators oriented, trained and accredited takes time - in the order of a couple of weeks full time work for an UHFDC Coordinator. To significantly increase the number of Educators UHFDC would need to put on additional staff in order to process the new Educators.
- d) Once the number of Educators has increased and the number of children in care has increased that will increase revenue to UHFDC and the increased capacity will be self sustaining.

Note: Separate additional documentation is available with further details on implementing this recommendation (including a proposed budget).

B. Implementation recommendations

d) Muswellbrook Pre School

Muswellbrook Pre School has been considering expansion of the preschool for some time.

Muswellbrook Pre School has 80 places and the recommendation is that it be expanded by 20 to 40 places.

Any redevelopment of Muswellbrook Pre School as a community based centre to be premised on:

The redeveloped centre will be designed for future flexible growth, i.e.

- o New rooms are larger rooms e.g. for 30 (so they can be used as rooms for 20 or 25 and in between the transition to a new room being added may have 30)
- o Additional rooms can be added later
- o The space for staff and parents is adequate to care for future expansion

The Centre will be part of strategies to outreach to the whole community

The Centre will provide a community space for such activities as supported playgroups, meetings of Family Day Care staff, parenting groups

To ensure that is a viable development for the Muswellbrook Preschool, the Preschool will require:

1. A Strategic Plan which includes its mission, vision and values, strategic directions, goals and strategies for achieving them
2. A Business Plan that includes the business case for the viability of the Preschool taking into account the requirements of the Early Learning Framework and the new National Quality Framework and related regulations
3. A Community Engagement Plan that shows how the Preschool can meet its community engagement objectives through improving access to the preschool for those less likely to engage with the preschool and through the use of the community space for such activities as supported playgroups, meetings of Family Day Care staff, parenting groups
4. A Project Management Plan for the construction of the proposed new buildings, including plans, budget and project management

Recommendation:

- a) The Expansion of the Muswellbrook Preschool proceed within the light of these plans and if affordable.

B. Implementation recommendations

e) Muswellbrook Public School

Because of limited room space Muswellbrook Public School is not able to take the opportunities it would like to take to connect with families in the community before school and in its transition to school program. Muswellbrook Public School has grounds on which a demountable building for these uses could be put. An additional demountable building would open up a wide range of opportunities for engagement with the community.

The purchase of the building will require capital investment from the community.

Recommendation:

- a) The priorities are:
 - i) a new demountable building on site;
 - ii) part time staff person to support the transition to school program; and
 - iii) resources to support the transition to school program (e.g. books).

Note: Separate additional documentation is available with further details on implementing this recommendation (including a proposed budget).

f) Muswellbrook South Public School

Muswellbrook South Public School operates Warrae Wannu, a 20 place school readiness program, on the school site. Warrae Wannu is an important and effective strategy for engaging with children and families who are typically less likely to engage with preschools and schools. No fees are charged. The current program is funded to the end of 2014. The size of the available building limits the program to 20 places.

Recommendation:

- a) The recommendation is for Warrae Wannu to continue. There are several scenarios for the future that need exploration with a view to ensuring the sustainability of Warrae Wannu and the development of further strategies to build engagement of the local community with the school and other services. These include:
 - i) a joint venture with TAFE including building redevelopment and strategic partnership
 - ii) collaboration with Muswellbrook Preschool and/or other stakeholders to ensure the sustainability of the existing program; and
 - iii) exploration of opportunities that will arise as a consequence if the South Side Community Services Centre proceed (i.e. alternative uses for the existing Muswellbrook Child Care site).

Each of these options requires further exploration. To be successful future developments will need to build on the key ingredients of the existing program.

B. Implementation recommendations

g) Community Health

There is a shortage of Speech Pathology and OT services for children. There are long waiting times for Speech Pathology and OT assessments and services. There is a shortage of private practitioners in the local area in allied health services including Speech Pathology and other children's services.

Medicare Locals are a new national network of primary health care organisations. Medicare Locals are independent legal entities having strong links to their local communities, health professionals, service providers, consumers and patient groups. They are able to get funding for primary health care. In 2013 there will be consultations by Medicare Locals covering the local area.

Recommendation:

a) The priorities are:

i) participation in consultations and work with Medicare Locals in relation to children's services allied health needs such as Speech Pathology and OT (including the provision of local data identifying needs);

ii) working with other children's services on identifying and collaborating on opportunities to make up the shortfall in Speech Pathology and OT services.

Given the resource limitations creative, collaborative strategies are required.

Where resources are available there are strategies for example, collaborating with schools, long day care and preschools in running "Language Development Partnership Modules". NSW Health charges for these services and so service providers may require financial support to participate.

Note: these priorities are for children's services providers as well as Community Health services.

B. Implementation recommendations

h) South Side Community Services and Long Day Care Centre: Muswellbrook Shire Council & service providers

Muswellbrook does not have a community services centre on the south side of Muswellbrook that is a focal point for the community and integrates a range of community services.

The current situation

The Muswellbrook Child Care Centre needs to expand the number of long day care places. While it could possibly expand by one room on its existing site any further expansion would also require expanded administration, foyer area, staff area etc. Muswellbrook Child Care Centre does not include any community space, e.g. there is not a spare room for parents meetings or a playgroup. While Muswellbrook Child Care Centre does an excellent job of building connections with the local community within its existing facilities it would be able to make a larger community contribution if there were an extra community use room.

The current facilities for MOOSH and Toy Box while superficially spacious are quite inadequate and while they can theoretically be used during the day for other activities (when not used for before and after school care) there are practical limitations to this. For example, the space is set up for before and after school care and so running a playgroup with young children in the space raises safety issues and also organisational issues - the room having to be set up again for after school care.

The existing facilities at Skelletar Street do not include spaces for visiting services.

The existing facilities at Skelletar Street are not at a central place in the community where people go for other things as well (e.g. near a shopping centre).

What's proposed

What's proposed is a community services centre on the south side of Muswellbrook that is a focal point for the community and integrates a range of community services.

The South Side Community Services Centre could include:

- a) Long day care centre with a spare room for community use
- b) Offices for existing services at the Skelletar St site - Toy Box and MOOSH; and space for children in before and after school care
- c) Offices for additional community services such as Upper Hunter Community Services and visiting services.

The South Side Community Services Centre would not include such things as a large community hall.

The recommended location for the Centre is in the vicinity of Rutherford Road / Cassidy Avenue / Highbrook Park.

This location has the important benefit of being part of a place where the community comes for other reasons e.g. shopping, skate park, Indoor Sports Centre etc.

It is central to the whole of the south side of Muswellbrook. It is within walking distance of much of the south side of Muswellbrook.

In the long term locating the Centre here will significantly improve the connections and integration of all parts of the south side community.

Once a new Muswellbrook Child Care Centre was completed as part of the South Side Community Services Centre the existing Muswellbrook Child Care Centre could be used as a place for local community activities, access to services. It could then replace (and be an expanded) Hunter Park Family Centre.

B. Implementation recommendations

Recommendations:

- a) The Muswellbrook Council Community Services establish a working party to further explore this proposed South Side Community Services Centre and identify more concrete options re land and facilities and alternative proposals is necessary
- b) The process include consultations with all relevant stakeholders
- c) That after the necessary explorations specific recommendation are developed and put to all relevant stakeholders.

I) Muswellbrook Child Care Centre

Recommendation

Muswellbrook Child Care Centre be expanded and redeveloped as part of the South Side Community Services Centre.

See above for details of this redevelopment.

In this redevelopment Muswellbrook Child Care Community Centre will remain a community based centre.

B. Implementation recommendations

j) Denman Children's Centre

Denman Children's Centre currently has limited hours day care, preschool places and preschool Denman Children's Centre to be redeveloped, relocated and expanded (initially by 20 places (from 39 to 60) with an option of a further expansion to 80 places in the long term future).

Denman Children's Centre is licensed as a preschool with 39 places and within that license it offers limited hours day care, preschool places and preschool extended hours and care for preschoolers outside term time when the preschool is not operating. The quality of the Denman Children's Centre building is poor in relation to its use.

The recommendation is that Denman Children's Centre be redeveloped to enable expanded places and extended hours and operate as both a LDC centre and a preschool (each with their separate license).

If Denman were to provide all the long day care and preschool places required in Denman and the surrounding areas to the east, west and south then approximately 40 long day care places and 20 preschool places would be required (with possible expansion in the future as Denman grows).

Denman Children's Centre does not have the capital to undertake such an expansion. The expansion will require capital investment from others.

Any redevelopment of Denman Children's Centre as a community based centre to be premised on:

- The redeveloped centre will be designed for future flexible growth, i.e.

 - New rooms are larger rooms e.g. for 30 (so they can be used as rooms for 20, 25 or 30 and continue to meet licensing requirements as needs change)

 - Additional rooms can be added later

 - The space for staff and parents is adequate to care for future expansion.

- The Centre will be part of strategies to outreach to the whole community.

- The Centre will provide a community space for such activities as supported playgroups, meetings of Family Day Care staff, parenting groups.

The Centre is currently located in the Denman Recreation Reserve. The Centre also has a lease on Crown land in Rosemount Street. This site could be used to undertake a new development.

Alternatively the Muswellbrook Shire Council could provide land (through a lease or other arrangements) within the Denman Recreation Reserve near the existing Denman Children's Centre site.

If the Council did this (with similar conditions to the lease the Denman Children's Centre has on the Crown land in Rosemount Street) there would be a choice of sites with pros and cons in relation to each site.

A feasibility study is required to identify the most appropriate location and option for the chosen location as well as to ensure the re-structured services are operationally possible and sustainable.

To ensure that it is a viable development for the Denman Children's Centre, the Centre will require:

1. A Strategic Plan which includes its mission, vision and values, strategic directions, goals and strategies for achieving them
2. A Feasibility study to identify the most appropriate location and structural arrangements (for example, if near the existing site in the Denman Recreation Reserve what is the relationship between the old and new building; if on the new site what are the pros and cons?)
2. A Business Plan that includes the business case for the viability of the Preschool taking into account the requirements of the Early Learning Framework and the new National Quality Framework and related regulations and the impact these will have on staffing availability and staff ratios.

B. Implementation recommendations

3. A Project Management Plan for the construction of proposed new buildings, including plans, budget and project management

Recommendation:

- a) The redevelopment of Denman Children's Centre proceed within the light of these plans if viable, affordable and sustainable.

Note: Denman Children's Centre will require professional support in developing a Strategic Plan, a Feasibility Study to identify the most appropriate site and structural arrangements, a Business Plan and a Project Management plan. The Community Services Muswellbrook Shire Council could play a useful role in working with Denman Children's Centre to determine an appropriate strategy for supporting Denman Children's Centre in obtaining the professional support it requires to plan for the above re-development.

B. Implementation recommendations

k) Future capital development for community based services: Muswellbrook Shire Council to facilitate public discussions

For the future the questions are:

Should there be a Muswellbrook community development fund established that is used for future capital development of community based centres?

Should organisations operating in Muswellbrook go guarantor for capital investment loans that community organisations then use for the redevelopment of their facilities.

Should the existing not for profit community based organisations be required to be putting money aside for their own future development and expansion (and if so what are the implications in the present)?

Should the existing not for profit community based organisations be support by the community including through council (e.g. token rent rather than commercial rents, etc) to allow them to extend services to the community in ways one would not expect a private provider to do (e.g. providing space for community use, offering supported playgroups).

These questions require public discussion.

It would be useful if there were agreed answers to these questions within the Muswellbrook Shire to provide some certainty about future capital development of not for profit community based centres.

Recommendation:

- a) That Muswellbrook Shire Council consider these issues and develop an appropriate process to address them in a way which will add certainty to meeting the future capital needs for community buildings such as community based long day care centres and preschools.

B. Implementation recommendations

C. Immediate Next Steps

The immediate next steps to continue implementation of the strategic plan are:

a) Early Years Development Network

The Early Years Development Network have as priorities for the first half of 2013:

- Community information and awareness
- Kindergarten 2013 intake data - gathering the data and working on the implications
- Review of the 2012 AEDI data when it is available in 2013
- Whole of community engagement strategy (see page 38).

b) Upper Hunter Community Services

Upper Hunter Community Services take on the lead role for the *Community Engagement Strategy* and provide support for this strategy with the appointment of the new community development positions in early 2013(see page 38). All stakeholders fully participate in this strategy

c) Community Services Muswellbrook Shire Council

Community Services:

- i) Continue with lead role for the Early Years Development Network and provide additional support for this role with the appointment of the new Community Development Officer position in Community Services in early 2013 (see page 35)
- ii) Build an annual review of the implementation of the Children's Services Strategic Plan into its annual work plan; this will allow the plan to be reviewed and emerging issues to be incorporated; the review of the plan would be done in collaboration with the Early Years Development Network.
- iii) Facilitate other meetings as appropriate, e.g. meeting of Centres to explore management support options

e) Muswellbrook Shire Council

Muswellbrook Shire Council:

- i) Consider the recommendation for a *South Side Community Services Centre* (including LDC, community and health services etc) and establish a process to develop concrete options and alternatives in consultation with relevant stakeholders (see page 40).
- ii) Consider the recommendation for *Clarifying answers to questions about the future capital development for community based services* and establish a process of public discussion to achieve this (see page 47).

f) Other agencies

Other agencies work on their priorities including identifying possible sources of funding to achieve relevant priorities including:

- Tillys proposed expansion to 71 LDC places
- Upper Hunter Family Day Care expansion by 6 Educators
- Muswellbrook Public School additional room
- Denman's Children Centre redevelopment
- Community Health working further on Speech Pathology and OT options
- Community preschools and LDC explore governance and management support options.

C. Immediate Next Steps

Attachments: Supporting Evidence

- 1. Children's Services Stakeholders**
- 2. The strategic planning process**
- 3. Muswellbrook Shire (and Aberdeen)**
 - Population and employment data
- 4. Children's Services Providers**
 - Childcare Centres and Preschools
 - Community Health
 - Primary Schools
 - MOOSH and Toy Box
- 5. FDC, Centres & Preschools current children, families and waiting lists**
 - Current families
 - Waiting lists data
- 6. ABS and other Child Care and Preschool data**
- 7. Primary School Readiness data**
- 8. LDC and Preschool places for current and future needs**
- 9. Data collection Instructions and Forms**
- 10. Summary Strategic Plan**
- 11. Project Agreement**

Attachments

Attachment 1

Children's Services Stakeholders

Service provider and other stakeholders

The following is a list of service provider stakeholders participating in the strategic planning process. Some stakeholders participated fully from the beginning of the process. Some were identified during the strategic planning process and participated later in the process.

A. Childcare Centres, Preschools and Family Day Care

Aberdeen Preschool

Aberdeen Preschool, 34 Bedford St, Aberdeen

Denman Children's Centre

Lot 229 Turner St (Denman Sporting Complex) Ogilvie St Denman
Child care for children aged 0 - 5 years
Preschool for children aged 4 - 5 years
Occasional care

Goodstart Early Learning Centre

14 – 18 Brentwood St Muswellbrook
Long day care: 6 weeks – 6 years

Muswellbrook Pre School Kindergarten

109-111 Hill St Muswellbrook

Muswellbrook Child Care Centre

Skellatar St (between Lorne and Mitchell Streets) Muswellbrook
Long day care: Children 0 - 5 years

New Train

Nearest office to Muswellbrook
86 Barnes Street Tamworth
Family day care

Strathern

Scone
Proposed Strathern development for 90 preschool places in Scone

Tillys Play and Development Centre

32 Bimbadeen Drive Muswellbrook
Long day care: 6 weeks – 6 years

Upper Hunter Family Day Care

Council Administration Centre, Scone

B. Out of School Hours Care and Playgroups

MOOSH

Skellatar St (between Lorne and Mitchell Streets), Muswellbrook
Child care activities before and after school and during vacation periods

Toy Box

Skellatar St (between Lorne and Mitchell Streets), Muswellbrook
Provides playgroup activities for 0-6 years as an outreach service to isolated rural areas in the Muswellbrook, Singleton and Upper Hunter Shires.

