



Quality Service Improvement

Priority of Access Review – Nillumbik
Shire Council

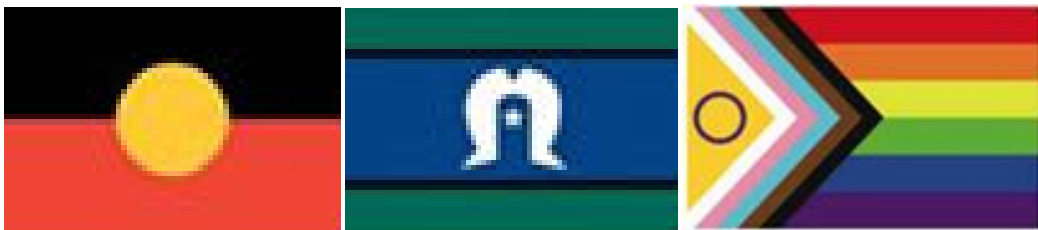
Findings and recommendations

January 2025

This report has been developed solely for the purposes of Nillumbik Shire Council. The primary purpose of engaging stakeholders was to understand and identify current practice, challenges and future approach to Nillumbik's Priority of Access criteria for preschool central registration.

The discussions, research and observations have been collected and synthesised to draw conclusions about the current practices, challenges and opportunities to support equitable access to preschool. To protect the privacy of participants in the discussions, contributors have been de-identified. This information was considered in our recommendations for future Priority of Access delivery. We would like to acknowledge individuals who have participated in providing constructive feedback and information to support this work.

Quality Service Improvement acknowledges all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. We respectfully acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the traditional custodians of the lands and waterways in which we live and work. We pay our respects to their Elders, those past, present and emerging. We acknowledge and uphold their continuing relationship to this land. We embrace equality, diversity and difference in our community. We believe that everyone has a right to live a full life the way they want to live it and that a diverse community enriches us all.



We acknowledge and thank those who generously participated in engagement with us. Quality Service Improvement recognises the support and advice of the Early Years team at Nillumbik Council

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EARLY YEARS SERVICES WITHIN NILLUMBIK

Services delivering funded kindergarten programs

35



Sessional standalone preschools

16



In Nillumbik the buildings are called sessional standalone preschools and the program is generally called funded kindergarten.

Integrated funded kindergarten program within a long day care service

21



The kindergarten program within the long day care settings is referred to as the funded kindergarten program. Programs within the long day care centres are referred to as integrated funded kindergarten programs.

Number of children registered to attend standalone sessional preschool in Nillumbik who:



live in the shire

670



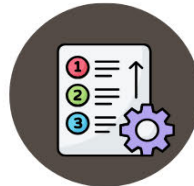
had a sibling connection in 2024

93



had a sibling connection in 2025

43



were identified as vulnerable/need to be prioritised

168



live on the border of the municipality

55



- 15 sessional stand alone preschools are in Council owned buildings. One preschool is operated by an independent school and not part of the council CRES

ENGAGING WITH OUR COMMUNITY

As part of this review we engaged with...



133

**Families who responded
to the Nillumbik
preschool survey**



7

**Services who attended
the online consultation
meeting**





Background and rationale

Nillumbik Shire Council owns and/or maintains 20 buildings that provide early years services within the Shire. Sessional standalone preschools operate from 15 of these buildings, with long day care services operating from the remaining five. Council do not manage any of these services. The majority of the early years services are operated by volunteer parent committees of management, with two preschools and one long day care service being operated by an external not-for-profit early years manager.

The Victorian State Government has committed to the delivery of Best Start, Best Life kindergarten reforms. These reforms incorporate the rollout of universal funded three-year-old kindergarten (often called preschool in Nillumbik), which is currently underway across Victoria, and additional funded hours for four-year-old kindergarten programs. This significant educational reform is being delivered through a staged rollout. The goal is for every three-year-old to be participating in a play-based program, delivered by an early childhood teacher, for 15 hours per week, by 2029 and for four-year-olds to be participating in 30 hours of funded play-based learning, to be called pre-prep, by 2036. These programs can be delivered in standalone preschools or as part of a long day care integrated kindergarten program.

Families within the Shire have the opportunity to choose which funded kindergarten program best suits the needs of their family and child/ren. Most families within the Shire currently choose to access their funded kindergarten programs at sessional standalone preschools rather than through a kindergarten program integrated into a long day care service. It is anticipated that with the increase in demand for these places, parents will no longer have a choice about where they can access their child's funded kindergarten program.

The Nillumbik Early Years Infrastructure Plan 2020–2026 (EYIP) was developed to address some of the proposed known changes in 2020 prior to the introduction of funded three-year-old kindergarten. This EYIP identified that there were a number of services that were older than 50 years and coming to the end of their life span and would need to be renewed to bring them up to contemporary standards and increase their capacity to meet the changing landscape of the early years sector.

In 2024, the Victorian Government announced that three and four-year-old funded kindergarten programs would be free. While this is the case for the sessional standalone preschool services, families are still required to pay fees when accessing their funded kindergarten year within a long day care service due to the costs associated with the childcare component of the service. Similarly, some sessional standalone preschool services will offer before and after kindergarten care for families who require care outside the scheduled kindergarten program. Families are required to pay a fee when accessing these wrap-around services.

Nillumbik Shire Council is funded by the Victorian State Government to operate a Central Registration and Enrolment Scheme (CRES) to allocate places in both the three and four-year-old funded kindergarten programs offered in the 15 standalone preschool services within the Shire. Families wishing to access a funded kindergarten within a long day care setting are required to register with the individual services. Some families may wish to attend a sessional standalone



preschool for the kindergarten funded program and then attend a long day care service on other days to support parents' work or study commitments. However, children can only access their funded kindergarten program at one or the other.

CRES – Priority of Access

Through the CRES, Nillumbik Shire Council allocates places to the funded three and four-year-old kindergarten programs in the 15 standalone preschools within the Shire and, as such, has a Priority of Access (PoA) policy which outlines the process for the allocation of preschool places. This PoA was reviewed in 2021 in consultation with service providers in response to the introduction of funded three-year-old kindergarten.

Historically, the CRES has been able to offer a place to all those who register to attend a funded kindergarten program within a sessional standalone preschool. However, with the changing landscape of longer hours and free kindergarten, there has been a significant increase in the number of families wishing to access their child's funded kindergarten program within a sessional standalone preschool. It is anticipated that as the hours for both three and four-year-old kindergarten programs increase, the demand will continue to rise. The CRES is no longer able to place all children wishing to access their funded three and/or four-year-old kindergarten program at a sessional standalone preschool.

In 2025, the standalone preschools within the Shire were able to provide:

- 434 three-year-old places
- 510 four-year-old places.

The CRES received:

- 501 registrations for three-year-old programs
- 549 registrations for four-year-old programs.

