

LONG DAY CARE POLICY

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| Policy Reference No. | POL/179 |
| File No. | HCC04/597-06 |
| Strategic Objective | 1.1: Support and enhance skill development and educational opportunities to reduce disadvantage, improve employment prospects and quality of life |
| Adopted by Council | 28 November 2011 |
| Re-Adopted | 14 October 2019 |
| Date Reviewed | 26 August 2024 |
| Next Review | 26 August 2027 |
| Responsible Officer | Manager Family Youth and Children |
| Department | Family, Youth & Children's Services |

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1 POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 It is Council Policy to provide, support and guide the development of Long Day Care (LDC) services in Hume City.
- 1.2 It is Council policy to conduct regular reviews of the delivery of Council's LDC services, with the aim of improving service delivery and ensuring resources are allocated appropriately. On occasion, this may lead to a change in a service or to Council deciding to cease offering a given service.
- 1.3 It is not Council policy to provide all LDC services in Hume City; but to provide these services when and where it is most appropriate for Council to do so, based on the principles and scope outlined in this policy.
- 1.4 The existing service system in Hume City is characterised by a range of LDC providers including Council. This policy provides scope for Council to consider the role of non-Council providers of LDC as appropriate service providers.

2 PURPOSE

- 2.1 The purpose of this Policy is to guide Council's role in ensuring Hume residents have access to LDC Services and ensuring equitable and appropriate allocation of Council resources.
- 2.2 The Policy outlines Council's roles and responsibilities in the context of Hume City experiencing strong population growth, with additional need for renewal in established areas.
- 2.3 Federal and State Government policy initiatives are consistent with Council's focus on the important role of early year's services in setting the foundations for life opportunities for individuals and a cohesive community.
- 2.4 A range of principles guide the implementation of this policy, with the aim of providing opportunities for best quality early years services for children and families in Hume City. The legislative and regulatory context that governs the provision of LDC services in Hume City includes:
 - 2.4.1 The Local Government Act requires Council to plan and provide for wellbeing within the community.
 - 2.4.2 The Federal Government has the primary responsibility to ensure that childcare is accessible, affordable and of a high quality.
 - 2.4.3 The National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care aims to improve the health, safety, early learning and wellbeing of Australia's children.

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2.4.4 The Vulnerable Children Action Plan presents a commitment to system- wide reform encompassing mainstream and specialist services, government and non-government organisations, and the range of individuals- both personal and professional that work with vulnerable children and families. It sets out a number of reforms and projects clustered within five action areas:

- Building effective and connected services
- Enhancing education and capacity building
- Making a child friendly legal system
- Providing safe, stable and supportive out-of-home care
- Introducing accountability and transparency

2.5 The licensing and operation of children's services in Victoria are regulated by the State Government through national legislation, namely, the Education and Care National Law Act 2010 and Education and Care National Law Regulations 2011

2.6 Council is the responsible authority for assessing planning applications for the establishment of long day child care facilities in Hume City in accordance with the Planning and Environment Act (1987).

2.7 In providing and facilitating high quality LDC services in the municipality, Hume City Council plays a number of key roles, which are outlined in this policy:

2.7.1 Planning for LDC services for children in Hume City and assessing planning applications from other service providers.

2.7.2 Providing LDC services where appropriate and applicable.

2.7.3 Providing a coordination role for the provision of LDC service in Hume City.

2.7.4 Acting as a lead agency in ensuring high quality service delivery.

3 SCOPE

3.1 The following principles underpin Council's approach to LDC services in the municipality and are to be considered at all times when implementing this policy:

3.1.1 Early years services directly improve a child's social, emotional, learning and employment opportunities throughout different life stages.

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- 3.1.2 Quality is critical to achieving the broader benefits of early year's services.
 - 3.1.3 A diversity of providers including Council, 'for-profit' and not-for-profit organisations underpin a robust LDC system.
 - 3.1.4 Integrated service models deliver the best possible outcomes for children and families.
 - 3.1.5 Council's service provider role strengthens Council's planning role and its capacity to deliver social justice outcomes for Hume residents.
 - 3.1.6 LDC providers who offer 'value-add' opportunities due to their broader organisational missions are preferred providers of LDC.
 - 3.1.7 Partnership with early years' service providers is critical to effective Council planning for LDC.
 - 3.1.8 Parent engagement in LDC service planning and delivery strengthens quality outcomes.
 - 3.1.9 Access to LDC is essential to support the participation of the many families who are in the workforce.
- 3.2 Council will undertake planning for the adequate provision of LDC in the municipality through:
- 3.2.1 Identifying infrastructure requirements to support LDC service delivery, including new services in growth areas and modernisation in established areas of Hume City.
 - 3.2.2 Developing local policy frameworks to lead and inform non-Council service provider planning and influence the development of an integrated service system.
 - 3.2.3 Providing leadership with local Early Years Partnerships and the community to influence State and Federal Government policy directions.
 - 3.2.4 Collaboration with key stakeholders to develop enhanced LDC models and programming and maximise integration opportunities.
 - 3.2.5 Identification of relevant social trends and emerging community needs through research and community engagement to ensure planning is robust and evidence-based.
 - 3.2.6 In planning for LDC service delivery in Hume, Council will identify critical industry issues and strategies (workforce capacity).

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Note: Council is the responsible authority for assessing planning applications for the establishment of long day child care facilities in the City in accordance with the Planning and Environment Act 1987.

3.3 Council will consider delivering new LDC services in the following circumstances:

3.3.1 If a suitable alternative LDC provider is not available.

3.3.2 Assistance is required for service establishment prior to transition to another suitable alternative provider.

3.3.3 LDC service quality or sustainability is vulnerable in a particular geographic catchment.

3.3.4 Families requiring support with complex child or family circumstances are not able to access suitable alternative LDC services in a catchment area.