Playgroups

There are multiple playgroups in Muswellbrook and elsewhere in the Shire.
Family Insight (Hamilton) supports some of the playgroups.

C. Community Health services

Hunter New England Local Health District (HNE LHD)
Upper Hunter Community Health Centre, Weidman Wing, Muswellbrook Hospital Campus
Services include: Speech Pathology, OT, Audiometry, Vision testing, Child and Family Nurse, Immunisation.

D. Schools

Muswellbrook Public School Roger St, Muswellbrook	Primary	Govt	K-6	560	Indig 7%
Muswellbrook South Public School Maitland St, Muswellbrook	Primary	Govt	K-6	400	Indig 26%
St James Primary School Skellatar Stock Route, Muswellbrook	Primary	Catholic	K-6	300	Indig 4%
Denman Public School Denman	Primary	Govt	K-6	200	Indig 2%
Muswellbrook Christian School 100 Hill St Muswellbrook	Primary	Non-govt	K-6	15	Indig 0%
St Joseph's Primary School	Primary	Catholic	K-6	75	Indig 0%
Martindale Public School	Primary	Govt	K-6	19	Indig 21%
Sandy Hollow Public School	Primary	Govt	K-6	54	Indig 9%

Data in table above: 2011 data.

E. Community Services

Upper Hunter Community Services

including

- Hunter Park Family Centre
- MOOSH
- Toy Box
- Upper Hunter Family Support
- Aboriginal Family Worker

F. Departments

NSW Department of Family and Community Services

NSW Department of Education and Communities

G. Mining companies

BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal
Inter-Mining Meeting

Attachment 1
Children's Services Stakeholders

Attachment 2

The Strategic Planning Process

A study commissioned by BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal in September 2010 identified a need for enhanced support for, and increased access to, early childhood education, childcare facilities and the associated children's services in the Muswellbrook Shire region.

BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal's Community Development Fund subsequently funded a project to develop a strategic plan for Children's Services in the Muswellbrook Shire.

Muswellbrook Shire Council auspiced the Children's Services Strategic Planning project and appointed an independent consultant to work on the Project with Muswellbrook Shire Council's Community Services staff.

Establishment

There was an **initial meeting of all stakeholders on 22nd February 2012** to introduce the project and the proposed strategic planning process.

The goal for the strategic plan was agreed:

Sustainable and quality children's services across the Muswellbrook Shire:

- Sufficient children's services places (incl centre based, family day care and out of school hours care)
- To meet current and future needs
- Through the provision of quality services
- That are accessible (in particular by Aboriginal, CALD, children with disabilities, shift working families, and others experiencing barriers to access)
- That enhance school readiness.

Individual stakeholder meetings

In March and April 2012 the consultant met individually with all of the stakeholders including:

- Children's services - pre-schools, child care centres, MOOSH etc
- Schools
- Other services (e.g. Community Health).

These meetings focussed on:

- What's your organisation's story
- What do you do?
- What are your plans?
- What are the issues that need to be addressed in relation to improving children's services in the Muswellbrook Shire?

Stakeholder's reviewing issues & data required

There was a **second meeting of all stakeholders on 29th March** which

- Reviewed the issues emerging
- Reviewed the data required to develop a robust plan
- Planned steps for gathering the relevant data.

Issues emerging

Some of the significant issues that were initially explored at the meeting on 22nd February and further discussed in the visits to Children's services and Schools were:

- The shortage of child care and pre-school places
- Staffing and training of staff
- Facilities
- School readiness
- Networking across services
- Connecting with those who are not connecting with services / missing out
- The availability of specialist services (e.g. Speech Pathology, OT).

The visits to Children's services also identified centre/service specific issues including for example:

- Plans for development of facilities
- Ideas for connections between children's services and other services and the appropriateness of buildings/facilities to achieve this
- The impact of the National Quality Framework & the Early Childhood Learning Framework
- The limits of existing resources within services to pay for services required.

Data required

All those present at the meeting on 29 March agreed they wanted a robust strategic plan based on sound data (rather than a plan with minimal data) and they agreed to provide the data necessary for a robust plan. The data required included:

- Centres/Services occupancy data
- Population census data
- Description of current users of Centres/Services that can be compared with the census data
- Employment projections from mining companies for the next 5+ years
- Master waiting list of all those waiting for places - with no duplication.
- The impact for those currently on the waiting list for places of the lack of places
- Method for identifying those who are missing out
- Description of who is less School ready - and whether or not they had prior access to pre-schools, child-care places, etc.
- Playgroups - what playgroups exist?

See *Attachment 9 Data collection Instructions and Forms* for details.

Data gathering and analysis

During May and June stakeholders gathered relevant data using the forms provided.

The ABS released the first round of 2011 Census Data on 21 June 2011

The data was analysed. See Attachments 5, 6, 7 and 8 for details.

Reviewing the data

There was a **meeting on 10 August of those stakeholders directly involved with long day care, family day care and preschools to review the data and data analysis.**

The meeting discussed the data:

- Population trends
- Child care and Preschool places - what places there are; what's needed
- Current users of child care and pre-schools
- Waiting lists for child care and pre-schools.

Big questions that were worked on were:

- What places do we have? What's required? How do we know? What's the difference?
- What about the quality of the buildings?
- What's the best strategy for getting the required places? With appropriate quality?
- What buildings? Where?
- What are appropriate & possible ways to resource what's required?

There were some surprises in this meeting:

- The anecdotes about growth in the number of children in Muswellbrook did not match the census data showing a decrease in the number of children in Muswellbrook from the 2006 to 2011 Census.
- The number of preschool places seemed to be more than what was required.
- The gap in the long day care places seemed smaller than expected.

There was discussion about possible reasons for these surprises. Questions included:

Was the Muswellbrook work force (and proportions of one and two parent families (with parents working / not working) similar to or different from elsewhere in NSW?

Were there other characteristics about Muswellbrook that made it unique and created additional demands for long day care?

The data previously collected from Centres about current children and families had not included the actual hours for each child in care/preschool. Basing the analysis on actual hours for each child in care/preschool could make a significant difference compared to basing it on the number of children.

It was agreed that:

- a) Centres would provide additional data about the actual hours for each child each day so that a more complete analysis could be undertaken.
- b) the final Strategic Plan would wait for the ABS to release the 2011 Census employment data on 30th October 2011 because this could have a significant impact on identifying unmet need and long day care and preschool places required.

Further data gathering

During September and October Centres provided additional data about the actual hours of care/preschool for each child each day. This data proved to be essential in understanding the current usage and future needs for long day care and preschools in Muswellbrook (and Aberdeen).

Attachment 2

The Strategic Planning Process

The ABS released further 2011 Census data, in particular employment related data on 30th October 2012. This data showed that Muswellbrook LGA was not different to the rest of NSW in relation to characteristics such as the proportion of one and two parent families (with working/not working parents) and other characteristics that impact on long day care, family day care and preschool usage.

The additional data was analysed and a model developed for identifying the number of additional long day care and preschool places required in Muswellbrook. See Attachment 8 for details.

A phone survey of a sample of people on waiting lists for centres was planned and begun. After the first 30 calls it was clear that the waiting lists were not the most useful data for understanding demand and so the phone survey was discontinued. Some of the anecdotes from the interviews included:

- Our care needs have been met, but we are still on the waiting list in case we need it in the future.
- Our child is already at a centre but we would prefer her to be at a different centre so we are still on their waiting list
- One of our children is on the waiting list. We are now expecting another one we will also need care for.

See Attachment 5 for details.

Further consultations with individual stakeholders

During October and November 2012 there were further face to face consultations with individual stakeholders including Denman Children's Centre, Upper Hunter Family Support, Muswellbrook Preschool, Muswellbrook Shire Council and BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal and telephone interviews and email consultations with many other stakeholders to clarify details of particular proposals and recommendations.

Draft plan

A draft Strategic Plan was prepared by early November and revised through several iterations until a final draft plan was presented at a meeting of all stakeholders on 16 November 2012.

That meeting fully support the five strategies in the plan and a significant majority of people at the meeting supported each of the principal recommendations.

There were a number of suggestions for improvements to the draft plan. All of these suggestions were incorporated in the final plan (unless they were outside the terms of reference of the plan).

Final Draft Strategic Plan

The Final Draft Children's Services Strategic Plan 2013 to 2015 was finalised by 23rd November.

Strategic Plan

After feedback on the final draft from Muswellbrook Council Community Services and BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal the plan was finalised.

Attachment 3 Muswellbrook Shire (and Aberdeen)

The follow are based on ABS Census data from 2006 and 2011. A “suburb” in the tables below is the respective ABS geographic area.

Muswellbrook Shire LGA

LGA	2006	2011
People	15236	15791
Families	3964	4003
Children 0-4	1254	1246
Children 5-14	2438	2358

Muswellbrook Suburb (town and surrounding area)

Muswellbrook Suburb	2006	2011
People	10707	11791
Families	2796	2994
Children 0-4	948	972
Children 5-14	1753	1730

Muswellbrook LGA (showing individual suburbs) & Aberdeen , Scone and Merriwa

REGION	2006		2011	
Suburbs	Population	Children 0-4	Population	Children 0-4
Muswellbrook	10707	948	11791	972
Castle Rock	401	23	329	23
Muscle Creek	373	32	522	37
Denman	1953	149	1,801	120
Martindale	268	28	434	19
Sandy Hollow	261	28	401	40
Giants Creek	191	14	196	9
Aberdeen	1791	134	2039	147
Scone	5078	339	5478	411
Merriwa	1673	105	1790	131

Attachment 3
Muswellbrook Shire (and Aberdeen)

Muswellbrook LGA & NSW

The following table is based on data from the ABS 2011 Census and shows comparisons between Muswellbrook LGA and NSW as a whole.

	Muswellbrook LGA	NSW
Population	15,791	6,917,658
Families	4,003	
0- 4 years	1,246	
% 0-4 years	7.9%	6.6%
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders	5.4%	2.5%
Couple families with children	44.7 % of families	44.5 % of families
One parent families	16.5% of families	16.3% of families
Attending a preschool	6.7% of those in education (355 children)	5.9%
Country of Birth Australia	86.4%	69.8%
15 and over employed full-time	40%	41%
15 and over employed part time	39%	40%
Employed people 15 and over Coal mining	18.5%	0.6%
Family households	71.1% of households	71.9 % of households
Less than \$600 gross weekly income	21.5%	24.2%
More than \$3,000 gross weekly income	13.6%	12.3%

Attachment 4

Children's Services Providers

This attachment provides descriptions of children's service providers in Muswellbrook (and Aberdeen).

- A. Childcare Centres, Preschools and Family Day Care**
- B. Out of School Hours Care and Playgroups**
- C. Community Health services**
- D. Schools**

A. CHILDCARE CENTRES, PRESCHOOLS AND FAMILY DAY CARE

Aberdeen Preschool

Aberdeen Preschool, 34 Bedford St, Aberdeen

History

Aberdeen Preschool has operated since 1977. The land was donated and the Lions Club supplied the building. The Preschool is not for profit and community based. It has a parent Management Committee.

The land and building are both owned by the Aberdeen Preschool. The current building and playground are suitable for 30 places. Any increase above 30 places would require structural changes/redevelopment.

There are no current plans for expansion.

Operations

Hours: 9.15am to 3.15pm school terms

Places: Licensed to 30 places per day

Mon, Tues, Thur & Frid: 4 to 5 year olds day class the year before school (a few 3 year olds do come on these days e.g. 3 and 5 year old siblings).

Wed: 3 year old class

Fees: \$20.00 per day

Denman Children's Centre

Lot 229 Turner St (Denman Recreation Reserve) Ogilvie St Denman

History

The Centre started in 1989 as a multi-purpose Centre. It is located in the Denman Recreation Reserve. It started as a one room centre and was later expanded with community support.

The Centre is a not for profit community organisation. It is incorporated and has a Management Committee of parents and interested members of the community.

The Centre is licensed as a preschool with 39 places and within that licence it offers limited hours day care, preschool places and preschool extended hours and care for preschoolers outside term time when the preschool is not operating.

The quality of the Denman Children's Centre building is poor in relation to its use.

The Centre has a 99 year lease on land at a separate vacant site in Rosemount St Denman.

The Centre has plans for redevelopment with community support.

Operations

The centre is licensed for:

- 34 preschool places
- 5 occasional care places
- 39 total places

Rooms

Discoverers Room - 4 to 6 Years for up to 20 children

Explorers Room - 2 to 4 Years for up to 16 children

Nursery - 6 Weeks to 2 Years for up to 4 children

Weeks open

The Centre operates 49 weeks of the year closing over the Christmas period.

Preschool is run during NSW school terms but care is available during the school holidays in the Explorers Room using extended hours.

Fees

Parents holding a low income health care card or pension have access to a subsidised rate.

	Hours	Full Rate per Day	Subsidised Rate
Preschool Discoverers & Explorers	9.00 - 3.00	\$27.00	\$10.80
Extended Preschool	8.30 - 4.00	\$30.00	\$12.00
Extended Preschool	8.30 - 5.00	\$35.00	\$15.00
Nursery	8.30- 4.00	\$37.00	n/a
Extended Nursery	8.30 - 5.00	\$40.00	n/a

Goodstart Early Learning Centre

14 – 18 Brentwood St Muswellbrook

History

Goodstart Early Learning Centre in Muswellbrook was previously ABC Learning. It opened as ABC Learning in 2005 as a 76 place centre with a new building. The land is leased from the Hospital.

Goodstart Early Learning was founded by the Brotherhood of St Laurence, The Benevolent Society, Social Ventures Australia and Mission Australia. Goodstart Early Learning is a not for profit organisation.

ABC Learning in Muswellbrook was one of the many ABC Learning Centres purchased by Goodstart Early Learning following ABC Learning's voluntary liquidation in 2009.

Goodstart Early Learning is also a Registered Training Organisation.

There are no plans for the expansion or redevelopment of Goodstart Early Learning Centre in Muswellbrook.

Operations

Licensed for 76 places.

Rooms:

Nursery	20 places	0 to 2 years
Toddlers	16 places	2 to 3 years
Pre-Kindy	20 places	3 to 4 years
Preschool	20 places	4 to 5 years

Opening hours 6:30 AM to 6:30 PM Monday to Friday

Muswellbrook Child Care Centre

Skellatar St (between Lorne and Mitchell Streets) Muswellbrook

History

Muswellbrook Child Care Centre has been operating in Muswellbrook since 1982 at its current site.

The land and building belong to the Muswellbrook Shire Council.

The Centre is a not for profit community organisation. It is incorporated and has a Management Committee of parents and interested members of the community.

Operations

Places

Licensed for 30 places. Operational for 29 places 0-5 years of age.

Rooms

The Koala Room - Nursery

10 children per day 0 - 3 years of age

4 children per day under 2 years of age

6 children per day from 2 - 3 years of age

The Penguin Room - Preschool

19 Children per day 3 - 6 years of age.

Opening hours : 7:30am - 5:45pm, Monday to Friday, 48 weeks fo the year

(closed for 3 weeks over the Christmas period and Public Holidays during the year)

Fees: From January 2013 there is a two tiered fee structure:

\$70.00 per day for 0 to 2 year olds

\$65.00 per day for 2 to 6 year olds.

Muswellbrook Pre School Kindergarten

109-111 Hill St Muswellbrook

History

In 1964 a group of interested parents held a public meeting with the aim of establishing a caring environment for children – a Pre School. The Pre School Kindergarten opened in the then Methodist Hall in Bridge Street, Muswellbrook in February 1965. In 1967 it moved to the current site.