Due to the oversubscription for places in the first round of kindergarten offers, places were unable to be offered to:

- 23 Nillumbik resident children who wanted a place in a three-year-old program
- 29 Nillumbik resident children who wanted a place in a four-year-old program.

There were also approximately 54 non-residents who did not receive an offer in the first round.

A great deal of change is experienced throughout the offer process and into the following year, with many children ultimately being offered a place within one of their chosen program. These places are not always provided at their first preference service.

Rationale for a review of PoA

In preparation for the next phase of the Best Start, Best Life reform rollout, Council's Early Years team has been working with the Department of Education and an independent population data analyst over the past 12 months to understand the anticipated future population growth of the 0–5-year-old cohort across the Shire.

While Nillumbik's population does not anticipate significant growth in the coming years, there are pockets of Nillumbik that, in the next 10 years, will experience an undersupply of kindergarten places both within the sessional standalone preschools and the long day care integrated kindergarten programs.

The table below showing data on the population versus the capacity of early years services demonstrates that there will be some townships where families will be affected by the Best Start, Best Life reform rollout, while other townships will not be affected at all.



Nillumbik Shire - Population versus capacity of early years services

SA2	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036
Eltham	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	23
Hurstbridge	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Panton Hill - St Andrews	0	0	1	10	19	23	24	24	24	27	36	46	62
Plenty - Yarrambat	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Research - North Warrandyte	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wattle Glen - Diamond Creek	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	77
LGA total	0	0	1	10	19	23	24	24	24	27	36	63	163

These figures are inclusive of all services offering a kindergarten program, not just the sessional standalone services. The undersupply of places would be significantly higher across the Shire if we were to consider only the sessional standalone services.

Nillumbik Shire Council's PoA

As Council is a recipient of state government CRES funding, it must adhere to the guidelines set out in the Kindergarten Funding Guide and maintain PoA policies that:

- ▶ promote fair and equitable access to kindergarten programs
- ▶ adhere to the department's PoA requirements
- ▶ support all eligible children to access a kindergarten program, including those who face barriers to participation
- ▶ Avoid barriers to participation, especially for vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

It is also requirement that children deemed high priority as defined by the Department of Education's Kindergarten Funding Guide (as per the table below) are allocated a funded kindergarten place prior to any other children who have registered.

PoA criteria – Department of Education's Kindergarten Funding Guide

High priority children	Criteria and processes for verifying need(s)
Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in out-of-home care	<p>The child is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ eligible for Early Start Kindergarten or Access To Early Learning and/or ▶ the family, carer or legal guardian identifies the child as known to Child Protection or in out-of-home care, and/or referred by one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Child Protection ○ child and family services (family services referral and support team, Child FIRST/integrated family



	<p>services/a Services Connect case worker)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a Maternal and Child Health nurse ○ an out-of-home care provider.
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children	As part of the enrolment process, service providers must respectfully ask families, “Do you identify your child as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?” and record this information in KIMS (Kindergarten Information Management System).
Asylum seeker and refugee children	<p>The child or family:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ holds a visa or supporting documentation and information, including an ImmiCard, identifying the child (and/or parents, carers or legal guardians) as a refugee or asylum seeker, and/or ▶ has been referred as a refugee or asylum seeker by a CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse) outreach worker.
Children that meet the eligibility criteria for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy	<p>A child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ (or parent) holds a Commonwealth Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Veteran’s Affairs Card, and/or ▶ is identified on their birth certificate as one of a set of triplets, quadruplets or more.
<p>Children with additional needs, defined as children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ with an identified specific disability or developmental delay ▶ who require additional assistance to fully participate in the kindergarten program ▶ who require a combination of services that are individually planned 	<p>The child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ holds a Child Disability Health Care Card, and/or ▶ has previously been approved for the Kindergarten Inclusion Support (KIS) program, and/or ▶ has been referred by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the National Disability Insurance Scheme • Early Childhood Intervention Services • a preschool field officer • a Maternal and Child Health nurse ▶ or is assessed as having delays in two or more areas and is declared eligible for a second year of funded four-year-old kindergarten

After the inclusion of the Department of Education high priority criteria, CRES providers are then able to develop locally agreed criteria to further prioritise children when allocating places. Council’s current PoA is relatively straightforward. Following the allocation of places to high priority children, the locally agreed criteria, in order of priority, for the allocation of three-year-old funded kindergarten places are:

- ▶ residents

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- ▶ non-residents with a connection to the Shire and then
- ▶ non-residents without a connection.

The allocation of four-year-old places considers those who have attended the three-year-old program within the preschool, and therefore, the criteria, in order of priority, for allocation are:

- ▶ those who are residents and have attended the three-year-old funded kindergarten program
- ▶ those who are non-residents and have attended the three-year-old funded kindergarten program
- ▶ residents
- ▶ non-residents with a connection to the Shire and then
- ▶ non-residents without a connection.

Of those wishing to attend a funded three or four-year-old kindergarten program in 2025:

- ▶ 43 were considered high priority to attend a funded three-year-old program
- ▶ 61 were considered high priority to attend a funded four-year-old program.

There were also 56 children approved to access a second year of funded four-year-old kindergarten. All these children are required to be placed in a funded kindergarten program prior to any other children registered to attend.

In 2024, there was feedback from the community that they valued the community connection to a service, both in consideration of the families' proximity to a service and the families' previous connection to the service through the attendance of a sibling.

Given the significant supply and demand issues anticipated across the Shire within the next 10 years, along with the feedback received from families and services who have already felt the impact of the reforms, Council's Early Years team appointed an external consultant to undertake a review of the current PoA.

Review objectives

The review was conducted to gather information from stakeholders within Nillumbik Shire and from other local councils in Victoria to understand their approaches and the needs of families. The learnings from the review and consultation will assist with the development of a renewed PoA policy to support Council's allocation of places, with consideration for what is important to families.

It is important to note that the review of the PoA was undertaken in the knowledge that even with a change of PoA, the CRES, with the current service capacities, will not be able to offer places to all those that register to attend a sessional standalone preschool.

Methodology

The review aimed to understand the community's view on access to and the delivery of preschool services as well as other councils' approach to PoA based on their community's needs. It considered the challenges of providing access to services with the number of hours for funded kindergarten increasing. The consultant sought to understand Council's process and current approach, benchmark other comparable councils' approach to PoA, and consult with current standalone sessional kindergartens to understand what they have observed and what they believe needs to be considered by Council.

Benchmarking with other councils delivering the CRES

We reached out to other councils to examine how municipalities that deliver the CRES in their area are approaching changes in PoA and demand. A range of councils were asked to participate in a



benchmarking exercise to understand what they had considered as they reviewed and updated their PoA criteria. Some providers were identified as having similar challenges to Nillumbik Shire, including meeting the requests of families for services in high demand, balancing the request for siblings to be prioritised, along with enabling new families to access their preferred kindergarten. One council that we spoke with is trialling delivering preschool on weekends to assist in accommodating demand as funded kindergarten hours per child increase.

