



# EARLY YEARS COMMITMENT STATEMENT



## Commitment Statement

The purpose of the Yarriambiack Shire Council Early Years Commitment Statement is to clearly articulate Council's future role and commitment to supporting positive early years outcomes for children and families without providing direct service delivery.

This Statement pertains to the early years age group, encompassing the period from pregnancy through to school entry, and covers services including:

- Maternal and child health,
- Childcare and early learning,
- Kindergarten and preschool,
- Family and parenting supports.

## Vision

All children in Yarriambiack Shire are supported to thrive in their early years through strong partnerships, accessible services and informed community planning.

## Context

Yarriambiack Shire is a rural municipality with dispersed communities, small population centres and limited local service availability.

Council recognises that access to early years services can be impacted by:

- Distance and transport barriers,
- Workforce shortages,
- Service viability in low-population settings,
- Socioeconomic and health vulnerabilities.

While Council does not deliver early years services, it acknowledges the importance of early intervention, prevention and access to quality support for long-term community wellbeing.

## Council's Role in Early Years

Yarriambiack Shire Council's role in early years is strategic and enabling, not operational.

Council will act as:

**A System Steward**: supporting a coordinated local early years system.

**A Facilitator**: bringing services, agencies and stakeholders together.

**A Planner**: ensuring early years needs are considered in municipal planning.

**An Advocate**: representing local needs to State and Commonwealth Governments.

**An Information Broker**: improving awareness and navigation of services.

Council will not:

- Deliver childcare, kindergarten or maternal and child health services,
- Employ early years practitioners for service delivery,
- Manage day-to-day operations of early years providers.

## Guiding Principles

Council's commitment to early years is underpinned by:

**Equity**: recognising the additional challenges faced in rural communities.

**Collaboration**: shared responsibility across government, service providers and communities.

**Sustainability**: advocating for service models that are viable over time.

## Strategic Priorities and Commitments

### **Priority 1: Leadership and Advocacy**

Council will provide leadership and advocacy to strengthen early years services across the Shire.

Council will:

- Advocate to State and Commonwealth Governments for equitable funding and service models for rural communities.
- Represent local needs, gaps and pressures in regional and intergovernmental forums.
- Support reforms to early learning and family services by contributing local planning insights.
- Advocate for flexible, place-based approaches to early years' service delivery.

### **Priority 2: Service System Coordination (Non-Delivery Role)**

Council will support a coordinated and connected early years system without delivering services directly.

Council will:

- Maintain oversight of early years' service availability and emerging gaps.
- Facilitate partnerships and networks between service providers.
- Share relevant data and local knowledge to inform service planning.
- Encourage intergrated service responses where possible.

### **Priority 3: Community Information and Engagement**

Council will help families understand and navigate the early years' service system.

Council will:

- Promote awareness of available services, supports and referrals.

### **Priority 4: Child-Friendly Environments and Planning**

Council will support physical and social environments that enable children and families to flourish.

Council will:

- Consider early years needs in land use, infrastructure and community planning.
- Support safe, inclusive and accessible public spaces for families with young children.

## Partnerships

Council recognises that strong early years outcomes depend on shared responsibility.

Key partners include:

- Victorian Government departments and agencies.
- Early years' service providers such as *Uniting Vic Tas* and *Emerge Early Years Services*.
- Health services and family support organisations such as *West Wimmera Health Services* and *Rural Northwest Health*.
- Schools and education networks.
- Community organisations, volunteers and families.

## Implementation and Review

Council will:

- Review the Commitment Statement in line with the Council Plan and the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan cycles.
- Use community feedback and service data to inform future advocacy and planning.

## Conclusion

Through leadership, advocacy, planning and collaboration - not service delivery - Yarriambiack Shire Council is committed to supporting strong early years foundations for children, families and communities.