The site was redeveloped with a Government grant in 1996 and 1997 and new buildings opened 1988.

Muswellbrook Pre School Kindergarten is a not for profit community organisation. It is incorporated and has a Management Committee of parents and interested members of the community.

The Preschool owns the land and buildings. It also purchased two adjacent blocks of land in 2010 and 2011 with a view to expansion.

Muswellbrook Shire Council has approved a Development Application, with conditions, to expand the Preschool using the two adjacent blocks of land.

Operations

The Preschool holds two pre-school licenses: 60 and 20 places respectively. Total places: 80.

Four and five year olds are offered up to 3 days each in the year before school

A maximum of 60 three year olds are offered one day each.

There are 4 rooms of 20 places each.

Room 1 4&5 year olds

Room 2 4&5 year olds

Room 3 4&5 year olds

Room 4 Mon-Tues is 3 and 4 year olds ; Wed-Fri is 3 year olds

Opening hours: 9am to 3pm, Monday to Friday during school terms.

Fees: 2013: \$33 per day and \$21 subsidy in 2013

New Train

Office nearest to Muswellbrook
86 Barnes Street Tamworth NSW

NewTrain is a not-for-profit registered charity and offers a number of fee-for-service and government funded services and programs. It is also a Registered Training Organisation.

As one of its services NewTrain provides services and training to Family Day Carers located across New South Wales.

NewTrain has 5 Family Day Carers in the Muswellbrook Shire.

NewTrain recruits, trains and resources carers, as well as supports and monitors individual carer services.

NewTrain's role in the Family Day Care program is to support the standards of Family Day Care. NewTrain discuss childcare needs, provide information and assist families to find the right carer and environment for their child. NewTrain monitors the child's wellbeing, learning and progress.

NewTrain works in partnership with Family Day Carers to meet required legislation, national standards and the formal Family Day Care quality assurance system. Carers are visited regularly by trained field workers.

Note: NewTrain did not have a face to face interview early in the strategic planning process. NewTrain was consulted by phone and email towards the end of the strategic planning process.

Tillys Play and Development Centre

32 Bimbadeen Drive Muswellbrook

History

Tillys Play and Development Centre was previously Kate's Kindy which was built as part of the new housing estate in February 2007.

Kate's Kindy was purchased by Tillys in August 2010.

Tillys Play & Development Centres are privately owned, family run child care centres owned and operated by Ron and Donna MacIntyre and their family. They have worked in Child Care for more than 25 years. Tillys runs Centres in Abermain, Dungog, , Waratah, Singleton Heights, Muswellbrook & Greta.

Tillys is also a Registered Training Organisation and offers both Certificate III and Diploma of Children's Services.

The land and building are owned by a landlord. Tillys rents the building.

The Centre is currently a 48 place Centre and Tillys wishes to expand it to a 71 place Centre and is in discussions with the landlord about the expansion.

Operations

Licensed Places: 48

Rooms:

0 - 2 years	12 places
2 - 3 years	16 places
3 - 6 years	20 places

Opening hours: 6.30am – 6.30pm, Monday to Friday, 51 weeks of the year (except public holidays and closed one week over the Christmas/New Year break)

Fees:

0 - 2 year olds	\$83
2 - 3 year olds	\$80
3 - 6 year olds	\$78

Upper Hunter Family Day Care

Upper Hunter Shire Council Administration
135 Liverpool St, Scone

History and program

Family Day Care is a network of qualified and registered Educators who provide quality education and care from their own home environments for children aged birth (0) to twelve (12) years. The Upper Hunter Family Day Care scheme has been operating since 1979. The Coordination Unit is based at the Upper Hunter Shire Council in Scone, although the Scheme serves both Muswellbrook and Upper Hunter Shires. Family Day Care is licensed to operate 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, 52 weeks per year.

Family Day Care is available to all families in all situations and this can include care for children whose parents/guardians are:

- working full-time
- working part-time
- studying
- need time out.

Types of care available are diverse and can include:

- full-time, part-time, occasional
- before and after school
- vacation
- weekend
- evening / overnight
- 24-hour (for eligible families)
- emergency
- respite.

Children are nurtured and receive personalised attention in small group settings of no more than five (5) pre-school aged children, and up to seven (7) children in total. Individualised and play-based programs are designed by the Educators to further develop and enhance children's learning and development in a family environment.

Eligible families receive Child Care benefit (CCB) and Child Care Rebate (CCR) government assistance with the cost of child care fees.

Upper Hunter Family Day Care is registered to facilitate the provision of In-Home Child Care to families in eligible circumstances. This is where a registered Educator provides a care and education service in the home of an individual client family.

Operations

The scheme operates under a National Quality Framework of Law and Regulations, Standards, and a Rating and Assessment system. The Federal government supplies partial operational funding assistance.

Qualified and experienced staff are employed in the Coordination Unit, who recruit Educators and provide orientation, as well as supporting and monitoring the Educators. The Coordination Unit also assists in arranging care placement for families. The Coordination Unit ensures all regulatory, funding, administrative and operational obligations are maintained.

Attachment 4 Children's Services Providers

The Educators each run their own business and provide quality care and education programs for children.

There are currently approximately 20 Educators in the Scheme across Muswellbrook, Denman, Aberdeen, Scone, Merriwa and Murrurundi.

In June 2012 there were 14 Educators in Muswellbrook, Denman and Aberdeen.

In June 2012 each Educator in Muswellbrook, Denman and Aberdeen provided an average 4.4 equivalent full-time (EFT) places. An EFT place is 35 hours of care per week.

These 14 Educators provided care to approximately 90 families with 110 children, the equivalent amount of care as a LDC Centre of approximately 50 places.

The ratios of pre-school children to Educators will change from in 2014 with the implementation of the National Quality Framework. This will effectively reduce the maximum number of pre-school aged care places per Educator by one, however there will be no change to the overall total number of children (7) an Educator may place.

As part of the National Quality Framework implementation all Educators need to have or be actively completing their Certificate III in Child Care. Educators are also required to hold First Aid and emergency Asthma and Anaphylaxis management qualifications. They must hold Public Liability Insurance at all times.

B. OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS CARE AND PLAYGROUPS

MOOSH - Muswellbrook Out of School Hours

Skellatar St (between Lorne and Mitchell Streets), Muswellbrook

History and service

MOOSH began in 1997 as a private service. In 2001 it became part of Upper Hunter Community Services.

It provides care for 5 to 12 year olds before school, after school, during vacations and pupil free days.

It operates from a Muswellbrook Shire Council building and pays rent.

Operations

MOOSH is for 5 to 12 year olds.

Before School: 6.30am till 9.00 am (licensed for a maximum of 30 places; 10 to 15 students typical)

After School: 3.00pm till 6.00pm (licensed for a maximum of 45 places; 30 students typical)

Vacation care: 11 hours per day for approximately 45 to 50 days a year (with 35 students per day typical).

Osborne's buses provide transport from MOOSH to schools and from the schools to MOOSH. Taxis are used for special needs students.

The majority of students attending come from Muswellbrook Public School, Muswellbrook South Public School and St James. Some students come from Muswellbrook Christian School, Aberdeen Public School, Denman Public School and Scone Grammar.

Playgroups in Muswellbrook

There are several playgroups operating in Muswellbrook (and elsewhere in the Shire).

The following are within Muswellbrook town and were operating at October 2012.

a) Muswellbrook South School Playgroup

at Muswellbrook South Public
Supported by Family Insight

b) Happy Campers Playgroup

at Stan Thiess Centre

c) Playtime

at Brookside - Baptist Church Hall

d) Pooh bear Playgroup

at MOOSH

e) Trinity Playgroup

Community playgroup

f) Playtime

at Hunter Park Family Centre

Note: Playgroups did not have a face to face interview in the strategic planning process.

Toy Box

Bowman Park Community Centre Skellatar St. Muswellbrook

The service

Toy Box is a mobile playgroup for 0 to 6 year olds in socially isolated families, geographically isolated families and families that have restricted or limited access to preschools.

It owns two trucks which it uses to go to the venues (with equipment and resources).

It has 3 permanent part time staff, 2 casuals and 1 volunteer.

In 2009 Toy Box became part of Upper Hunter Community Services prior to that it had its own separate Committee.

Operations

Toy Box provides playgroup activities for 0-6 years as an outreach service to isolated rural areas in the Muswellbrook, Singleton and Upper Hunter Shires.

Toy Box visits 13 venues once a fortnight. Some families go to 2 venues and so they see Toy Box once a week.

The furthest venue is just under 2 hours from Muswellbrook, some venues are about an hour away and a couple are 15 to 20 minutes away.

In 2012 there were approximately 125 families with 170 children registered .

Numbers of children attending each venue vary from about 6 to 25 children.

C. COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES

Upper Hunter Community Health Hunter New England Local Health District (HNE LHD)

Upper Hunter Community Health Centre
Weidman Wing
Muswellbrook Hospital Campus

Centre based and outreach services delivered across Muswellbrook and Upper Hunter Shire LGAs and parts of Liverpool Plains Shire

In relation to children aged 5 years and under services offered include:

Health Screening: As per the blue book for children from birth to 5 years of age

Child and Family Health Nurses: Identify and provide advice on behavioural, emotional, physical, nutrition/feeding and developmental issues in babies and children up to 5 years of age. Ongoing referral to appropriate service providers is suggested as required. Child & Family Health Nurses endeavour to see all new babies within the first 2 weeks of life in their own homes and then we invite them to visit us in our centres.

Nurse Audiometrists provide hearing assessment and referral to appropriate service providers as required. Audiometry is available by booking through Upper Hunter Community Health.

Vision Screening: is provided through the State-wide Eyesight Pre-schooler Screening (StEPS) Program. This offers preschool based vision screening for 4 year old children and referral as required through appropriate pathways.

Occupational Therapy can offer assessment and treatment to children who are experiencing difficulties in their functional skills at home, at preschool/school or during play. This may be in the domain of gross motor skills, fine motor skills, sensory processing or perceptual development. Service priorities are preterm babies or children with medical conditions: 0-5 year olds who are not meeting developmental milestones.

Speech Pathology can offer assessment and treatment to children who are experiencing difficulties in the areas of speech, using and understanding language, voice, stuttering and swallowing.

Specialist Clinics: Kaleidoscope is HNE LHD's Children's Health network linking clinical services for children, young people and their families. Part of the provision of services under Kaleidoscope includes monthly outreach Paediatric clinics and Child and Family Team clinics at Muswellbrook Health Campus.

There may be waiting lists for some services and these are determined by district wide clinical priorities.

Partnerships and Fee for Service Arrangements

Upper Hunter Community Health are able to provide services in partnership with others on a fee for service basis (e.g. Language Development Partnership Program).

**Attachment 4
Children's Services Providers**

D. SCHOOLS

School (2011 data; 2010 data*)	Years	Total enrolments	School ICSEA value	ICSEA distribution				Indigenous	CALD
				Bottom	Middle	Middle	Top		
Muswellbrook Public School	K - 6	563	951	36%	28%	29%	8%	7%	3%
Muswellbrook South Public School	K - 6	366	852	72%*	16%*	9%*	3%*	25%	1%
St James Primary School	K - 6	287	993	38%	18%	37%	6%	5%	1%
Denman Public School	K - 6	209	969	39%	31%	28%	3%	3%	3%
Muswellbrook Christian School	K - 5	23	1040	0%	75%	25%	0%	17%	0%
St Joseph's Primary School	K - 6	76	1007	53%	12%	35%	0%	0%	0%
Martindale Public School	K - 6	15	907	31%	31%	38%	0%	33%	0%
Sandy Hollow Public School	K - 6	50	903	34%*	42%*	24%*	0%*	16%	0%

Average ICSEA value across all Australian schools : 1000 Australian distribution 24% in each quarter from Bottom to Top.

The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) is a scale that enables meaningful comparisons to be made across schools. It has been developed specifically for the My School website for the purpose of identifying schools serving similar student populations. The variables used in calculating a value on the ICSEA scale include student-level data on the occupation and education level of parents/carers, and/or socio-economic characteristics of the areas where students live, whether a school is in a metropolitan, regional or remote area, proportion of students from a language background other than English, as well as the proportion of Indigenous students enrolled at the school.

Attachment 4
Children's Services Providers

Attachment 5

FDC, Centres & Preschools data - Current families and Waiting lists

Introduction

Early in the strategic planning process stakeholders agreed they wanted a plan based on robust data.

Two important questions were:

Who currently uses:

Long day care centres,
Family day care,
Preschools?

Who is on the waiting lists for:

Long day care centres,
Family day care,
Preschools?

The Forms

Two forms were designed to gather this data:

Current Families Form
Waiting List Form

Each of these forms collected the same data about each family (e.g. location, one or two parent family, number of children in/waiting for care etc); the full data set is below.

In May and June Current Families and Master Waiting List Forms were completed by:

Preschools

Aberdeen Preschool
Denman Children's Centre
Muswellbrook Pre School Kindergarten Inc
Warrae Wannu (School Readiness program for those coming Monday to Wednesday)

Long day care

Goodstart Early Learning
Muswellbrook Child Care Centre Inc
Tillys Play and Development Centre

Family Day Care

Upper Hunter Family Day Care

In August and September 2012 additional data was added to the Current Families Form to show the number of hours each child was in care/preschool each day.

See Attachment 9 for full details of the forms and data collection process.

The data and analysis

The data was collated and analysed.

The Current Families data has been very useful and is discussed further below.

It was hoped that the Waiting List data from all the services would be able to be amalgamated into one Master Waiting List which would be a guide to unmet need. An analysis of the Waiting List data and some subsequent follow up phone calls to those on the waiting list showed the Master Waiting list would not be a useful guide to unmet need. Some of the important reasons are:

Service providers had quite different approaches to how they were keeping their waiting lists. Some maintained an extensive waiting list, others a shorter one.

Because people know there is a shortage of care/preschool places a significant proportion of people put themselves on the waiting list knowing they may need care/preschool places at some time in the future (in some cases years ahead). In these cases the waiting list is not an indication of present need.

Some people on the waiting list already have a place in care/preschool and are on the waiting list because they want to change the care/preschool for one reason or another.

So the Waiting List data is not included here as its analysis did not provide decisive information on unmet need.

On the other hand the Current Families data is very useful.

The tables below provide a summary of this data for each service. Note that Warrae Wannu only includes the 37 students who were in the program on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays at the beginning of 2012. The program has since expanded to five days a week with a younger age group on the Thursdays and Fridays.

The locations of the current families in Muswellbrook town using children's services were also mapped onto a map of Muswellbrook.

The map of Muswellbrook town below has a grid with rows A to K and columns 1 to 10. The table "Current Families Map Location" shows the number of families located within each row, A to K of the map, i.e. Location A refers to anywhere in A1, A2, through to A10; Location B refers to anywhere in B1, B2 through to B10, and so on.

It is important to note that totals across all services in the Current Families data does not include some of the Warrae Wannu students as noted above or the New Train family day care families. These families and students have been taken into account in the calculations showing the total places and families reported in the body of the strategic planning report.