Some of the councils that participated were bordering councils that had recently reviewed their approach to PoA. We looked at the approaches of Frankston, Boroondara, Darebin, Whittlesea, Moorabool, Surf Coast Shire, Brimbank, Geelong and Port Phillip. We also reviewed online information on council websites in 2024; this included Banyule, Monash, Wyndham, Shepparton, Yarra, Hobsons Bay and Combined Preschools Southern Gippsland. It was evident during our discussions that the Best Start, Best Life reforms in Victoria provide new challenges in the allocation of places.

Traditionally, many families have been limited to accessing integrated kindergarten in a long day care setting rather than standalone kindergarten due to their financial or work circumstances. For example, families with greater flexibility in their work hours have been able to choose to access standalone preschool with aspects and programs that appeal to them. More families are likely to want to access standalone preschool programs now that they are fully funded (free) and program hours are becoming more accessible to working families.

The opportunity to apply some local criteria to the PoA criteria is vital in assisting councils to support the needs of their community. As the number of funded kindergarten hours increase for three and four-year-old programs, the demand for these services is likely to increase and the number of places in each service will decrease. Therefore, it is more likely that fewer people will receive their first preference of preschool. However, Council has done significant work to plan for the future changes and ensure that accessing standalone preschool in Nillumbik Shire is possible for families.

It was evident during our conversations and exploration that each local government area has its unique set of challenges, perceptions and needs from their community. The key themes that we found from discussions with other CRES providers included:

- ▶ Some services were still reviewing their PoA or had not commenced reviewing at the time of our benchmarking exercise.
- ▶ Demand for particular services limited council's ability to meet family's' preferences, and there was a concern of "overpromising" and not being able to deliver if too many local criteria were added to the PoA.
- ▶ PoA typically contain four to eight levels of criteria to support the allocation of places.
- ▶ Most services are using EnrolNow, a CRES database and some are new in their journey with EnrolNow software.
- ▶ Most services do not offer families the opportunity to accept an offer while remaining on the waiting list for a higher preference throughout the offer process.
- ▶ Some services allocate places more frequently than others over the course of the year.
- ▶ One service offers families only one preference, allocates the places according to that and then works with families that were not offered a place to secure a place.
- ▶ Some services allocate the three and four-year-old place in the one process and believe that this is a good process and highly valued by families as it provides certainty in preschool placement.
- ▶ Some services provide priority to siblings, and some recognise that they can no longer do this due to demand.
- ▶ For services that are applying a sibling priority in their criteria, there is a range in time frame, with some services recognising siblings attending in the same registration year only and others recognising siblings who attended the preferred preschool up to five years ago.



- ▶ Most services prioritise the closest preschool and recognise that this meets other municipal goals for the population’s health and the environment.
- ▶ Non-residents are low priority.
- ▶ Some services are prioritising those who register on time; for example, families who are rate payers or have siblings and register on time are prioritised over those who are ratepayers but register later.
- ▶ Some services recognise a “connection to council”, such as working/studying within the municipality, and some do not in their PoA. This is particularly important for prioritising non-residents. Some are more specific about the “connection to council” by stating what constitutes meeting this criteria, for example if the child’s parent/guardian is working within in the municipality (minimum two days a week) or the child is attending formal or informal care in the municipality (minimum of two days per week).

Additional to the PoA criteria, many councils recognised that you cannot communicate every reason that might reasonably fall under “exceptional circumstances” for a child. Below is the wording that Frankston uses to allow for some flexibility of allocation where needed.

Exceptional circumstances

Preschool registrations submitted with exceptional circumstances noted will be assessed by Children’s Services management. Examples of exceptional circumstances may include:

- ▶ *Parent with a disability*
- ▶ *Parent or child with a diagnosed mental health illness*
- ▶ *Homelessness*
- ▶ *Drug and/or alcohol misuse*
- ▶ *Court order that limit the choice of Preschool*
- ▶ *Multiple births*
- ▶ *Other situations verifiable by a child/family support service*

Supporting documentation may be requested to support the application and should include parent and child names, contact details of the person supplying the document, which should be less than 12 months old.

There are many exceptional circumstances that may meet this criteria, and therefore not all examples can be listed.

Generally, when we initially spoke with services about their PoA policies and decisions about their criteria and approach, it was evident that, over time, some significant changes are accepted as reasonable by families given there are a large number of children to accommodate, families’ priorities change, and not every scenario can be accommodated. An example of such a change is refining the sibling rule from five years to the current year or reducing the number of local priorities outlined in the PoA. Many families that will be affected by the renewed eligibility criteria will not know any different; others will expect their child to be able to access their closest preschool without understanding the complexities of registration and allocation.

It is more important than ever that communication about the mandated priorities and the local priorities and the intention of the CRES is clearly and positively communicated in language that focuses on equity and the variety of needs of individual children accessing education and care.

Community engagement

Engagement with the community regarding central registration and PoA included a survey to families and an online session with providers.



Consultation with families

To support the development of the Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan (KISP), which is currently being developed by Council and the Department of Education and to gather feedback from the community in relation to PoA, Nillumbik Shire Council developed a kindergarten survey. The survey was used to collect relevant data from families, service providers, educators and the broader community. The survey was hosted on Participate Nillumbik, with information distributed to families on the CRES database who agreed to be contacted, Maternal and Child Health Services offices, early years services within the Shire, libraries and Living and Learning centres. The survey was open from 11 November 2024 to 1 December 2024.

The survey received 133 responses. The quick poll received 51 responses. This poll provided people with the opportunity to respond to a key question of what matters most to them when selecting a kindergarten.

