

Tackling the Early Years labour shortage

We are seeking

\$5 million to construct a Centre of Excellence in Early Years Education and Wellbeing to resolve workforce shortages within the sector.

The challenge

Growing kindergarten enrolments and childcare demand have brought about an Australia-wide shortage of early years educators.

Warrnambool and the South West have an acute shortage of trained and qualified early years educators. This directly contributes to the shortage of available placements for children across the South West Victoria region.

In Warrnambool alone, demand for childcare is high with waiting lists across the city showing over 400 children/ families need care. Services have introduced caps due to workforce shortages and regulatory requirements. Anecdotally, one provider in the city has 125 places a week unavailable due to workforce shortages.

There is scope to increase capacity within kindergartens but without qualified and skilled staff to work we are unable to do so. With the introduction of Best Start best Life – Pre Prep reform which we see hours increase up to 30 hours per week per child, waitlists are anticipated for kindergarten access as well as early learning centres.



The solution

A collaborative initiative between Deakin University, WCC, and South West TAFE aims to establish a region-wide Centre of Excellence in Early Years Education and Wellbeing.



The Centre of Excellence

Along with providing kindergarten, childcare, and maternal and child health services, the centre at Deakin University's Warrnambool campus would provide training and placement opportunities for students pursuing qualifications in early childhood and allied health fields, such as occupational therapy, speech therapy, and play therapy.

It is proposed the Centre of Excellence would function as an incubator for sector development and long-term research focused on education, health and better practice.

The Centre of Excellence would collaborate with Deakin University's Centre of Excellence for the Digital Child to foster innovative, evidence-informed initiatives.

The Centre of Excellence presents a unique opportunity to develop a new operating model that can serve as a best practice framework for early years education, providing learning opportunities for students in Certificate III, Diploma and Bachelor courses.

Funding the Centre of Excellence in Early Years Education and Wellbeing will enable the development of state-of-the-art facilities, cutting-edge educational programs, and the integration of digital technologies, ensuring high-quality early years education and holistic family support. Additionally, this funding will facilitate the development of best practice operating model, which can serve as a benchmark for similar centres nationwide.



Facility overview

- Significant outdoor and undercover play spaces
- Kindergarten
- Childcare
- Maternal and Child Health service
- Observation windows for research and staff training
- Reception, office space, staff rooms, and ancillary facilities
- Car park



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