Observations

Some observations on the data in the tables below are:

- a) Long day care centres, Family Day Care and Preschools are an integrated system across Muswellbrook (and Aberdeen). Most service providers provide services to people from multiple locations. For example Tillys has families from Muswellbrook, Denman, Aberdeen, out of town but within the Shire and other towns outside the Shire such as Scone.
- b) 8% of families are from "Oth" towns, a majority of these other families are likely to be from outside the Muswellbrook Shire, e.g. Scone, Merriwa and Singleton.
- c) Long day care centres and preschools each have different patterns of usage. For example the average hours per child in long day care varies from 20 to 22, whereas the average hours in preschool varies from 9 to 13. The preschools have on average less days per week per child than the long day care centres.
- d) The proportions of one and two parent families varies greatly with service provider, for example Aberdeen Preschool and Tillys have 5% and 6% respectively of one parent families and Muswellbrook Child Care Centre has 22%.
- e) The proportion of families with one/two parents working also varies greatly with service provider. For example the proportion of families that are two parent with both parents working varies from about 60% for the long day care centres to about 40% for the preschools.
- f) All the service providers have families coming from all areas of Muswellbrook town. All service providers have families from at least nine out of the 11 rows on the Muswellbrook map (i.e. A1 through to A10, B1 through to B10, etc). At the same time there is an increased proportion of families closer to the service providers location. For example Tillys and Muswellbrook Child Care Centre both have higher proportions of families from the south side of Muswellbrook town.
- g) Upper Hunter Family Day Care provides about the same number of hours of care as a 50 place long day care centre.

Unmet need analysis

The essence of the approach to determining unmet need was to compare the current families care/preschool usage data with what one would expect to find if the Muswellbrook (and Aberdeen) population (based on ABS Census data) had the same amount of care/preschool places as the rest of NSW.

The difference between what is being provided and what one would expect was taken to be a measure of unmet need. It was then adjusted for other relevant factors such as the services provided to people outside of Muswellbrook Shire (and Aberdeen); the number of children that are in both a long day care centre and a preschool; and that Denman while technically a preschool is actually a mix of care/preschool places.

FDC, Centres & Preschools data - Current families and Waiting lists

Data set & Codes

The following codes are used in the tables below:

Service Providers

<i>Preschools</i>	<i>Codes</i>
Aberdeen Preschool	APS
Denman Children's Centre	DCC
Muswellbrook Pre School Kindergarten Inc	MPS
Warrae Wannii	WW
<i>Long day care</i>	
Goodstart Early Learning	GS
Muswellbrook Child Care Centre Inc	MCCC
Tillys Play and Development Centre	TPDC
<i>Family Day Care</i>	
Upper Hunter Family Day Care	UHFDC

Street

Street and Town was gathered so a map can be made showing the locations of where people using centres/pre-schools come from.

The map **locates the number of people in each square of a grid drawn over each town.**

Street numbers were NOT used.

Town

Mu = Muswellbrook

De = Denman

Ab = Aberdeen

Oth = Other town (other than Muswellbrook, Denman or Aberdeen)

OOT = Out of town (In the Shire but not in any of the towns in the Shire).

Hours in care/at preschool

Mon

Tues

Wed

Thur

Frid

Sat

Sun

One or two parent family

1 = 1 parent family

2 = 2 parent family

? = not known

FDC, Centres & Preschools data - Current families and Waiting lists

Number of children in care

Number of children in care at this Child-care centre or Pre-school.

Ages of child/ren in care e.g. <1,1,2,3,4,5

Ages of children in care at this Child-care centre or Pre-school.

Parent 1

Working (F/T P/T)

Not working (O)

? = not known

Parent 2

Working (F/T P/T)

Not working (O)

? = not known

Working

One parent family

1 P Works (one parent works full time or part-time)

1 P Other (on parent other)

Two parent family

2 P 2 Work (two parents work full time or part-time)

2 P 1 Works (one parent works full time or part-time)

2 P 2 Other (two parent other)

Attachment 5
FDC, Centres & Preschools data - Current families and Waiting lists

Current Families and children																		
	MCCC		TPDC		GS		MPS		WW	DCC		APS		UHFDC		Total		
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Places	29		48		76		80		20		39		30		na		na	
Families per place	1.7		1.8		1.5		2.6		1.7		2.2		2.3		na		na	
Children per place	1.9		2.3		1.8		2.7		1.9		2.5		2.5		na		na	
Hours per place	41.9		46.0		41.1		31.0		16.8		32.1		29.2		na		na	
Average days per child	2.7		2.7		2.2		2.3		1.9		1.8		1.9		2.0		2.1	
Hours per child	22		20		22		11		9		13		12		15		16	
Families																		
Mu	43	88	69	79	91	80	196	96	34		8	10	11	16	58	63	510	69
De	1	2	2	2	4	4	0	0	0		58	69	0	0	6	7	71	10
Ab	2	4	4	5	4	4	3	1	0		0	0	43	61	18	20	74	10
Oth	2	4	5	6	11	10	5	2	0		8	10	16	23	9	10	56	8
OOT	1	2	7	8	3	3	0	0	0		9	11	0	0	1	1	21	3
Unknown	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0		1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0
Total	49	100	87	100	114	100	204	100	34		84	100	70	100	92	100	734	100
Children																		
Mu	49	88	83	77	107	77	208	96	37		8	8	12	16	71	63	575	68
De	1	2	4	4	6	4	0	0	0		68	69	0	0	10	9	89	11
Ab	2	4	4	4	6	4	3	1	0		0	0	45	61	19	17	79	9
Oth	3	5	7	6	13	9	5	2	0		10	10	17	23	12	11	67	8
OOT	1	2	10	9	6	4	0	0	0		11	11	0	0	1	1	29	3
Unknown	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0		1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0
Total	56	100	108	100	139	100	216	100	37		98	100	74	100	113	100	841	100
Children by age																		
<1	1	2	2	2	5	4	0	0	0		3	3	0	0	3	3	14	2
1	3	5	25	23	23	17	0	0	0		6	6	0	0	20	18	77	9
2	11	20	28	26	38	27	0	0	0		18	18	0	0	33	29	128	15
3	18	32	27	25	35	25	50	23	13		30	31	10	14	24	21	207	25
4	22	39	25	23	32	23	126	58	33		32	33	53	72	20	18	343	41
5	1	2	1	1	6	4	40	19	10		9	9	11	15	13	12	91	11
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	56	100	108	100	139	100	216	100	37		98	100	74	100	113	100	841	100

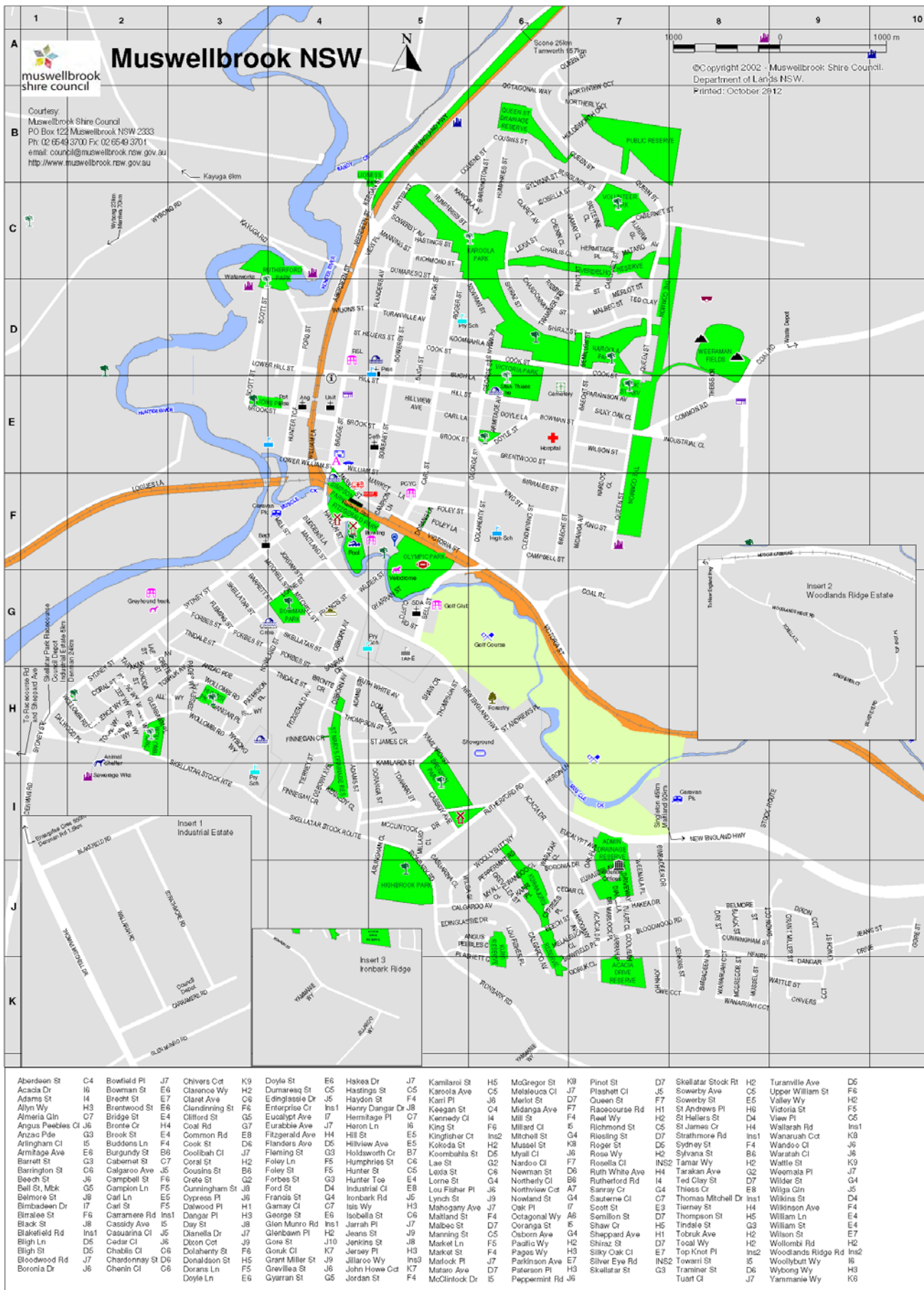
Attachment 5
FDC, Centres & Preschools data - Current families and Waiting lists

Current Families and children (contd)																		
	MCCC		TPDC		GS		MPS		WW		DCC		APS		UHFDC		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Average hrs per child per week by age (for those attending)																		
Age																		
<1	28.5		31.8		25.4		na		na		17.5		na		29.6		25.4	
1	31.4		20.8		23.7		na		na		13.0		na		18.7		20.9	
2	20.7		22.2		21.4		na		na		12.3		na		13.7		18.3	
3	22.7		17.4		20.9		7.8		10.0		11.6		9.6		13.4		14.2	
4	20.4		20.2		22.3		11.9		8.8		13.5		11.8		16.9		14.3	
5	7.5		27.0		31.8		14.6		9.5		13.0		14.2		13.0		14.8	
All	21.7		20.4		22.4		11.5		9.1		12.8		11.8		15.3		15.7	
Total hours	1216		2207		3120		2477		335		1251		876		1734		13216	
Days per week																		
Absent in the census week	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	10	16	2
1 day	9	16	37	34	39	28	73	34	7	19	38	39	21	28	35	31	259	31
2 days	18	32	31	29	42	30	88	41	30	81	38	39	36	49	35	31	318	38
3 days	13	23	20	19	35	25	52	24	0	0	20	20	15	20	19	17	174	21
4 days	9	16	16	15	12	9	1	0	0	0	2	2	2	3	6	5	48	6
5 days	6	11	3	3	10	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	5	25	3
6 days	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0
Total	56	100	108	100	139	100	216	100	37	100	98	100	74	100	113	100	841	100
Average days per week	2.7		2.2		2.3		1.9		1.8		1.9		2.0		2.0		2.1	
Parents																		
1	11	22	5	6	21	18	10	5	10		12	14	3	4	25	27	97	13
2	38	78	82	94	91	80	194	95	24		72	86	67	96	67	73	635	87
Unknown	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Total	49	100	87	100	114	100	204	100	34		84	100	70	100	92	100	734	100
Working																		
1 P Works	4	8	4	5	14	12	3	1	2		7	8	2	3	12	13.0	48	6.5
1 P Other	7	14	1	1	7	6	7	3	8		5	6	1	1	13	14.1	49	6.7
2 P 2 Work	31	63	55	63	73	64	87	43	3		41	49	39	56	56.5	381	51.9	
2 P 1 Works	7	14	27	31	16	14	92	45	18		28	33	27	39	14	15.2	229	31.2
2 P 2 Other	0	0	0	0	2	2	15	7	3		2	2	1	1	1.1	24	3.3	
Unknown	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0		1	1	0	0	0.0	3	0.4	
Total	49	100	87	100	114	100	204	100	34		84	100	70	100	92	100	734	100

Attachment 5
FDC, Centres & Preschools data - Current families and Waiting lists

Current Families Map Location						For those within Muswellbrook Map boundary						
	MCCC		TPDC		GS		MPS		UHFDC		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
A	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
B	0	0	1	2	2	2	7	4	1	2	11	3
C	3	8	6	10	9	11	16	9	5	9	39	10
D	2	6	4	7	18	21	23	13	4	7	51	13
E	3	8	3	5	9	11	19	11	5	9	39	10
F	2	6	5	9	5	6	22	13	9	16	43	11
G	6	17	4	7	8	9	18	10	8	15	44	11
H	7	19	4	7	13	15	18	10	7	13	49	12
I	3	8	9	16	4	5	18	10	7	13	41	10
J	8	22	14	24	12	14	28	16	9	16	71	17
K	2	6	8	14	4	5	5	3	0	0	19	5
Total	36	100	58	100	85	100	174	100	55	100	408	100

FDC, Centres & Preschools data - Current families and Waiting lists



Attachment 5
FDC, Centres & Preschools data - Current families and Waiting lists

Attachment 6

ABS and other Child Care and Preschool data

Some of the important sources of data in relation to childcare care and preschools in Australia that has been used in this Strategic Plan to help identify what long day care, family day care and preschool places are needed are:

ABS: 4402.0 - Childhood Education and Care, Australia, June 2011

Tables included in this document and used in developing the model of need for Muswellbrook Shire (and Aberdeen) are:

1. Children aged 0–12 years, Type of care usually attended by age of child
2. Children aged 0–12 years, Type of care usually attended by state or territory of usual residence
3. Children aged 0–12 years, Type of care usually attended by selected demographic characteristics
4. Children aged 0–12 years, Type of care usually attended by employment status of parents and family composition
5. Families with children aged 0–12 years with at least one parent employed, Work arrangements used to care for child
6. Children aged 0–12 years in couple families, Type of care usually attended by weekly income of parents
7. Children aged 0–12 years in one parent families, Type of care usually attended by weekly income of parent
8. Children aged 0–12 years who usually attended care, Type of care by weekly hours of care
9. Children aged 0–12 years who usually attended formal care, All and main reasons attended formal care
10. Children aged 0–12 years who usually attended informal care, All and main reasons used informal care
11. Children aged 0–12 years who usually attended care, Type of care by usual weekly cost
12. Children aged 0–12 years who usually attended formal care, Usual weekly cost by usual weekly hours attended
13. Families with children aged 0–12 years who usually attended formal care, Income of parents by usual weekly cost
14. Children aged 4–5 years who did not attend school, Selected characteristics by preschool program attendance
15. Children aged 4–5 years who usually attended preschool, Selected characteristics by usual weekly hours and usual weekly cost
16. Children aged 4–8 years who currently attend school, Usual arrangements prior to school by child's adjustment to school
17. Children aged 0–12 years, Whether additional formal care or preschool required by family composition
18. Children aged 0–12 years who currently require additional formal care, Type, quantity, reasons required and whether actively looked
19. Children aged 0–2 years, Parental involvement in informal learning by labour force status of parents
20. Children aged 3–8 years, Parental involvement in informal learning by labour force status of parents

ACER, Preschool education in Australia, December 2009

The table of contents is

- Introduction
- Terminology
- Preschool participation in Australia
- Australian investment in preschool
- The structure of preschool in Australia
- Stand alone vs integrated preschool
- Legislation
- Workforce
- Curriculum
- Conclusion
- APPENDIX A: Legislation covering preschools in Australia
- Works Cited

Early Office of Childhood Education and Child Care, State of Child Care in Australia, 2010

Key findings:

There were more than 870,000 children using approved child care in the September quarter 2009, up 8 per cent since the September quarter 2005.