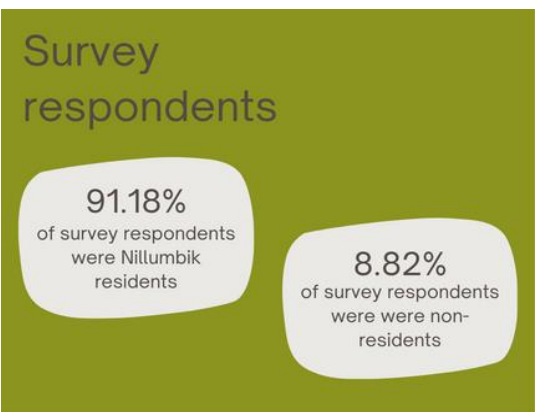
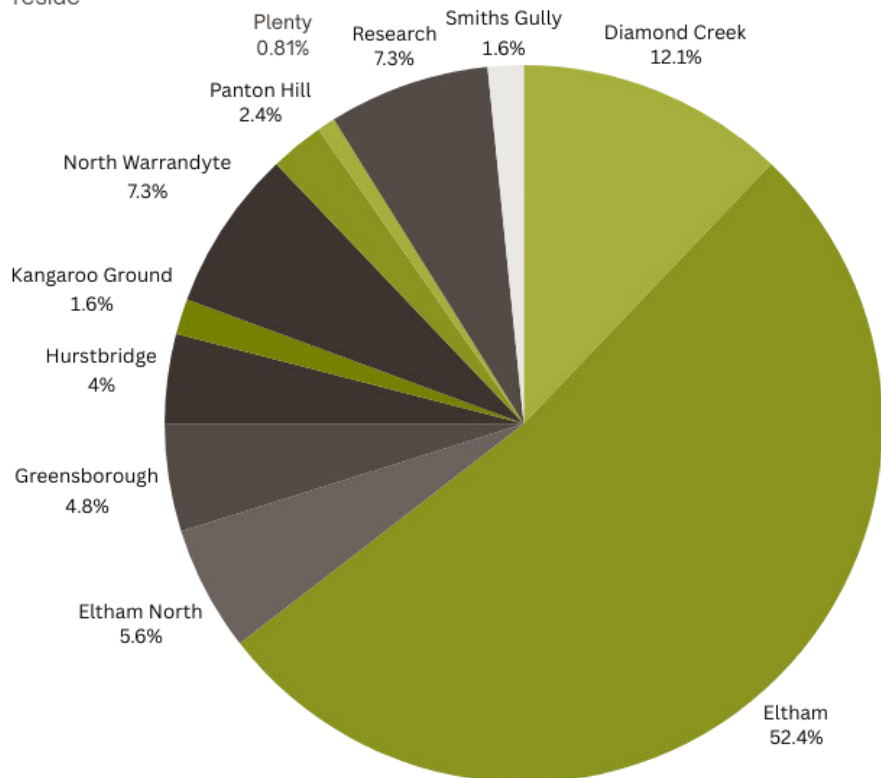
When asked, in relation to CRES, “What would you like to see included in Nillumbik's additional priorities? (Rank any factors you think should be considered in order of importance)”, 96.3% of people responded. A breakdown of the results are noted on page 14 of this report..

Participants were from Diamond Creek, Eltham, Eltham North, Greensborough, Hurstbridge, Kangaroo Ground, North Warrandyte, Panton Hill, Plenty, Research and Smiths Gully. 52.42% of survey participants were from Eltham, an area of Nillumbik Shire that is highly populated and has a high demand for preschool services.

There were no survey respondents from the following suburbs: Arthurs Creek, Bend of Islands, Christmas Hills, Cottles Bridge, Doreen, Nutfield, St Andrews, Strathewen, Watsons Creek, Wattle Glen, Yarrambat and Yan Yean. It is worth noting the lack of responses for these areas for consideration in future engagements with preschool families.

Suburbs where survey respondents reside

The pie chart below is a visual representation of where the survey respondents reside



When participants were asked if they were a resident of Nillumbik, 124 of 133 respondents indicated that they were, and 12 respondents (8.82%) indicated that they were non-residents.

Of respondents, 84.56% have a child/children five years of age or under. Overall, we were fortunate that a mixed group with a variety of opinions from across the Shire's preschool services were willing to share their perspective on what priorities they think should be considered for the CRES. There are valuable learnings for Nillumbik Shire Council to consider from this consultation.

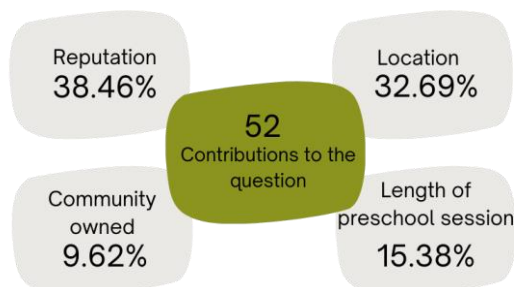


What we heard from the community survey

- ▶ 84.56% of survey respondents were parents or carers, with one grandparent, three educators and 17 identifying as “other” in completing the survey.
- ▶ Some respondents had multiple children who were five years of age or under.
- ▶ 83.4% had three or four-year-old children at the time of completing the survey.
- ▶ 34.78% had three-year-olds and 38.26% had four-year-olds.
- ▶ Just over 40% had a child aged 0–2 years, and 24.35% had a child six years of age or older.
- ▶ Only 16.9% answered the question “What year and preschool did your child attend?”
- ▶ 100% answered the question “Do you know three and four-year-old preschool is now free?” 98.53% responded “Yes”.
- ▶ Most families who responded indicated a preference for standalone preschool or a combination of sessional standalone preschool and childcare.
- ▶ Siblings being able to attend the same service was important to many respondents, and this was consistent with our consultation with providers.
- ▶ Of those who answered the question about what service their child currently attends, 53% indicated they were attending sessional standalone preschool, 10% sessional standalone preschool and childcare, 14% indicated they were attending private or community-managed childcare, and 23% indicated that their children were not attending a funded kindergarten program in 2024.
- ▶ 73.53% indicated they drive to preschool or childcare.
- ▶ 22.06% indicated they walk to preschool or childcare.
- ▶ 93.38% travelling 15 minutes or less to get to preschool or childcare.

Additionally, a quick poll to families asked, “What matters most to you when selecting a preschool?” (Quick poll results: 51 contributions) (In order of importance selected)

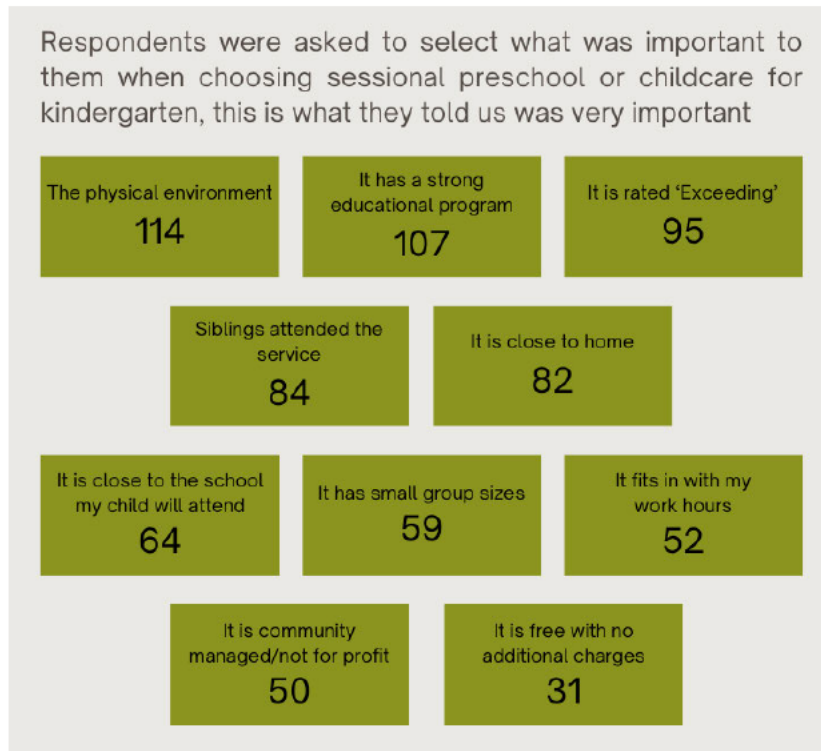
- ▶ Reputation 38.46%
- ▶ Location 32.69%
- ▶ Length of preschool session 15.38%
- ▶ Community owned 9.62%
- ▶ Size of the centre 1.92%
- ▶ Number of enrolments 0
- ▶ Group size 0