3.3.5 When external capital and operational funding is available and provides an opportunity for innovative service delivery or meets a particular need in the community.

3.3.6 Where Council identifies there is higher order strategic outcomes being pursued by Council that another otherwise suitable service provider will not deliver within a particular area of Hume City.

3.4 Council will consider reducing LDC services in the following circumstances:

3.4.1 LDC policy objectives can be better achieved by transitioning Council LDC service provision to an appropriate not-for-profit or community managed model.

3.4.2 An alternative service delivery model is developed with other providers which allocates Council a modified role in service delivery (such as enhanced service coordination capacity).

3.4.3 Where a Council LDC service is not viable and demand will be met by suitable alternate providers.

3.5 In its role as a coordinator of LDC services in Hume City, Council will:

3.5.1 Undertake an Expression of Interest process to identify a suitable provider in any new Council-owned LDC facility, with the option of choosing to either:

3.5.1.1 directly provide and manage the service or;

3.5.1.2 enter into a lease agreement with an external provider.

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- 3.5.2 Collaborate with key stakeholders to develop enhanced LDC models and programming and maximise integration opportunities.
- 3.5.3 Facilitate the integration of service access and response by different service providers in a single facility or local area.
- 3.5.4 Consider a direct onsite coordination/community capacity building role where Council can directly influence the outcomes achieved through enhanced service integration and community engagement.
- 3.6 In its role as a lead agency in ensuring high quality service provision in Hume City, Council will:
- 3.6.1 Facilitate best practice service provision in a number of ways including:
- 3.6.1.1 Model 'industry best practice' in service delivery and facilitate best practice forums in Hume City.
- 3.6.1.2 Provide information and support that builds the capacity of other service providers to deliver best practice services.
- 3.6.1.3 Host annual events to share research findings.
- 3.6.1.4 Support the professional development of Council staff in the early year's services.
- 3.6.2 Provide leadership and advocacy with local early years partners and the community to influence future State and Federal Government policy directions and initiatives including:
- 3.6.2.1 Development of innovative service models.
- 3.6.2.2 Infrastructure funding.
- 3.6.2.3 A mix of service providers in the Hume LDC service system.
- 3.6.2.4 Improved and/or new services for the community.
- 3.6.2.5 Funding to reduce the cost of LDC for families.
- 3.6.3 Facilitate and encourage the development of appropriate infrastructure that supports the delivery of high quality LDC services in Hume City, through activities including:

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- 3.6.3.1 Fund and construct new LDC infrastructure where Council resolves that Council infrastructure is required to meet community need and infrastructure costs are reflected in Council's Capital Works Program.
- 3.6.3.2 Collect appropriate developer contributions for the construction of required facilities.
- 3.6.3.3 Ensure that Council-owned LDC facilities meet Children's Services Regulations and other relevant standards.
- 3.6.4 Promote LDC services and their benefits to families in Hume City, including:
 - 3.6.4.1 Disseminate information regarding available LDC services within Hume.
 - 3.6.4.2 Inform community of the value of LDC services.
 - 3.6.4.3 Promote collaboration across LDC and other relevant services.

4 OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 Council's implementation of this policy will support the development and enhancement of a robust LDC system which:
 - 4.1.1 is sustainable;
 - 4.1.2 offers choice;
 - 4.1.3 offers quality;
 - 4.1.4 is accessible- culturally, geographically and financially;
 - 4.1.5 is integrated with other relevant services and provides an access point to complementary child and family support services;
 - 4.1.6 provides LDC at times and in locations that align with community needs;
 - 4.1.7 responds to the needs of children with additional needs within the parameters of mainstream programs and funding constraints.
- 4.2 This policy is aligned to the Council Plan Strategic Objective 1.1.2, "Young children are developed into confident learners from birth and have access to high-quality education" and focuses on:
 - 4.2.1 Support the provision of early childhood services across the City including:

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- 4.2.1.1 Undertake programs and initiatives that strengthen learning opportunities for vulnerable families and children.
- 4.2.1.2 Provide ongoing support to culturally and linguistically diverse families and newly arrived migrants through school-based community hubs.

5 POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Council will respond to community need for long day care within the limitations of the

Scope, as identified in this Policy, through:

- 5.1.1 Planning
- 5.1.2 Advocacy
- 5.1.3 Driving partnerships with community service providers
- 5.1.4 Coordinating services
- 5.1.5 Guiding the development of infrastructure

6 DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

- 6.1 **Long Day Care (LDC)** - Long Day child care provides centre-based child care for children from birth to six years. A LDC centre operates extended hours to provide support to families who work or study. In partnership with families, LDC centres support a child's development through guidance and extensive opportunity for play.
- 6.2 **Viable** - A viable model of service delivery is a model that allows the service to operate in a financially sustainable way without Council subsidy.
- 6.3 **Access** - A family is considered to have 'access' to early childhood education when a place is available in a quality early childhood education program where neither distance nor cost present a barrier to attendance.
- 6.4 **Quality** - A service is provided in accordance with National Child Care Quality Standards.
- 6.5 **Industry leading practice** - Practice that is aligned with contemporary policy and international and national research determining a model of practice that achieves the best possible outcomes for the community.
- 6.6 **Strategic Objectives** - Refer to Council's adopted strategic objectives including the Council Plan and other strategic plans as detailed in the related documents section of this policy.

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7 RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Local Government Act (2020)
- Hume City Council 0-24 Framework
- State Government National Competition Policy and Local Government (2008)
- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (effective January 2016)
- Education and Care National Law Act 2010 and Education and Care Services National Law Regulations 2011.

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