There are now 5,758 long day care services across the country, an increase of more than 1,000 services since the September quarter 2005.

The proportion of child care hours being used was 75 per cent in September 2009, compared to 77 per cent in September 2005.

Across all income levels, out-of-pocket child care costs to families decreased between 2004 and 2009.

Early childhood education and care funding has more than doubled, up from \$1.7b in 2004-05 to \$3.7b in 2008-09.

ABS, 4102.0, Australian Social Trends, Dec 2009. Preschool Attendance.

Contents include:

- Early childhood education
- Pre school attendance
- House or attendance and cost to parents
- What type of preschool are children attending
- Why choose that particular pre-school
- Geographical location
- Reasons for not attending preschool
- Preschool attendance socio-economic characteristics.

Attachment 7

Primary School Readiness data

Two sources of school readiness data are referred to in this strategic plan and supporting evidence.

- A. Australian Early Development Index (AEDI)
- B. 2012 Kindergarten Intake and other data

The follow provides an overview of the AEDI data and the 2012 Kindergarten Intake and other data.

A. AEDI

The Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) was first implemented nationwide in 2009. The Australian Government's commitment to the AEDI will enable data to be collected nationally every three years for approximately 270,000 children in their first year of full-time school.

The second data collection took place from May to July 2012. The results will be available in 2013.

The AEDI is a population measure of young children's development. Like a census, it involves collecting information to help create a snapshot of children's development in communities across Australia. Teachers complete a checklist for children in their first year of full-time school. The checklist measures five key areas, or domains, of early childhood development:

- physical health and wellbeing
- social competence
- emotional maturity
- language and cognitive skills (school-based)
- communication skills and general knowledge

These areas are closely linked to the predictors of good adult health, education and social outcomes.

As a population measure, the AEDI places the focus on all children in the community; it examines early childhood development across the whole community. By moving the focus of effort from the individual child to all children in the community we can make a bigger difference in supporting efforts to create optimal early childhood development.

Although the AEDI is completed by teachers, results are reported for the communities where children live, not where they go to school. The AEDI results allow communities to see how local children are doing relative to, or compared to other children in their community, and across Australia.

Muswellbrook AEDI data 2009

The following table provides a summary of the Muswellbrook results for 2009 (MUS)

It also includes the data for Inner Regional New South Wales (IRNSW) and Outer Regional NSW (ORNSW).

Overall Muswellbrook has higher percentages of developmentally at risk and vulnerable children than other regional areas.

The right hand column *B. 2012 Kindergarten Intake Data* is described below.

Attachment 7
Primary School Readiness data

A. Summary results by AEDI domain – Muswellbrook				B. 2012 Kindergarten Intake data
AEDI domain	% of children on track (above the 25 th percentile)	% of children developmentally at risk (between the 10 th and 25 th percentile)	% of children developmentally vulnerable (below the 10 th percentile)	% children “not school ready”
Physical health and wellbeing (physical readiness for the school day, physical independence, gross and fine motor skills)	66.9 MUS 76.8 IRNSW 74.8 ORNSW	15.9 MUS 13.6 IRNSW 13.6 ORNSW	17.2 MUS 9.6 IRNSW 11.6 ORNSW	11%
Social competence (overall social competence, responsibility and respect, approaches to learning, readiness to explore new things)	70.3 MUS 74.7 IRNSW 72.7 ORNSW	14.6 MUS 15.7 IRNSW 16.3 ORNSW	15.1 MUS 9.6 IRNSW 11.0 ORNSW	25%
Emotional maturity (pro-social and helping behaviour, anxious, fearful and aggressive behaviour, hyperactivity and inattention)	67.2 MUS 74.8 IRNSW 75.4 ORNSW	18.5 MUS 18.9 IRNSW 16.5 ORNSW	14.3 MUS 9.3 IRNSW 10.1 ORNSW	27%
Language and cognitive skills (school-based) (basic literacy, interest in literacy/numeracy and memory, advanced literacy, basic numeracy)	70.3 MUS 75.5 IRNSW 70.2 ORNSW	16.7 MUS 14.9 IRNSW 17.6 ORNSW	13.0 MUS 9.6 IRNSW 12.2 ORNSW	30%
Communication skills and general knowledge (storytelling ability, communication with adults and children)	65.3 MUS 75.5 IRNSW 74.2 ORNSW	23.0 MUS 16.4 IRNSW 16.3 ORNSW	11.7 MUS 8.1 IRNSW 9.5 ORNSW	22%

Overall in Muswellbrook there are 34.3 per cent of children developmentally vulnerable on one or more domain/s of the AEDI and 18.5 per cent are developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains.

B. 2012 Kindergarten Intake and other data

In 2012 the three largest primary schools in Muswellbrook (Muswellbrook Public, Muswellbrook South Public and St James) completed a form for their 2012 Kindergarten Intake. See Attachment 9 for details.

Some of the items completed for each student coming into kindergarten were:

D. Attended Pre-school of child care

Did the student attend pre-school or child care in 2011 - the year prior to kindergarten?

Y = Yes N = No ? = Unknown

E. Known prior to starting school

Was the student known to the school prior to the start of the 2012 school year?

Y = Yes

N = No

F. School ready

Overall was the student 'school ready'?

Yes - yes, definitely

P - yes, partially

No - no, at risk or vulnerable

G. School ready domains

Circle domains where the student is vulnerable or at risk.

See attached list of domains and descriptions.

P = Physical health and wellbeing

S = Social competence

E = Emotional maturity

L = Language and cognitive skills

C = Communication skills and general knowledge

H. Specialist service is being provided

Is a specialist service being provided? Circle if known.

OT = Occupational Therapy

S = Speech Therapy

I. Specialist service is not being provided but is probably required/ assessment required

Is a specialist service not currently being provided but probably required.

OT = Occupational Therapy

S = Speech Therapy

Do you think a vision or hearing assessment may be required?

V = Vision

H = hearing

J. One or two parent family

1 = single parent

2 = two parent

? = unknown

K. Parent 1

Working (F/T P/T)

Not working (O)

? = not known

L. Parent 2

Working (F/T P/T)

Not working (O)

? = unknown

Some of the specific gaps and opportunities

Data from the completed Kindergarten Intake forms was analysed with ABS Census data and data from centres about their current families.

Some of the findings were:

1) Single parent families

In the Muswellbrook Shire of the families with children under 15 years of age approximately 76% are two parent families and 24 % are one parent families.

The proportion of one parent families using care and preschools varies significantly, for example, 6% at Tillys, 10% at Muswellbrook Preschool, 21% at Goodstart and 22% at Muswellbrook Child Care.

The 213 children who started kindergarten in 2012 at St James, Muswellbrook Public and Muswellbrook South Public [referred to below as the children who started kindergarten in 2012 in Muswellbrook (town)] were part of a school census of school readiness at the beginning of 2012. Based on that census:

Of the total 213 students 78% were from 2 parent families and 22% were from one parent families.

Of the 141 who were considered school ready 16% were from one parent families

Of the 66 students who were partially not ready or not ready for school 35% were from one parent families.

Of the 15 students who were known to have not been to care or a preschool 6 were from one parent families (40%)

Are single parents able to take the out of home opportunities they need? Barriers? Possibilities?

ii) Transient families

In the Muswellbrook Shire in the 2011 Census 10% of families were in living in a different local government area 12 months previously and 20% were living in a different local government area 5 years previously. So 10% of families are new to Muswellbrook area each year.

There is a stream of new people coming to the community with children. The total number of children is not going up in recent years so there is also a stream of people leaving the local community.

The challenge is how to make connections with these families early so that the benefits of being part of the local community can be maximised.

Are new families coming to the community quickly connected with the community?

iii) Not attending child care or preschool

Of the 213 children who started kindergarten in 2012 in Muswellbrook (town) 15 students who were known to have not been to care or a preschool (and for a further 16 it was not known whether or not they have been to care or a preschool).

The goal is to have all children attend a preschool program of some kind prior to school.

Has everyone got the opportunity to attend a preschool program of some kind in the year before school?

iv) Not school ready

The National AEDI results are reported separately and indicated that a significant proportion of students in Muswellbrook were not school ready. The next set of AEDI results will be available in 2013.

Of the 213 children who started kindergarten in 2012 in Muswellbrook (town) there were 66 (31%) who were partially not ready or not ready for school.

What opportunities would these families have required to have their children school ready?

v) Speech Pathology and OT difficulties

Of the 213 children who started kindergarten in 2012 in Muswellbrook (town) 42 (20%) needed services they were not receiving:

11 students were requiring but not receiving both OT and Speech Pathology

14 students were requiring OT but not receiving it

17 students were requiring Speech Pathology but not receiving it.

How could these needs have been identified earlier to get services earlier (even given the long waiting lists for service assessment and delivery).

Note:

The three schools that completed the 2012 Kindergarten Intake form, Muswellbrook Public, Muswellbrook South Public and St James, have very different kindergarten intake profiles, for example Muswellbrook South Public has the most not school ready students and St James the least not school ready students.

The analysis above combines the data from the three schools to provide an overview of Muswellbrook as a whole.

Attachment 7
Primary School Readiness data

Attachment 8

LDC and Preschool places for current and future needs

Currently the services available are not sufficient to meet community need. There is a shortage of:
Long day care (at Long Day Care Centres and/or Family Day Care)
Preschool places (for those not at long day care)
Specialist services such as Speech Pathology and OT

Given the likely future growth of Muswellbrook and Denman there will be an ongoing shortage of services in the Muswellbrook Shire unless there is a significant increase in services.

In relation to long day care and preschool places, Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen are one integrated services network and so the recommendations in relation to long day care and preschool places are for Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen combined.

Determining the number of long day care places and preschool places needed in a community and likely to be needed in the future is complex.

The essence of the approach taken here has been to:

- a) Map all the existing long day care and preschool providers and take a census of the families and children using those providers and the amount of care/preschool education provided to each child.
- b) Compare Muswellbrook services, families and children with national and state data about the availability of long day care, family day care and preschool places across Australia and within NSW (data provided by ABS). At the same time acknowledging that there is a shortage of care in NSW and nationally and that the national and state data describes what is (a useful point of comparison), not what is required.
- c) Review the ABS Census data to explore the similarities and differences between the Muswellbrook Shire community and the NSW and Australian communities (in particular any differences that impact on the amount of long day care, family day care or preschool places required to meet community need).
- d) Take into account changing community attitudes in relation to preschool education. For example, a number of years back there was less community importance placed on preschool education than there is now. The number of days on which parents want preschool education has also increased.
- e) Take into account the likely long term growth in the Muswellbrook Shire in the next 5 to 10 years while also acknowledging the uncertainties about aspects of this. Housing estate releases are planned for both Muswellbrook and Denman. However the impact of these releases on the number of children under 5 is not clear. For example, from 2006 to 2011 the total population in Muswellbrook increased but the number of children under 5 decreased. Nonetheless the implication is that any new long day care or preschool buildings should be designed in such a way as to allow for future expansion, e.g. an additional room added to a long day care development at a later date.
- f) Recognise that there are a proportion of children who attend both long day care and preschools (about 10% nationally) and so the total number of children in long day care centres and the total number of children in preschools adds up to 10% more than the total number of children in long day care and/or preschools.
- g) Acknowledge that the children's services system in Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen also

LDC and Preschool places for current and future needs

provides services to people outside these areas and that development of additional services outside these areas will also impact on services within Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen. At present about 5% to 8% (max) of children in care and preschools in Muswellbrook and Aberdeen are from outside the Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen (e.g. Scone, Singleton and Merriwa). There is no data available on how many children from Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen are using care and preschools elsewhere. Strathearn is proposing to build a 90 place long day care Centre in Scone and phase it in over time. This will impact on services in Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen.

- h) Anecdotally there are people living and working in Muswellbrook who have not been able to bring their families with them because of a lack of care/preschool places. It is difficult to estimate the number of these families. Nonetheless for the purposes of developing a model of need the equivalent of 1% to 2% of existing places has been allowed. If the number of these families is actually higher than this estimate the number of additional care/preschool places in the model of need would also proportionally increase.
- i) Whether or not care/preschool places are actually needed in any particular location will also depend on many factors not considered here, for example, families perceptions of comparative quality of services available, convenience to work and/or home, comparative fees, services used by family friends, etc. In the final analysis one has to see what families actually want; waiting to see who enrolls for what.
- j) If there are too few care places and/or preschool places there will be long waiting lists and children and families will not get the care/preschool places they need. If on the other hand there are too many care/preschool places services will be under financial stress through maintaining vacant places.

So it is important to maximise flexibility particularly in designing any new buildings. For example, rooms to be such that they can accommodate 20 or 25 (or 30) as needs change. Community based centres to have a community room that could be used on a flexible basis for care/preschool while numbers were increasing before a new permanent room might be added.

Attachment 8
LDC and Preschool places for current and future needs

Key parameters

Some of the key parameters used in analysing the data and/or making estimates of places required are below. They are based on ABS data.

a) The population of Muswellbrook & Aberdeen and Denman and surrounds (east, south and west)

Years of age	Muswellbrook LGA & Aberdeen	Denman and surrounds*
0	273	35
1	279	46
2	289	56
3	266	44
4	287	53
5	319	61
<i>Total 0-4 years</i>	<i>1394</i>	<i>234</i>
<i>Total 0-5 years</i>	<i>1713</i>	<i>295</i>

Denman and surrounds includes the ABS suburbs of Denman, Jerrys Plains, Martindale, Sandy Hollow and Giants Creek.

Muswellbrook LGA and Aberdeen includes Denman and surrounds.

b) Long day care equivalent places available (actuals)

The current long day care places equivalent is 237 places

This includes long day care centre places, 19 of Denman Children's Centre's places and the family day care equivalent places

The number of children per place varies from 1.8 to 2.3 depending on the centre.

The number of hours per child per week varies from 20 to 22 depending on the centre.

c) Preschool places available (actuals)

The current preschool places is 150 places.

The number of children per place varies from 2.5 to 2.7 depending on the preschool.

The number of hours per child per week varies from 11 to 13 depending on the preschool.

d) Percentage of children in long day care or family day care by age (National data)

The following table shows the national data for the percentage of children for each age who are in long day care or family day care:

AGE	LDC	FDC	TOTAL
0	6.6	1.0	7.6
1	30.1	4.7	34.8
2	46.1	8.0	54.1
3	45.8	5.2	51.0
4	32.1	4.3	36.4
5	6.9	1.6	8.5

So, from the table one can see 6.6 % of children less than 1 year of age are in long day care and 1% are in family day care.

LDC and Preschool places for current and future needs

e) Percentage of children in a preschool or preschool program (National data)

AGE	% at preschool
3	60
4	85
5	15 (rest at school)

Note: to meet the Muswellbrook goals Age 3 would be 85% and Age 4 100%.

f) Average hours of care (National and state data)

Average hours per child	Type of care
19.9 (Nat)	LDC
16.3 (Nat)	FDC
15.9 (NSW)	Preschool

g) Distribution of hours of care (National data)

Hours	LDC %	FDC %
<5	1.3	6.4
5-9	18.5	27.5
10-19	37.8	35.3
20-29	22.2	17.2
30-34	7.0	4.3
35-39	3.0	2.2
40-44	5.3	3.8
45+	4.8	3.2

So, from the table one can see that 22.2% of children in long day care receive between 20 and 29 hours of care each week.

h) Percentage of children who attend both long day care and preschool (National data)

10% (National)

i) Variations of care and preschool use with demographics (National and state data)

How many people use long day care, family day care and preschools and what hours they use vary significantly with type of family, income, employment status, etc.. For example:

11% of children from 1 parent families used LDC compared with 14% of children from 2 parent families

91% of four year olds of 2 parent families with both parents working were in a preschool or preschool program compared with 68% of children from 1 parent families where the parent was not working.