Families completing the survey were asked to rank from ‘very important to not important at all’, a number of attributes associated with selecting a kindergarten program at either a sessional stand-alone preschool or a kindergarten program within a long day care centre. The responses are displayed below. The responses indicate that the physical environment is considered highly by families with sibling’s attending the service ranked fourth closely followed by the service being close to home. Cost and the management of the service were of least importance.



Respondents were asked to select what was important to them when choosing sessional preschool or childcare for kindergarten, this is what they told us was very important



*133 respondents answered and selected up to five factors that were important to them. The responses above were the top "very important" factors selected.

Survey respondents indicated that the most important factors when choosing a sessional standalone preschool or childcare for kindergarten were the physical environment, a strong educational program, being close to home, being close to the school the child will attend, being community managed, the National Quality Standard rating of "exceeding", a strong educational program, where siblings had attended the service, small group sizes and fitting in with work hours. Factors that were less important included being close to public transport and funded kindergarten in standalone or integrated kindergartens operating during school holidays.

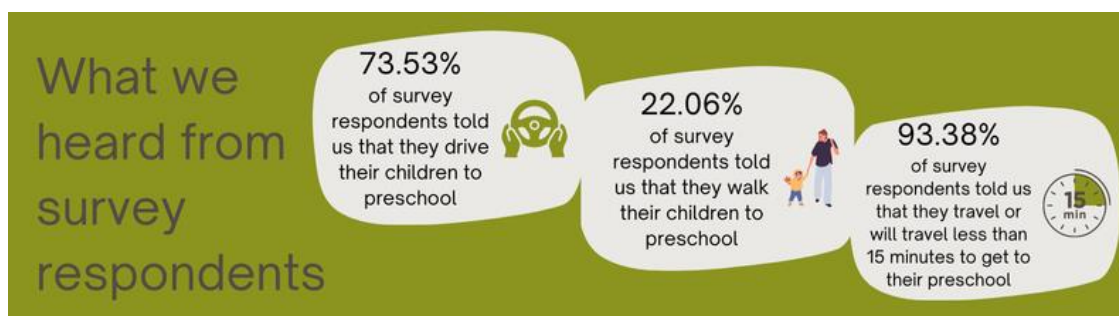
Survey respondents were asked to rank a list of factors that they thought were important to be included in Nillumbik Shire's PoA criteria. The below table demonstrates the order of importance by those who completed the survey. As respondents were able to rate all priority listings the total adds to more than 100%

(Note that 133 answered this question; therefore, it had a high engagement rate compared with some of the other questions in the survey.)

	Priority in order of importance	Ranking (%)
1	Children who are currently enrolled in the preschool	48.31
2	Children who live in Nillumbik Shire	19.64
3	The preschool is the closest to the child's residence	16.38
4	Children whose sibling is attending or has attended in the last two years	15.87
5	Children living within the township or suburb of the preschool	9.48
6	Parent/guardian working or studying in Nillumbik	1.08
7	Children of families intending to live in Nillumbik at the time of attending kindergarten	0.99
8	Children of rate payers who do not live in the Shire	0.00



Survey respondents were asked if there was “anything else you would like to share with Council relevant to future planning for preschool in Nillumbik?” Eighty-three respondents added additional comments that they wanted to share with Council. This information was further explored and has been included in Appendix 3 of this report



“Kindergarten places should be allocated to those closest residents and who have had previous children/ siblings attending and therefore have a relationship. It’s ridiculous that people are being rejected by their closest preschool and those they have a previous connection with or are having to wait for third round offers.”

“I think the key points are covered; very important to consider current siblings attending or who have attended, proximity to preschool and living within the suburb and then within in the shire as relevant to allocation process.”

“I think the importance of a sibling attending a service that their sibling has attended cannot be underrated. A younger sibling spends a lot of time picking and dropping older siblings at their preschool. They know the environment and even more importantly they know the educators and they know them. This familiarity creates a strong and exciting transition to their preschool year and therefore allows for a strong start to their education. Children learn best when they feel confident, comfortable, and safe.”

Consultation with services

Council promoted an online session for providers of standalone preschool to attend. Representatives from seven preschools attended the online session, including enrolment officers, centre directors and committee of management representatives. One attendee was the Preschool General Manager at The Y, who is managing the response to the Best Start, Best Life reforms across a number of regions and municipalities. The attendance of this participant added depth to the experience of the group.

The participants were given an overview of the State Reforms, including updates to the PoA items that are mandated by the government and that apply to all services across the state to support the reforms. They were advised of the opportunity for Council to apply additional criteria relevant to the demand and population of Nillumbik Shire.

Services indicated that the things that mattered to current parents accessing standalone preschool include:

- ▶ access to outdoor spaces that allowed children to explore

Quality Service Improvement



- ▶ smaller group numbers; most participants indicated that services with smaller licence capacity were preferred by the families that attended their service
- ▶ having siblings attending the same preschool; it was communicated that the sense of community, familiarity with the centre and the convenience for the family were key reasons behind this preference
- ▶ a bush location
- ▶ being walkable to home if possible
- ▶ the quality of the program
- ▶ days and hours offered for the program
- ▶ teachers and educators.

The observations and insights shared with us by the people we spoke with generally aligned; it was evident that some services are highly engaged with the topic and have a firm opinion on ensuring that the criteria include features that enable them to keep the same families attending and represented the view that some families should access funded kindergarten through an integrated kindergarten rather than the standalone preschool program. This feedback was particularly in relation to children who are younger, families who do not volunteer and a perception that the reform meant that there are families who do not necessarily value the unique offering of standalone kindergarten who are now registering. There was also concern that people that volunteer or have volunteered at a preschool on committee of management are not being prioritised, with the belief verbalised that they should be prioritised over families who have not contributed to the service. This concept does not factor in peoples' inability to volunteer or the possibility that people volunteer in the community in other ways. There appeared to be an undeveloped understanding of what a vulnerable child or family "looks like" and some concerns about being able to meet their needs without the right information.

Other items that were raised that are relevant and helpful to Council as they work with providers on the reforms include:

- ▶ concerns about children repeating and the criteria (that possibly it was too easy to attain approval for a child to repeat)
- ▶ an observed increase in non-immunised children attending, which is frustrating for the service and results in an extra burden to work with families
- ▶ opportunities to review and improve communication to families about preschool changes; this included the term "free", the difference between standalone and integrated kindergarten and other information about what people can expect from an early years service
- ▶ indications that the longer days were too long for three-year-olds and observations that some children were struggling with longer days in preschool
- ▶ a concern that some families were "hedging their bets" by registering across a few councils, particularly the bordering councils of Banyule, Whittlesea and Manningham
- ▶ the desire to have more information about how the allocation works at Nillumbik Shire
- ▶ the suggestion that some families had not been honest about their address during the preschool process and that people living in the suburb of the preschool had missed out; this frustrated people in the community and is important to factor into the wording of PoA and any evidence that families might need to provide to secure their registration.

Some of these items raised are not within Council's ability to change as they sit within state jurisdiction and processes; however, it was important to hear about preschools' experiences of the current changes and the challenges they face. Many valuable insights were shared, and the discussion was very helpful for Nillumbik Shire Council to understand the current views, challenges and preferences of the services that attended.

PoA themes arising from community and service engagement

The themes that have been identified as critical considerations include:



Continuity of education. Being offered a place for four-year-old preschool at your three-year-old preschool allocation was important to families.

Proximity to service. Respondents indicated that those residing 30 minutes away should not get priority over those closer to the service and that enabling children to go to their closest preschool increased the possibility to walk. It was also mentioned that families perceived that living closer connected you to the community and to the school that your child is likely to attend in the local area.

Siblings. Being able to attend the preschool that older siblings attend or attended in the past. Some respondents suggested recognising siblings who had attended up to five years previously; this is a challenge given the increased hours per child that will need to be accommodated in the future.

Concern about reduced appetite for volunteers. It was communicated through feedback from service representatives that some families felt that it was unfair that those that had volunteered had not been given access to the service that they had supported. It was articulated that this discourages families to volunteer.

Aftercare. Consideration for families that need to access aftercare at the service to access sessional preschool.

Borders. Some families' closest preschool is in another municipality. This was raised by parents and needs to be monitored to gain a picture of the size of this challenge for families. There is potential for Council to work in partnership with bordering municipalities to best support children and families living near council borders.

Overall, based on what we heard during our consultation and from the survey results, the following priorities should apply to meet the needs of the children within the Shire:

1. Children that meet Priority 1
2. Children repeating
3. Nillumbik Shire residents
4. Closest preschool to the Nillumbik Shire resident
5. Children who have attended for three-year-old kindergarten
6. Children who have a sibling attending or who attended in the past (where it can be accommodated)
7. Non-residents with a connection to Nillumbik Shire – work/study/volunteer/grandparents
8. Non-residents with additional/high priority children that do not meet Priority 1
9. Non-residents where Nillumbik Shire preschool is their closest preschool
10. Non-residents with no connection.

Within all the consultation it became apparent that non-residents should be prioritised at a lower level than residents

Geographical proximity

Despite the data indicating that most families drive their children to preschool, there was a resounding desire for families to be allocated a place at their closest preschool to allow them to walk to preschool and connect locally. This concept supports active living and is in line with health and wellbeing goals for residents of Nillumbik Shire. Supporting access to the local preschool and encouraging families to walk also supports reducing emissions and traffic. Speaking with other councils about identifying the closest preschool to home, this is generally measured “as the crow flies”.

The preference was that people within the municipality receive PoA over families that reside in neighbouring municipalities. There are examples where this might not be best for the child, for example where other family members that assist in their care and support reside within Nillumbik



Shire or where the service within Nillumbik Shire is identified as more appropriate for the child and their needs (e.g. in cases of a physical or cognitive need that might be better supported at a service with a specific layout, program or workforce skills).

There was recognition that there are children who need to be prioritised for the service who might not necessarily live or work in the municipality. Continuing to review current enrolment data to understand what the implications are as the hours of funded kindergarten increase will be vital. The prioritisation of children might need to be reviewed further as we attain a better understanding of how the reforms affect the demand for funded kindergarten.

While most children are accessing a preschool within 15 minutes of their home by car, there are a number of children accessing preschool who do not reside within the area. In 2024, 429 children in both three and four-year-old preschool did not attend their closest service. The 2023 Nillumbik profile data provided by the Department of Education identified that there were 1046 Nillumbik residents attending a Nillumbik service; 156 children were Whittlesea residents, 155 were Banyule residents and 50 were Manningham residents. These are all bordering municipalities, and it is realistic to assume that some families' closest kindergarten is not necessarily within their LGA.

The Department of Education data also shows that there are children who reside in Nillumbik who chose to access their kindergarten program outside of the Shire. In 2023 there were 206 children who live in Nillumbik accessing kindergarten programs in Banyule with 101 accessing their kindergarten program in Whittlesea, 24 accessing kindergarten programs in Manningham and 17 accessing a kindergarten program in Murrindindi. Families may chose this option for a number of reasons including program hours, route of travel or closer to home than a Nillumbik service.

Of the children who live outside of the Nillumbik Shire but attend Nillumbik kindergartens, many have a connection to the Shire, and this is recognised in the current PoA but at a lower priority than Nillumbik residents. While it is vital that Nillumbik residents have access to sessional kindergarten, there are also some circumstances for children residing outside the municipality where the best choice for them is accessing preschool within Nillumbik Shire. Current state government policy emphasises accessibility and reducing barriers to families to access early years education and care.

Sibling priority

There are currently a number of municipalities reviewing sibling attendance as a possible priority criteria. All municipalities will have their own unique challenges in meeting demand. Therefore, it is not possible to compare them “apples for apples” with each other. However, it is worthwhile looking across the spectrum of this issue. The table on the following page shows the current position for the councils we spoke with; it is important to note that many are currently in a re-evaluating phase. With increased demand on services as preschool hours increase, it is unclear how long the criteria of having a sibling will be able to be sustained. Note in the table below that some councils have siblings included in the priority criteria; others do not (e.g. Geelong and Moorabool have connection to shire as a lower priority). Of those with the sibling listed in their criteria, some do not have a time period listed, and others have limited it to within two to five years or to the year of enrolment. Many are reviewing their PoA criteria for 2026 before sharing this information.

	Same year	2 years	3 years	Sibling/prior connection	Connection to service	Connection to shire
Frankston		✓				
Banyule						
Boroondara				5 yrs		
Hobsons Bay		✓				
Darebin		✓				
Whittlesea					✓	
Moorabool						✓



Geelong						✓
Surfcoast Shire				Currently reviewing and possibly will be 5 years		
Brimbank	✓					
Monash			✓			
Wyndham				No specific timeframe		
Shepparton		✓				
Glen Eira	✓					

Considering the increased demand and the importance of being able to accommodate all siblings if Nillumbik lists siblings as a priority, we were interested in the councils that have decided to commit to accommodating siblings in the same year of registration. We spoke with Glen Eira Council, who have recently made a determination about siblings for 2026 based on the predicted demand and equity of access. They have moved to accommodating siblings attending in the same year.