On the demographics that account for the significant differences in care and preschool use Muswellbrook is not significantly different from the rest of NSW to make a sizable impact on the extent of care or preschool places required based on demographic differences alone.

LDC and Preschool places for current and future needs

j) There are state differences (State data)

For example, the average hours per week of preschool attendance in 2011 and the percentage of children in LDC by state was:

State or territory of usual residence	Preschool hours		
	Mean	Median	% children in LDC
New South Wales	15.9	16	13.0
Victoria	11.1	10	13.5
Queensland	17.4	15	16.2
South Australia	12.6	12	12.0
Western Australia	15.0	12	11.0
Tasmania	15.5	14.4	12.6
Northern Territory	15.7	15	11.7
Australian Capital Territory	15.2	12	19.3

k) Add ons above the number of children in the Shire and Aberdeen

If a model is used to determine the needs for long day care/ family day care for children living within the Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen based on the national data and the number of children in the Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen the following add ons are required:

5% to 8% (max) for services to people living outside the Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen

1% to 2% for people living in Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen who have not been able to bring their families with them because of a lack of care; It is difficult to estimate the number of these families, if the number of these families is actually higher than this estimate the number of additional care/preschool places in the model of need would also proportionally increase.

5% for the increase in the NSW standards to better meet community needs.

i.e. about 10% to 15% increase in total places.

If a model is used to determine the needs for preschool places for children living within the Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen based on the national data then the add ons that are required are:

5% to 8% (max) for services to people living outside the Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen

10% for the duplication of children attending preschool and long day care

1% to 2% for people living in Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen who have not been able to bring their families with them because of a lack of care (see note above).

Goal of 85% of 3 year olds in a preschool or preschool program rather than 60%

Goal of 100% of 4 year olds in a preschool or preschool program rather than 85%

LDC and Preschool places for current and future needs

Taking all these factors into account across Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen it is possible to build a model of what care and preschool places would be available in Muswellbrook if it were similar to the rest of NSW.

It is also possible to adjust the model to take account of the goals in Muswellbrook, for example, to have every child attend a preschool or preschool program before school.

Some of the most significant observations (based on meeting the needs of the people living in Muswellbrook Shire and Aberdeen (and not elsewhere)) are:

- a) The number of children in LDC is substantially less than one would expect (about 330 compared with 470) based on population alone.
- b) The number of children in FDC is substantially more than one would expect (about 120 compared with 70) based on population alone.
- c) The number of children in LDC and FDC combined is less than one would expect (about 450 compared with 540) based on population alone.
- d) The gap in LDC equivalent places is age specific (based on the first 40 places to be filled the age distribution for the gap is):

<i>Age</i>	<i>LDC places required</i>
0	4
1	12
2	13
3	12
4	-2
5	1

Note the age distribution for subsequent places above the first 40 additional places will be different.

- e) The average hours in LDC is more than the NSW average (21 hours compared with 19.9) hours).
- f) The number of children in preschools is higher than what one would expect (if 85% of 4 year olds were in a preschool or preschool program (about 325 compared with 270).
- g) The average time in preschool is substantially less than the NSW average (12.1 hours compared with 15.9 hours). Adjusting for this time difference would mean that the number of places is required to increase by 31%.
- h) Taking all this into account there is a **shortage of 55 to 75 long day care equivalent places** (i.e. LDC and FDC combined)
- i) If one wants to give every child in Muswellbrook the opportunity to be in a preschool or preschool program for the amount of time that is typical in the rest of NSW the number of **preschool places needs to increase by 20 to 50 places.**
- j) If Muswellbrook grows in the future the likely increase in places will be:

Growth	LDC Equivalent Places	Preschool Places
Base	237+65=302	150+35 = 185
5%	15	9
10%	30	18
15%	45	27

So if the number of children grew by 5% an extra 15 LDC equivalent places would be required

Attachment 9

Data collection Instructions and Forms

In order to provide a robust basis for the Children's Services Strategic Plan stakeholders completed data collection forms in May and June 2012.

Long day care, family day care and preschools also provided additional data in September and October 2012 (adding hours per child per day to the previous current families data).

Current families and Master waiting list forms were completed by:

All 6 Long Day Care Centres and Preschools and Warrae Wannii
Upper Hunter Family Day Care

Places - past, present and future form was completed by:

All 6 Long Day Care Centres and Preschools

2012 Kindergarten Intake form was completed by:

Muswellbrook Public, Muswellbrook South Public and St James

Additional data collection forms were completed by :

MOOSH (usage)
Toy Box (usage)
Community Health (services)
Mining companies (employment projections).

This attachment includes:

The covering letters to child care centres and preschools and schools with the initial request for data in April 2012.

The project update and attachments circulated with the letter

The Forms and Instructions

- a) Land and facilities overview
- b) Form: Places
- c) Form: Current families
- d) Form: Master waiting list
- e) Form: Kindergarten intake 2012

Details about *Land and Facilities* and *Places* are in the service provider descriptions in Attachment 4. Children's Services.

Details about *Current families* and the *Master waiting list* are in Attachment 5. FDC, Centres & Preschools current children, families and waiting lists.

Details from the *Kindergarten Intake 2012* are in Attachment 7. Primary School Readiness data.

Children's Services Strategic Planning

Update & Data requirements: Child care centres & Pre-schools

23 April 2012

Introduction

Mt Arthur Coal's Community Development Fund has funded a project to develop a strategic plan for Children's Services in the Muswellbrook Shire.

Stakeholders include:

- **Children's services** - pre-schools, child care centres, MOOSH etc
- **Schools**
- **Other services** (e.g. Community Health).

Stakeholders met on 22nd Feb and 29th Mar 2012.

They agreed on the need for a robust strategic plan based on sound data.

Below is a two page Update on the project and the data requirements and three attachments:

Attachment 1: Data required (from all stakeholders)

Attachment 2: Service provider stakeholders (for the whole strategic planning project)

Attachment 3A: Data collection forms: Child care centres and Pre-schools.

Child care centres & Pre-schools

The feasibility of the data collection from Child care centres and Pre-schools and the draft forms were discussed at the meeting on 29th March. The meeting agreed on the need for the data and also that its collection seemed feasible.

The data required from Child care centres and Pre-schools is:

- a) Land and facilities overview (so that relevant background information can be included in the Strategic Planning report about each centre/pre-school).
- b) Places - past, present and future (so there can be a sound basis for estimated future needs).
- c) Current families (so we can identify who is using/not using Child care centres and Pre-schools and where they are from/not from).
- d) Current waiting list (so that a Master waiting list can be developed to estimate current unmet needs).

Details of what's required are in **Attachment 3B: Data collection: Schools**. Please send the completed forms to:

Paul Bullen paul.bullen@mapl.com.au
PO BOX 181, Coogee, NSW, 2034.

by 18 May 2012.

Thanks

Paul Bullen

Children's Services Strategic Planning Update & Data requirements: Schools

26 April 2012

Introduction

Mt Arthur Coal's Community Development Fund has funded a project to develop a strategic plan for Children's Services in the Muswellbrook Shire.

Stakeholders include:

- **Children's services** - pre-schools, child care centres, MOOSH etc
- **Schools**
- **Other services** (e.g. Community Health).

Stakeholders met on 22nd Feb and 29th March 2012.

They agreed on the need for a robust strategic plan based on sound data.

Below is a two page **Update** on the project and the data requirements and **three attachments**:

Attachment 1: Data required (from all stakeholders)

Attachment 2: Service provider stakeholders (for the whole strategic planning project)

Attachment 3B: Data collection form: Schools.

Schools

In the strategic planning process to date some key observations from schools have been:

- There are some students who are not known to the school before they arrive at school in the Kindergarten intake.
- Some children are not school ready.
- There are a shortage of specialist services such as OT and Speech
- Some families have difficulty accessing services.

These issues are being considered as part of the Children's services strategic plan and some data is required to understand the issues and what could be done about them.

Five schools are being asked to completed the **Form: Kindergarten Intake 2012**

Muswellbrook Public School
Muswellbrook South Public School
St James Primary School
Denman Public School
St Joseph's Primary School (Denman)

The rationale and details of what's required are in:
Attachment 3B: Data collection form: Schools.

Please send the completed forms to:

Paul Bullen paul.bullen@mapl.com.au
PO BOX 181, Coogee, NSW, 2034.

by 18 May 2012.

Thanks Paul Bullen

Sustainable Communities Project - Mt Arthur Coal Community Development Fund: Children's Services Planning Update & Data requirements

Introduction

Mt Arthur Coal's Community Development Fund has funded a project to develop a strategic plan for Children's Services in the Muswellbrook Shire.

There was an initial meeting of all stakeholders on 22nd February 2012 to introduce the project and the proposed strategic planning process.

Paul Bullen an independent consultant who facilitated that meeting has been working on the project. In March and April he has visited:

- **Children's services** - pre-schools, child care centres, MOOSH etc
- **Schools**
- **Other services** (e.g. Community Health).

On 29th March there was a second meeting of stakeholders to:

- Review the issues emerging
- Review the data required to develop a robust plan
- Plan steps for gathering the relevant data.

All those present agreed they wanted a robust strategic plan based on sound data (rather than a plan with minimal data) and they agreed to provide the data necessary for a robust plan.

Goal

The goal for the children's services strategic plan is:

Sustainable and quality children's services across the Muswellbrook Shire:

- Sufficient children's services places (incl centre based, family day care and out of school hours care)
- To meet current and future needs
- Through the provision of quality services
- That are accessible (in particular by Aboriginal, CALD, children with disabilities, shift working families, and others experiencing barriers to access)
- That enhance school readiness.

Issues emerging

Some of the big issues that were initially explored at the meeting on 22nd February and further discussed in the visits to Children's services and Schools were:

- The shortage of child care and pre-school places
- Staffing and training of staff
- Facilities
- School readiness
- Networking across services
- Connecting with those who are not connecting with services / missing out
- The availability of specialist services (e.g. Speech, OT)

The visits to Children's services also identified centre/service specific issues including for example:

- Plans for development of facilities
- Ideas for connections between children's services and other services and the appropriateness of buildings/facilities to achieve this.
- The impact of the National Quality Framework & the Early Childhood Learning Framework.
- The limits of existing resources within services to pay for services required.

Data required

To develop a robust strategic plan will require data including:

- Centres/Services occupancy data
- Population census data
- Description of current users of Centres/Services that can be compared with the census data
- Employment projections from mining companies for the next 5+ years
- Master waiting list of all those waiting for places - with no duplication.
- The impact for those currently on the waiting list for places of the lack of places
- Method for identifying those who are missing out
- Description of who is less School ready - and whether or not they had prior access to pre-schools, child-care places, etc.
- Playgroups - what playgroups exist?

Attachments

Attachment 1: Data required

Attachment 2: Service provider stakeholders

Attachment 3A: Data collection forms: Child care centres and Pre-schools

Attachment 3B: Data collection forms: Schools

Attachment 3C: Data collection forms: Community Health

Attachment 3D: Data collection form: Mining companies

Attachment 1 Data required

23 April 2012

The following is a list of data required for developing a robust strategic plan.

a) Centres/Services

Places actual and projections - Mid 2006 and annually to the present and estimates for the next five years

Staffing actuals and projections - Mid 2006 and annually to the present and estimates for the next five years

Diagram showing overview of Layout of building and & rooms in use

Photos of Centre & Rooms in use.

b) Data from ABS

Population profile by Collector Districts for 2001, 2006, 2011 to generate a profile of families with children and the number/ages of children.

c) Current families of Centres/Services

For each Centre/Service who uses it? Profile to have a key variables similar to the ABS data so the profile of families can be compared with the 2011 ABS data.

Where do they live? What is the area that each Centre/Service is actually providing services to?

d) Data from Mining companies

The number of people resident in the Muswellbrook LGA who have been employed by the mining companies annually from 2006 to the present.

Employment projections for the next 5+ years.

Profile of existing and future staff in terms of staff with children and needs for child care / pre schools.

e) Master waiting list

Master list of those waiting - with no duplication.

I.e. amalgamate the waiting lists across all Centres/Services to generate one master waiting list where each family is only counted once.

f) Those currently on the waiting list

What are they doing in the absence of services? What is the impact of absence of services? This would require phone calls to a sample of those on the Master waiting list.

g) Those who are missing out

Method for identifying those who are missing out. Comparing ABS CD data with Centre's Services families for 2011.

Does Centrelink have data available in a form that may be useful, especially in relation to identifying who is missing out?

h) AEDI

Who didn't score well on the AEDI and where do they live? Did they use Childcare? Preschools? The actual data is not available but a proxy data set may be able to be developed.

i) Playgroups

What playgroups exist? Who uses them?

Attachment 2
Service provider and other stakeholders

23 April 2012

The following is a list of service provider stakeholders included in the strategic planning process. Any gaps?

Muswellbrook Pre School Kindergarten

109-111 Hill St Muswellbrook
Children 0 - 5 years

DA Approved for 40 places (incl 20 existing) Rebuild and expand

Muswellbrook Child Care Centre

Skellatar St (between Lorne and Mitchell Streets) Muswellbrook
Children 0 - 5 years

Goodstart Early Learning Centre

14 – 18 Brentwood St Muswellbrook
6 weeks – 6 years

Tillys Play and Development Centre

32 Bimbadeen Drive Muswellbrook
6 weeks – 6 years

Denman Children's Centre

Lot 229 Turner St (Denman Sporting Complex) Ogilvie St Denman
Child care for children aged 0 - 5 years 4 days a week
Pre School for children aged 4 - 5 years 5 days a week
Occasional care

Preparing plans for development.

MOOSH

Skellatar St (between Lorne and Mitchell Streets), Muswellbrook
Child care activities before and after school and during vacation periods
Est 15 morning; 30 afternoon; 45 vacation

Toy Box

Provides playgroup activities for 0-6 years as an outreach service to isolated rural areas in the Muswellbrook, Singleton and Upper Hunter Shires.

Bowman Park Community Centre Skellatar St. Muswellbrook

Aberdeen Preschool

Aberdeen Preschool, 34 Bedford St, Aberdeen

Family Day Care

Council Administration Centre, Scone
Provides Family Day Care in Muswellbrook Shire

Scone

Proposed Strathhern development for 60 pre school places in Scone
Scone and District Pre-School

Schools

School directly involved in the strategic planning process:

Muswellbrook Public School Roger St	Primary	Govt	K-6	560	Indig 7%
Muswellbrook South Public School Maitland St	Primary	Govt	K-6	400	Indig 26%
St James Primary School Skellatar Stock Route	Primary	Catholic	K-6	300	Indig 4%
Denman Public School	Primary	Govt	K-6	200	Indig 2%

Other schools:

Muswellbrook Christian School 100 Hill St	Primary	Non-govt	K-6	15	Indig 0%
St Joseph's Primary School	Primary	Catholic	K-6	75	Indig 0%
Martindale Public School	Primary	Govt	K-6	19	Indig 21%
Sandy Hollow Public School	Primary	Govt	K-6	54	Indig 9%

Other Services

Community Health
Hunter Park Family Centre

Departments

NSW Department of Community Services
NSW Health
NSW Department of Education and Communities

Play groups

Playgroups

Mining companies

Employment within the Muswellbrook LGA.

Attachment 3A

23 April 2012

Data Collection Forms: Child care centres and Pre-schools

The data required from Child care centres and Pre-schools is:

- a) **Land and facilities overview** (so that relevant background information can be included in the Strategic Planning report about each centre/pre-school).
- b) **Places - past, present and future** (so there can be a sound basis for estimated future needs).
- c) **Current families** (so we can identify who is using/not using Child care centres and Pre-schools and where they are from/not from).
- d) **Current waiting list** (so that a Master waiting list can be developed to estimate current unmet needs).