Some councils approach it in relation to the service; for example, one has included a co-located school (this is less common). Casey does not promise to provide places for siblings; however, they do advise parents they will try and accommodate siblings at the same centre.

Prioritising siblings can discriminate against a family where there is one child and no siblings. Often family and sibling rules can restrict the number of new families to a service. Brimbank has siblings at the same preschool to reduce drop off load. They do not apply this to co-located services such a preschool on a school site. They do not use historical family attendance as a reason to prioritise one child over another; this approach is becoming more common as the demand increases on services. Monash accommodate the past three years, an approach that they have applied for the past 13 years; however, they advise that this is likely to be reviewed as preschool hours increase. At the time of discussions in late 2024 when we collected this information, some had not yet decided on a final approach for 2026 registrations.

Definition of a vulnerable child

The discussion with participants during the online session raised a query about children being identified as a higher priority if they or their parents held a Health Care Card. Some participants communicated that they thought that this was unfair. While this discussion was brief, it raised a bigger question about people’s general understanding of what the indicators of vulnerability are for a preschool-aged child. There is value in Nillumbik continuing to understand the variation of vulnerability that is present in the children living in Nillumbik and sharing some vital information, including more inclusive language and thinking about vulnerability and accessibility for preschool children and their families. Councils’ role in supporting mandated priority for vulnerable children is to advocate to the Department of Education for a review of this mandatory priority where they receive new information from their community about how Priority 1 is applying and how effective it is in supporting vulnerable children.

Right service for the child

Speaking with other councils and service providers, we have observed that preschool selection decisions made by families might be more about reputation, perceived quality, sentimental choice (someone in the family has attended) and proximity to home, school or work rather than suitability for the individual child. There is an opportunity to strengthen communication about selection of preschool based on the individual child’s needs and preferences. It is not guaranteed that sending a child to the same preschool as their sibling, for example, will create the best experience for the individual child, who might benefit from a different environment or program focus.



Councils can play a role in supporting families' understanding of early years services and their priorities in terms of the services they are choosing. Some service representatives in the consultation felt that there are now more parents focused on accessing sessional standalone preschools for the purpose of childcare rather than the program itself and its educational value. Some also shared their belief that sessional standalone preschool delivers a superior education and care experience for children, and integrated services can be looked at negatively. Many families were once unable to access standalone kindergarten programs due to the limited hours offered for the programs (e.g. due to work commitments). Now that these programs are fully funded and offering extended program hours, they are more accessible and increasingly desired by families. It is important that the benefits of both models are shared with families to support informed choice and to assist Nillumbik Shire in meeting demand in the future. There is a place for both models to provide education and care to preschool children.

During our consultation with service providers, there was an opinion shared by some that some families should be accessing integrated kindergarten through long day care for reasons such as the child being less independent, needing more care in areas such as toileting and other factors that they felt affected the program and were a burden on teachers. Some participants identified the range in readiness of children, with one service suggesting that older children should be prioritised over younger children, with the view that the younger three-year-olds were not always ready for preschool, which affected the program delivery.

All children mature at different rates, and therefore the current cutoff dates set by the Department of Education are the best guide for allocation of places to children. Providers should be mindful of discriminating based on age and developmental ability; discussions with the Department of Education and the Municipal Association of Victoria did not support the suggested approach of prioritising older three-year-olds over younger ones. Anecdotally, other work that QSI has been involved reflects some interesting shifts:

- ▶ Toilet training research involving interviewing preschool, long day care centres and Maternal Child Health nurses indicates many children are toilet training later and kindergarten rooms are not set up well to accommodate this change.
- ▶ Discussions with families and professionals have highlighted general changes to family life and priorities. This includes, but is not limited to, pressures on parents to meet the cost of living, families living very busy lives and general health and wellbeing following the pandemic.
- ▶ Discussions with many providers have revealed their observation of a decline in long day care demand as families are accessing free sessional preschool at another service rather than paying long day care fees for the days their child can attend preschool.
- ▶ A recent Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) report found that price was a key consideration for families looking for care and education. Therefore, sessional standalone preschool, which can be accessed for free, is highly sought after. Accessing sessional preschool is often a fiscal preference for many families, rather than integrated long day care that incurs additional costs to families. Cost is a huge factor when making choices about care and education.

Current policy

The current Nillumbik PoA and Officer Policy Guidelines are relatively straightforward and have met most of the community needs to date. Following the Department of Education's mandatory Priority 1 criteria, Nillumbik Shire Council's local priorities include recognition of attendance at three-year-old kindergarten, resident status and those intending to be residents (which requires a Contract of Sale provision to prove future status as a resident). The next priority provides for parents/guardians of children who have a connection to Nillumbik, which includes parents/guardians that work or study in the municipality, closest preschool and child who has attended childcare in the municipality. Only one connection is required to meet this eligibility criteria.





For four-year-old preschool enrolments, children who attended three-year-old preschool at the service are prioritised, with a higher priority for ratepayers/residents. Non-residents with no connection are the lowest priority to access preschool in Nillumbik.

Nillumbik's current PoA is more clearly outlined in the table on page 26.

Recommendations

A series of recommendations have been made based on our research, knowledge of the early years central registration function and what we have learned from benchmarking other organisations.

PoA

There are key priorities for families in regard to accessing standalone sessional kindergarten. Enabling children to access the same service for three- and four-year-old kindergarten is highly valued, as well as proximity to the service and offering siblings an opportunity to attend the same service where possible. It was also clearly evident that there is a view that if you are a resident of Nillumbik, you should be given priority over non residents.

Our recommendations are outlined as follows:

- ▶ With the above elements in mind, it is recommended that Nillumbik apply a new scoring/weighted system that accumulates to recognise the following priorities:
 - residents and soon-to-be residents
 - repeating at the service
 - allocation to the same preschool where the child attended three-year-old preschool when requested
 - children's closest service (where they have applied for the closest service)
 - other contributions to the Shire, such as owning a business or studying or volunteering in the Shire
 - non-residents that live geographically close (or for whom the Nillumbik preschool is their closest preschool)
 - consider limiting sibling priority to within two years, and as the demand increases move to within the same year or having the same year as a higher score and within two years a lower score to ensure families with kids in at the same time are prioritised
 - allowance for some discretion where there are extenuating circumstances for a child, their family or guardians.

The priorities above have not been listed in order of importance; however, it is vital that the findings from the survey and the consultation with service representatives are considered by Council.