Details of what's required are below. Please send the completed forms to:

Paul Bullen paul.bullen@mapl.com.au
PO BOX 181, Coogee, NSW, 2034.

by 18 May 2012.

a) Land and facilities overview

The strategic planning report will require an overview of each Child care centre and Pre-school.

Ideally this will include:

A sketch/plan for the property and building (showing an outline of the land, the building and the rooms in use; an architectural drawing is not required, rather a simplified outline that would enable someone who hasn't been to your centre/pre-school to imagine what's there. A half A4 page up to a full A4 page diagram will be adequate.

A photo of outside from the street.

A photo of the inside of each room in use (e.g. 0-1, 2-3s etc).

A photo of the outside (if there is more than one outside area a photo of each one).

The sketch/plan and the photos will be included in the Attachments to the strategic planning report.

The photos should be in electronic form. Email them. The sketch /plan can be either hard copy or electronic.

b) Places - past, present and future (see form below)

This data is important as it will be combined with data from other sources including ABS data and mining companies employment data to map total needs and total usage of Child care centres and Pre-schools and make estimates for future needs.

Total Places when full

The year groups should be the year groups you use in your Centre or Pre-school. So change the headings in the Year groups as necessary.

Actual places

The year groups should be the year groups you use in your Centre or Pre-school. So change the headings in the Year groups as necessary.

Total Families

Total families using the centre/pre school at a point in time - mid year. One full time place can be used by more than one family so the number of families may exceed actual places. Because this is the number of families at a point in time if your centre/pre-school has a turn over of families during the year this number will be less than the total families for a year.

Total children

Total children using the centre/pre school in the middle of the year. As with families the total children will exceed actual places unless all children are full time. Because this is the number of children at a point in time if your centre/pre-school has a turn over of children during the year this number will be less than the total children for a year.

Staff FTE

Number of full-time equivalent positions.

Staff Number

Number of actual staff (people).

1 FTE in the previous column could equate to 2 staff in this column.

c) Current families (see form below)

The data on current families is particularly important because we want to be able to map where the existing users of Child care centres and Pre-schools come from and also combine it with the ABS census data to identify where the people are who are NOT using child-care centres and pre-schools.

ID

This is for the use of the Child care centre or Pre-school to track who data has been completed for. It will not be included in the analysis.

Street

Street and Town is being gathered so a map can be made showing the locations of where people using centres/pre-schools come from.

The map will only **locate the number of people in each square of a grid drawn over each town**. It will be made by the consultant using the data provided. Number of people in individual streets will not be show.

Street numbers are NOT needed or wanted (identifying data is not wanted on this list). However there are a small number of very long streets - in these cases it wold be useful to indicate the relevant 100s with the street name. So if someone lived in 356 XXX Street it could be indicated as Street XXX (300s).

Town

Mu = Muswellbrook

De = Denman

Ab = Aberdeen

Oth = Other town (other than Muswellbrook, Denman or Aberdeen)

OOT = Out of town (In the Shire but not in any of the towns in the Shire).

One or two parent family

1 = 1 parent family

2 = 2 parent family

? = not known

Number of children in care

Number of children in care at this Child-care centre or Pre-school.

Ages of child/ren in care e.g. <1,1,2,3,4,5

Ages of children in care at this Child-care centre or Pre-school.

Parent 1

Working (F/T P/T)

Not working (O)

? = not known

Parent 2

Working (F/T P/T)

Not working (O)

? = not known

d) Master waiting list (see form below)

The master waiting list data is being gathered so that a master waiting list can be generated across all Child-care centres and Pre-schools in the Shire.

The form uses the same data categories as the Form c) Current families. See above for details.

The **one difference** is that the waiting list data must include a SURNAME because it will only be with a surname and street name that it will be possible to identify duplicates in waiting lists across centres/pre-schools. See the letter below which you may wish to send to those on your waiting list.

No individual's data will be published.

No data that enables individual's to be identified will be published.

The only purpose of gathering this data is to identify the total unmet need for child care and pre-schools in the Muswellbrook Shire and where the unmet need is located.

As with the current families data the location data will be mapped onto a grid to locate the number of people in each square of a grid drawn over each town. Number of people in individual streets will not be show.

**Attachment 9
Data collection Instructions and Forms**

b) Form: Places

Centre/Pre-school Name:.....

	Total Places when full			Actual places			Total Families	Total children	Staff EFT	Staff Number
	Year groups			Year groups						
ACTUALS	0-1*	2-3*	4-5*	0-1*	2-3*	4-5*				
Mid 2006										
Mid 2007										
Mid 2008										
Mid 2009										
Mid 2010										
Mid 2011										
April 2012										
ESTIMATES										
Mid 2013				NA	NA	NA	NA	NA		NA
Mid 2014				NA	NA	NA	NA	NA		NA
Mid 2015				NA	NA	NA	NA	NA		NA
Mid 2016				NA	NA	NA	NA	NA		NA
Mid 2017				NA	NA	NA	NA	NA		NA

* Amend these year groups to be consistent with the break up of age groups in your centre or pre-school.

**Attachment 9
Data collection Instructions and Forms**

c) Form: Current families

Centre/Pre-school Name:.....

ID	Street	Town	One or two parent family	Number of children in care	Ages of child/ren in care e.g. <1,1,2,3,4,5	Parent 1 Working (F/T P/T) Not working (O)	Parent 2 Working (F/T P/T) Not working (O)
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?

ID is for use by the Centre/Pre-School

Street names not required for Towns Oth and OOT (as they will not be mapped)

d) Master waiting list

Sample Letter

Dear xxxx,

All of the Child Care Centres and Preschools in Muswellbrook Shire have waiting lists. Lack of places is a major issue in the Shire and needs to be addressed.

Mt Arthur Coal's Community Development Fund has funded a project to develop a strategic plan for Children's Services in the Muswellbrook Shire.

There was an initial meeting of Child Care Services, Preschool and Schools on 22nd February 2012 to begin work on the strategic plan.

Paul Bullen an independent consultant facilitated that meeting and has been working on the project. He has visited

- Children's services - pre-schools, child care centres, MOOSH etc
- Schools
- Other services (e.g. Community Health).

In order to plan for Child Care and Pre-School places in the Shire we need to know about who is currently on the waiting list across the whole Shire.

To develop a master waiting list for the whole Shire for the purpose of planning for additional places **we are wanting to give your surname and street name and details (e.g. number of children on the waiting list) to Paul Bullen - the independent consultant working on the project so that he can develop a master waiting list.**

All of the other Child Care Centres and Pre-schools are also writing to people on their waiting lists (so you may receive multiple letters if you are on multiple waiting lists).

Paul Bullen will then cross reference all the lists to develop one Master waiting list.

He will also contact a random sample of people on the waiting list to talk about the impact of not being able to get child care/pre-school places.

The Master waiting list will not be used for any other purpose other than the strategic plan for children's services. The Strategic Plan for Children's services will NOT include any details of individual families - the Master Waiting lists is solely for the purposes of working out the total number of people currently waiting on places.

This will be an important step in working to improve Children's Services in the Shire.

If you do not wish us to provide Paul Bullen with your surname and street name please let me know before xxx/xxx/xxx

Yours

**Attachment 9
Data collection Instructions and Forms**

d) Form: Master waiting list

Centre/Pre-school Name:.....

ID	Surname	Street	Town	One or two parent family	Number of children on waiting list	Ages of child/ren on waiting list e.g. <1,1,2,3,4,5	Parent 1 Working (F/T P/T) Not working (O)	Parent 2 Working (F/T P/T) Not working (O)
			Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
			Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
			Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
			Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
			Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
			Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
			Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
			Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
			Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
			Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
			Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
			Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
			Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
			Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
			Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
			Mu De Ab Oth OOT	1 2 ?			F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?

Surname and Street names are required for everyone on this form. They are essential for generating one Master list.

Attachment 3B
Data Collection: Schools

23 April 2012

Introduction

In the children's services strategic planning process to date some key observations from schools have been:

There are some students who are not known to the school before they arrive at school in the Kindergarten intake.

Some children are not school ready.

There are a shortage of specialist services such as OT and Speech.

Some families have difficulty accessing services.

Within the context of the children's strategic plan these observations lead to questions:

Are students' 'not being known' or 'not being school ready' related to whether or not they went to a child care centre or pre-school and/or geographically where they are living in the community?

What is the extent of need for specialist services?

How can services be more accessible?

The answers to these questions could make a significant difference to where and how services are provided. For example if students who had attended child care centres and preschools prior to kindergarten were not school ready this would be an important point of dialogue between schools and child care centres and pre-schools.

If not being school ready or not being known is related to where people live it may make a difference to how and where access to services is provided.

Five schools are being asked to completed the **Form: Kindergarten Intake 2012** (below):

Muswellbrook Public School
Muswellbrook South Public School
St James Primary School
Denman Public School
St Joseph's Primary School (Denman)

The data for Muswellbrook will be mapped so that it can be compared with the data being provided by child care centres and pre-schools (which is also being mapped).

Denman and other towns will not be mapped.

Community Health will also be providing data about the services it provides.

The analysis of the data will be undertaken by the consultant.

The analysed data, after being reviewed by each school, will be available as part of the children's services strategic plan.

No individual record data will be included with the data in the strategic plan.

Form instructions: Kindergarten intake 2012

The form is to be completed for the 2012 Kindergarten intake.

There is one row on the form per student.

Circle the most appropriate responses (except for Street).

A. ID

This is for use by the school to identify who is included on the list. It is not used as part of the analysis.

B. Street

Street is only required where the town is Muswellbrook.

Street is being gathered so a map can be made showing for Muswellbrook the locations of where students come from (those school ready/ not school ready; known/not known etc).

The map will only **locate the number of people in each square of a grid drawn over Muswellbrook**. It will be made by the consultant using the data provided. The number of students in individual streets will not be show.

Street numbers are NOT needed or wanted (identifying data is not wanted on this list). However there are a small number of very long streets - in these cases it would be useful to indicate the relevant 100s with the street name. So if someone lived in 356 XXX Street it could be indicated as Street XXX (300s).

C. Town

Mu = Muswellbrook

De = Denman

Ab = Aberdeen

Oth = Other town (other than Muswellbrook, Denman or Aberdeen)

OOT = Out of town (In the Shire but not in any of the towns in the Shire).

D. Attended Pre-school of child care

Did the student attend pre-school or child care in 2011 - the year prior to kindergarten?

Y = Yes

N = No

? = Unknown

E. Known prior to starting school

Was the student known to the school prior to the start of the 2012 school year?

Y = Yes

N = No

F. School ready

Overall was the student 'school ready'?

Yes - yes, definitely

P - yes, partially

No - no, at risk or vulnerable

G. School ready domains

Circle domains where the student is **vulnerable or at risk**.
See attached list of domains and descriptions.

- P = Physical health and wellbeing
- S = Social competence
- E = Emotional maturity
- L = Language and cognitive skills
- C = Communication skills and general knowledge

H. Specialist service is being provided

Is a specialist service being provided? Circle if known.

- OT = Occupational Therapy
- S = Speech Therapy

I. Specialist service is not being provided but is probably required/ assessment required

Is a specialist service not currently being provided but probably required.

- OT = Occupational Therapy
- S = Speech Therapy

Do you think a vision or hearing assessment may be required?

- V = Vision
- H = hearing

J. One or two parent family

- 1 = single parent
- 2 = two parent
- ? = unknown

K. Parent 1

- Working (F/T P/T)
- Not working (O)
- ? = not known

L. Parent 2

- Working (F/T P/T)
- Not working (O)
- ? = unknown

Attachment 9
Data collection Instructions and Forms

e) Form: Kindergarten intake 2012 One row per student. Circle the most appropriate responses **School.....**

A. ID	B. Street**	C. Town	D. Attended Pre-school or child care	E. Known prior to starting school	F. School Ready	G. School Ready Domains Vulnerable/ At risk	H. Receiving	I. Not receiving but required	J. One or two parent family	K. Parent 1 Working/not working	L. Parent 2 Working/not working
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	Y N ?	Y N	Y P N	P S E L C	OT SP	OT SP V H	1 2 ?	F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	Y N ?	Y N	Y P N	P S E L C	OT SP	OT SP V H	1 2 ?	F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	Y N ?	Y N	Y P N	P S E L C	OT SP	OT SP V H	1 2 ?	F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	Y N ?	Y N	Y P N	P S E L C	OT SP	OT SP V H	1 2 ?	F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	Y N ?	Y N	Y P N	P S E L C	OT SP	OT SP V H	1 2 ?	F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	Y N ?	Y N	Y P N	P S E L C	OT SP	OT SP V H	1 2 ?	F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	Y N ?	Y N	Y P N	P S E L C	OT SP	OT SP V H	1 2 ?	F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	Y N ?	Y N	Y P N	P S E L C	OT SP	OT SP V H	1 2 ?	F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	Y N ?	Y N	Y P N	P S E L C	OT SP	OT SP V H	1 2 ?	F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	Y N ?	Y N	Y P N	P S E L C	OT SP	OT SP V H	1 2 ?	F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	Y N ?	Y N	Y P N	P S E L C	OT SP	OT SP V H	1 2 ?	F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	Y N ?	Y N	Y P N	P S E L C	OT SP	OT SP V H	1 2 ?	F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	Y N ?	Y N	Y P N	P S E L C	OT SP	OT SP V H	1 2 ?	F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	Y N ?	Y N	Y P N	P S E L C	OT SP	OT SP V H	1 2 ?	F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	Y N ?	Y N	Y P N	P S E L C	OT SP	OT SP V H	1 2 ?	F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?
		Mu De Ab Oth OOT	Y N ?	Y N	Y P N	P S E L C	OT SP	OT SP V H	1 2 ?	F/T P/T O ?	F/T P/T O ?

** Only required where the town is Muswellbrook.

Attachment 10

Summary Strategic Plan

Vision

Children's services stakeholders in the Muswellbrook Shire (and Aberdeen) share a vision where:

- Children and families are valued
- Early childhood education is valued
- Children are school ready
- Families are able to access the child care they need to enable them to work and have breaks
- Staff working with children and families have the skills they need to do quality work
- Service providers are working together to achieve this.

Challenges and opportunities

In the Muswellbrook Shire (and Aberdeen) there are significant challenges to achieving this vision including:

- Shortage of preschool places
- Shortage of long day care places
- Shortage of specialist services such as Speech Pathology and OT
- Children not as school ready as hoped
- Lack of access to services (because of insufficient availability or other barriers including lack of adequate infrastructure)
- The current NSW State and Commonwealth budgetary situations

There are opportunities to:

- Take a whole of Shire approach to children's services - Muswellbrook Shire (and Aberdeen) is small enough for all stakeholders to understand the whole
- Engage all families with young children
- Further develop strategies for agencies working together
- Pool resources
- Redevelop infrastructure to better meet community needs
- Build on the investment that Mt Arthur Coal has made in the community with the funding of a four year community development initiative from mid 2012.

Learning Framework and Standards

The Children's Services Strategic Plan for the Shire is within the context of:

- Belonging, Being and Becoming The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia; and
- National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education & Care (and related regulations).

Goals

Goals for the children's services system in the Muswellbrook Shire (and Aberdeen) include:

- a) The community is aware of what makes a child friendly environment, the importance of quality pre-schools and long day care and what services are available.
- b) There are sufficient child care places (including centre based, family day care and out of school hours care) to meet current and medium term future needs.
- c) There are sufficient preschool places to meet current and medium term future needs.
- d) Staff are available with the skills required to ensure:
 - o quality services are provided
 - o the children's services system runs to full capacity.
- e) There is a process for monitoring school readiness and service providers working together to address ways of improving school readiness as necessary.
- f) Primary schools engage with families in their communities prior to their children commencing school, through transition to school and other strategies.
- g) Long Day Care Centres and Preschools, particularly those that are community based, act as hubs for families connecting with other families and families connecting with services.
- h) Each service in the children services system provides points of information/referral for other parts of the children's services system.
- i) Children and families can access the specialist services they require.
- j) Children's services are equally accessible by all (including Aboriginal, CALD, children with disabilities, shift working families, and others experiencing barriers to access).
- k) Each service in the children's services network is managed well and operates efficiently.
- l) The children's services are professionally managed with longer term goals and plans and financial plans that ensure sustainability of services and the availability of capital required for future growth.

Stakeholders roles

There are different kinds of stakeholders involved with Children's Services, including:

- Not for profit community based services (e.g. Aberdeen Preschool)
- Not for profit but not community based services (e.g. Goodstart Early Learning)
- Private services (e.g. Tillys)
- Local Council
- Government
- Private businesses.

The roles of these stakeholders have some similarities and differences. For example, all stakeholders providing services are required to meet service standards and accreditation requirements.

Stakeholders also have quite different roles, for example, community based services have a responsibility to build community as well as provide services.

Strategies

There are five interconnected strategies for improving the children's services system to better meet the needs of children and families in the Muswellbrook Shire:

1. **Early learning aware community** - community awareness and information
2. **Engagement of the whole community** - community engagement strategies to ensure families and children are able to engage with out of home opportunities
3. **Care and early learning opportunities for all children before school and at school (services available)** - increasing long day care places, family day care places, preschool places, specialist services and access to services
4. **Agencies working together** - to achieve the other strategies
5. **Adequate infrastructure** - to achieve the other strategies

The strategies are interconnected. For example, priorities for engaging the whole community require agencies to work together and also require adequate infrastructure.

Within each strategy there are priorities. Some priorities can be implemented at no additional cost. Some priorities require additional resources beyond those within the existing services.

Implementation recommendations

The following are the principal recommendations. There are others including for example support for the expansion of Tillys and additional strategies for stakeholders working together.

1. Agencies working together: Early Years Development Network and other strategies

Continuing and building on the work of the Early Years Development Network is an important part of agencies working together. Priorities for work include: a) The connection between preschool programs in long day care and preschools and the schools programs so there is mutual understanding and improved school readiness; b) Staff training opportunities; c) Transition to school collaboration; d) AEDI results and strategies for improving school readiness; and e) The availability of specialist services; f) Linkages to *Strategy 2. Engagement of the whole community*; and g) identifying emerging issues and incorporating them in the process of reviewing the implementation of the strategic plan

This will involve all children's services stakeholders. There are additional strategies for agencies working together including, establishing systems for better sharing of information, continuing with the Preschools and LDC Directors meetings and strategies for supporting the governance and management of the community based centres.

2. Upper Hunter Community Services: Community Engagement Strategy

A community development engagement strategy is required. This community development engagement strategy to be coordinated and driven by Upper Hunter Community Services in collaboration with all the other relevant stakeholders. This strategy will focus on community engagement with families with children, especially those with young children 5 years or younger but also as part of a wider community engagement strategy with families with children 6 to 12.

3. Upper Hunter Family Day Care

Upper Hunter Family Day Care currently had 14 Educators in June 2012. These Educators provide the equivalent amount of care as a LDC Centre of approximately 50 places. The number of long day care places in Muswellbrook Shire is currently insufficient to meet the need. Given the time frames for building redevelopment in Long Day Care Centres an interim strategy is for UHFDC to expand by 6 Educators in the next 6 to 8 months (the equivalent of about 20 long day care places). And if this expansion is successful to then expand further. To achieve the expansion will require additional resources to enable: i) marketing ; ii) identifying Educators and overcoming barriers to entry for new

Educators and iii) The additional staff time required by UHFDC to put the additional Educators in the program.

This will require investment from the community.

4. Muswellbrook Pre School

Muswellbrook Pre School has been considering expansion of the preschool for some time. Muswellbrook Pre School has 80 places and the recommendation is that it be expanded by approximately 20 to 40 places now with the possibility of further expansion in the longer term. The expansion of Muswellbrook Pre School as a community based centre to be premised on the provision of a room for community use, development of community engagement strategies to ensure access for all and expansion in such a way as that it flexibly allows for future expansion.

This will require capital investment from the community.

5. Muswellbrook Public School

Because of limited room space Muswellbrook Public School is not able to take the opportunities it would like to take to connect with families in the community before school and in its transition to school program. Muswellbrook Public School has grounds on which a demountable building for these uses could be put. An additional demountable building would open up a wide range of opportunities for engagement with the community.

The purchase of the building would require capital investment from the community. The priorities are: i) a new demountable building on site; ii) part time staff person to support the transition to school program; and iii) resources to support the transition to school program (e.g. books).

6. Muswellbrook South Public School

Muswellbrook South Public School operates Warrae Wannii, a 20 place school readiness program, on the school site. Warrae Wannii is an important and effective strategy for engaging with children and families who are typically less likely to engage with preschools and schools. No fees are charged. The current program is funded to the end of 2014. The size of the available building limits the program to 20 places.

The recommendation is for Warrae Wannii to continue. There are several scenarios for the future that need exploration with a view to ensuring the sustainability of Warrae Wannii and the development of further strategies to build engagement of the local community with the school and other services. These include: i) a joint venture with TAFE, ii) collaboration with Muswellbrook Preschool and/or other stakeholders; and iii) exploration of opportunities that will arise as a consequence if the South Side Community Services Centre proceeds (i.e. alternative uses for the existing Muswellbrook Child Care site).

7. Community Health

There is a shortage of Speech Pathology and OT services for children. There are long waiting times for Speech Pathology and OT assessments and services. There is a shortage of private practitioners in the local area in allied health services including Speech Pathology and other children's services.

Medicare Locals are a new national network of primary health care organisations. They are able to get funding for primary health care. In 2013 there will be consultations by Medicare Locals covering the local area.

The priorities are: i) participation in consultations and work with Medicare Locals in relation to children's services allied health needs such as Speech Pathology and OT (including the provision of local data identifying needs); and ii) working with other children's services on identifying and collaborating on opportunities to make up the shortfall in Speech Pathology and OT services.

8. South Side Community Services and LDC Centre: Muswellbrook Shire Council

A community services centre (including long day care) on the south side of Muswellbrook that is a focal point for the community and integrates a range of community services is a high priority. The Community Services Centre to include:

- a) Long day care centre with a spare room for community use (redevelopment of Muswellbrook Child Care Centre)
- b) Offices for existing services at the Skelatar St site - Toy Box and MOOSH; and space for children in before and after school care
- c) Offices for additional community services such as Upper Hunter Community Services and visiting services such as Community Health.

The recommended location for the Centre is in the vicinity of Rutherford Road / Cassidy Avenue Highbrook Park.

This will require capital investment from the community.

The next step is further work to explore the recommendation in more detail and explore other options if necessary.

9. Muswellbrook Child Care

Muswellbrook Child Care Centre is expanded and redeveloped as part of the South Side Community Services Centre.

See above for details of this redevelopment.

In this redevelopment Muswellbrook Child Care Community Centre will remain a community based centre.

10. Denman Children's Centre

Denman Children's Centre is licensed as a preschool with 39 places and within that license it offers limited hours day care, preschool places and preschool extended hours and care for preschoolers outside term time when the preschool is not operating. The quality of the Denman Children's Centre building is poor in relation to its use.

The recommendation is that Denman Children's Centre be redeveloped to enable expanded places and extended hours and operate as both a LDC centre and a preschool (each with their separate license).

If Denman were to provide all the long day care and preschool places required in Denman and the surrounding areas to the east, west and south then approximately 40 long day care places and 20 preschool places may be required (with possible expansion in the future as Denman grows).

The redevelopment of Denman Children's Centre as a community based centre to be premised on the provision of a room for community use, development of community engagement strategies to ensure access for all and expansion in such a way as that it flexibly allows for future expansion.

This will require capital investment from the community.

11. Future capital development for community based services: Muswellbrook Shire Council

There are important questions to be considered about the future capital development for community based services for example: Should there be a Muswellbrook community development fund established that is used for future capital development of community based centres? Should organisations operating in Muswellbrook go guarantor for capital investment loans that community organisations then use for the redevelopment of their facilities? Should the existing not for profit community based organisations be required to put money aside for their own future development and expansion (and if so what are the implications in the present)? Should the existing not for profit community based organisations be supported by the community, including through council (e.g. token rent rather than commercial rents, etc) to allow them to extend services to the community in ways one would not expect a private provider to do (e.g. providing space for community use, offering supported playgroups)?

These questions require public discussion. It would be useful if there were agreed answers to these questions within the Muswellbrook Shire to provide some certainty about future capital development of not for profit community based centres.

The Muswellbrook Shire Council to consider these issues and develop an appropriate process of discussion to address them in a way which will add certainty to meeting the future capital needs for community buildings (such as community based long day care centres and preschools).

Immediate Next Steps

The immediate next steps to continue implementation of the strategic plan are:

a) Early Years Development Network

The Early Years Development Network have as priorities for the first half of 2013:

- Community information and awareness
- Kindergarten 2013 intake data - gathering the data and working on the implications
- Review of the 2012 AEDI data when it is available in 2013
- Whole of community engagement strategy (See page 38).

b) Upper Hunter Community Services

Upper Hunter Community Services take on the lead role for the *Community Engagement Strategy* and provide support for this strategy with the appointment of the new community development positions in early 2013(see page 37). All stakeholders fully participate in this strategy.

c) Community Services Muswellbrook Shire Council

Community Services:

- i) Continue with lead role for the Early Years Development Network and provide additional support for this role with the appointment of the new Community Development Officer in Community Services in early 2013 (see page 35).
- ii) Build an annual review of the implementation of the Children's Services Strategic Plan into its annual work plan (and work collaboratively with the Early Years Development Network on this).
- iii) Facilitate other meetings as necessary, e.g. a meeting of Centres to explore options for management support for their Centres.

d) Muswellbrook Shire Council

Muswellbrook Shire Council:

- i) Establish a working party to further explore this proposed South Side Community Services Centre and identify more concrete options re land and facilities and alternative proposals is necessary; the process include consultations with all relevant stakeholders; and that after the necessary explorations specific recommendation are developed and put to all relevant stakeholders.
- ii) Consider the recommendation for *Clarifying answers to questions about the future capital development for community based services* and establish a process of public discussion to achieve this (see page 47)

e) Other agencies

Other agencies work on their priorities including identifying possible sources of funding to achieve relevant priorities including:

- Tillys proposed expansion to 71 LDC places
- Upper Hunter Family Day Care expansion by 6 Educators
- Muswellbrook Public School additional room
- Denman's Children's Centre
- Community Health working further on Speech Pathology and OT options
- Community preschools and LDC explore governance and management support options

Attachment 10
Summary Strategic Plan

**Attachment 11
Project Agreement**

This is the agreement between BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal and Muswellbrook shire Council for the Children Services Strategic Planning Project.

Mt Arthur Coal



AGREEMENT BETWEEN

MT ARTHUR COAL

AND

MUSWELLBROOK SHIRE COUNCIL

Hunter Valley Energy Coal Pty Ltd
Mt Arthur Coal
Thomas Mitchell Drive
Muswellbrook NSW 2333 Australia
Private Mail Bag No. 8
Muswellbrook NSW 2333 Australia
Tel +61 2 6542 4800 Fax +61 2 6542 4801
bhpbilliton.com

BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal agrees to provide \$25,000 for Muswellbrook Shire Council's Children's Services Planning project.

In recognition of this contribution Muswellbrook Shire Council (Funding Recipient) agrees to:

1. Scope and develop a Children's Services Plan through the employment of a project consultant for 6 months who will investigate the Muswellbrook Local Government Area (LGA) community. The scoping phase will:
 - Bring together a steering group of the key children's services stakeholders (including, but not limited to Government agencies, Muswellbrook Shire Council, Upper Hunter Shire Council, private and community children's services, family day care and preschools, public and private schools, UHCS, MOOSH, children's services professionals, parents groups and mining industry representatives), to help guide the development of the plan in cooperation with a project manager.
 - Engage a project consultant with appropriate expertise to develop the plan.
 - Develop and implement a community and stakeholders engagement plan for the project.
 - Undertake research and develop a draft plan addressing the issues identified by the Sustainable Communities Project.
 - Identify any partners and resources for implementation.
2. Funding Recipient will undertake proactive consultation and engagement with all relevant and identified stakeholders, organisations and sectors, as outlined in the Community Development Fund application form.
3. Funding Recipient acknowledges that the project scope must include reference to identifying preferred locations for expansion which include addressing any potential land use concerns/obstacles.
4. Funding Recipient will capture and provide BHP Billiton with baseline data relevant to the project. The capture of baseline data should be a focus of the committee and should include, but is not limited to qualitative and quantitative information for each participating organisation and sector, such as student numbers, student demographics, service delivery gaps, capacity and waiting list numbers, student educational reporting information.

Registered Office:
Hunter Valley Energy Coal Pty Ltd
Rialto Towers
Level 29, 525 Collins Street
Melbourne VIC 3000 Australia
ABN 39 062 894 464
Registered in Australia

5. Should further opportunities for support or funding be identified at the conclusion of this project, the Funding Recipient, prior to approaching any other third-party will offer BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal the opportunity to be the primary supporter.
6. Prior to accepting any third party involvement in or support for the project, the Funding Recipient will notify BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal.
7. Provide a receipt of funding at the commencement of the project and a complete financial report at the conclusion of the project.
8. Allow BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal to profile the project for internal and external purposes. The Funding Recipient will assist with these activities by responding to all information requests from BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal in a timely manner. The Funding Recipient and BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal will approve all media releases and related activities prior to distribution.
9. Supply BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal with photos of the project for potential use in internal and external publications. Funding Recipient to provide written photographic consent for use of photos.
10. Meet with BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal by 16 March to discuss project progression, reporting timeframes and any issues that need to be discussed prior to the delivery of the final report.
11. Deliver a final project report and assessment to BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal no later than 27 April 2011, and is to respond in a timely manner (as determined by BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal) to any further requests for information.
12. BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal reserves the right to share the project findings and reports with other key stakeholders such as government, Council and industry.
13. Should the Funding Recipient identify any issues throughout any stage of the project (e.g. resourcing, ability to achieve deliverables, budget concerns etc), it is the responsibility of the Funding Recipient to contact and discuss this with BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal immediately.
14. Continue to manage identified risks, as outlined in the Community Development Fund application form.
15. Acknowledge that BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal is unable to guarantee further funding at the completion of this project.
16. Attend and present project material at community events and meetings including a community barbecue to be held in December 2011, as requested by BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal (pending staff availability of Funding Recipient).
17. BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal and the Funding Recipient must comply with, and the Funding Recipient must ensure that any project consultant complies with, all applicable anti-corruption laws, and must not give or offer to give, receive, or agree to accept, any payment, gift or other advantage which violates an applicable anti-corruption law. No funding, reports or other materials may be provided or used in any manner to authorise, offer, promise or give anything of value to any government official in order to influence any official action.

Please contact Nicole Wergeltoft-Grant, Coordinator Community Relations, on 02 65 424 994 for a copy of the BHP Billiton brandmark as required (jpeg, tif or eps files). All artwork must be submitted for approval to BHP Billiton Mt Arthur Coal at least three weeks prior to being finalised for production and distribution.

Signed for and on behalf of Mt Arthur Coal

Name Shelley Masterson
Title Superintendent Community Relations
Signature 
Date 

**Signed for and on behalf of Muswellbrook
Shire Council**

Name Russell Esdaile
Title Director Corporate and Community
Services
Signature
Date