This "accumulating score(weighted) system" is used successfully in many councils to assist with the final prioritisation of access. A point allocation system ensures that the priorities identified as important through the consultation process can be weighted in order of importance and a child can have a number of priorities recognised within their registration. A points allocation will likely ensure less children are sitting on the same priority and therefore less instances of a 'random electronic selection' being used to allocate the place.



Table 2 on page 28 provides details about the recommended scoring/weighted system and Appendix 1 outlines some “real-life scenarios” of how the scoring would apply to different circumstances of a preschooler.

- ▶ Council should support criteria that recognise families’ proximity to their preferred standalone sessional kindergarten. Allocating children to their closest preschool also supports Council and community goals, such as reducing emissions and keeping people active and connected in their local area.
- ▶ Council should address the sibling preference issue by providing:
 - criteria that prioritise children whose sibling is attending the service in the same year as the applicant
 - a score for siblings recognising that this element is important; a low score that will not considerably discriminate against children without siblings accessing preschool services
 - information about seeking a service that focuses on meeting your individual child’s education and development needs. That this should be an element that is considered, as well as siblings having attending the same service.
- ▶ Council should further explore the opportunity to split out non-residents and residents to assist with meeting resident demand for access to preschool within Nillumbik over those that do not reside within the municipality. The suggested weighting will effectively support prioritising residents over non-residents.
- ▶ Redefine the Nillumbik connection priority and apply this to residents and non-residents. By splitting it out further, children whose families/guardians meet multiple connection criteria will be prioritised over those who meet one connection criteria.
- ▶ Apply weighting of the criteria in alignment with the order of importance of factors identified by survey respondents and service providers. Allow accumulating scores to support families who meet multiple criteria. Offer a different score for siblings to reduce disadvantaging the first child in a family and one-child families.
- ▶ Ensure residents are prioritised for access where possible and learn more about non-residents accessing services in Nillumbik. There was a view from some people who attended the consultation and from the survey that people that live within the municipality should be prioritised over those living outside the municipality. This is an issue that many councils are grappling with. In terms of making it as easy possible to access care and education, this seems like an arbitrary barrier. However, it is important to residents, and the criteria weighting must continue to reflect this. Providing access to people that contribute to Nillumbik Shire, such as those running a business or working in Nillumbik, is also important for the community, so this needs to be weighed up continuously.
- ▶ Council should consider the needs of residents in bordering councils, where the service is the closest in location to their home or meets a particular need for their child that the services in their municipality or closer to home do not meet (e.g. their learning and development needs).
- ▶ Council should communicate with bordering municipalities about accommodating families who are disadvantaged by an arbitrary council boundary. Review the families over the next year to see how many have fallen into the category that applies and review how families can be accommodated in future. If there are fewer than 50 families, for example, it might be useful to have a conversation with those families to understand why they are applying within the municipality to understand whether the reason is proximity to their home, a program-specific interest or something else.



- ▶ Council should coordinate with neighbouring shires and municipalities on enrolment cutoff dates and enrolment offer dates to reduce families “hedging bets” until they receive an offer from the other municipality.
- ▶ As demand increases for places, Council could consider the addition of a score in the PoA for children on the boundary. It could also limit sibling applications to residents of Nillumbik Shire only.
- ▶ A human rights approach could be weaved into communication to assist families understand the “bigger picture” about accessing preschool and the importance of the PoA adapting according to community needs and changes in policy.
- ▶ Support general knowledge of what the PoA’s and Council’s role is, to support better understanding of “vulnerability” and the types of supports that some children need to get the best start in life.
- ▶ Consider offering three- and four-year-old kindergarten at the same time to support consistency of education for the child and to assist with planning for educators and families.

Proposed options

A table of the PoA options has been included below on page 26. The table includes Nillumbik Shire Council’s current PoA and criteria and three options for Council to consider.

Options A and B allocate places according to a straight order of priority that has been determined through the consultation as the order of importance

All three options recognise:

- ▶ mandated children that meet Priority 1 criteria
- ▶ children who have attended three-year-old kindergarten. They will be given priority to attend the same service for four-year-old kindergarten
- ▶ current residents.

Option A

Prioritises in order:

- ▶ Resident children who live closest to their preferred preschool,
- ▶ Resident children who have a sibling in attendance/attended in the past
- ▶ Other residents of Nillumbik Shire
- ▶ Children from neighbouring municipalities that where the preschool is the closest to their place of residence
- ▶ Children from neighbouring municipalities who have a sibling in attendance/attended in the past
- ▶ Children from neighbouring municipalities who have a connection to the Shire such as parents who work/study in the Shire
- ▶ Any other non resident child

Allocations are made based on a straight level of priority

Option B

Prioritises in order:

- ▶ Resident children who live in the same suburb as their preferred preschool,
- ▶ Resident children who have a sibling in attendance
- ▶ Resident children who have a sibling attend the preschool in the past 2 years



- ▶ Other residents of Nillumbik Shire
- ▶ Children from neighbouring municipalities who have a sibling in attendance at the same time
- ▶ Children from neighbouring municipalities who have a connection to the Shire such as parents who work/study in the Shire/closest preschool to their place of residence
- ▶ Any other non-resident child

Allocations are made based on a straight level of priority

Option C

Gives higher weighting scores which accumulate according to the following criteria:

- ▶ Residents
- ▶ Children who live close to preferred preschool,
- ▶ Children whos siblings will be attending the preschool in the same year or in past years (different weightings will be applied to these)
- ▶ Non-residents with or without any other connection to the Shire

Recommended Option

It is recommended that moving forward, Nillumbik Council should implement Option C, being the implementation of the accumulating scored/weighting allocation as outlined in Table 2 below.

This practice serves other councils well and can be easily included in the current central enrolment software system to automate the process.

Scenarios showing how Option C would be applied in practice are shown in Appendix 1

Where two children score the same points, the system will allocate randomly.

Table 1: Straight priority allocation options – Three- and four-year-old preschool

Preschool	Current PoA	OPTION A	OPTION B
Priority 1 (Level 1) – State government defined	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in out-of-home care ▶ Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children ▶ Asylum seeker and refugee children ▶ Children eligible for the Preschool Fee Subsidy ▶ Children with additional needs, defined as children who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ require additional 	Process that could be used to verify need(s): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in out-of-home care ▶ The child is attending a three-year-old kindergarten program through Early Start Kindergarten or Access to Early Learning, or is referred by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Child Protection ○ Child and family services (family services referral and support team, Child FIRST/integrated family services/Services Connect case worker) ○ A Maternal and Child Health nurse, or ○ An out-of-home care provider ▶ Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children ▶ As part of the enrolment process, service providers must respectfully ask families, “Is your child Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?” and record this information in in 	



	<p>assistance to fully participate in the preschool program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ require a combination of services which are individually planned ○ have an identified specific disability or developmental delay 	<p>KIMS (Kindergarten Information Management System).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Asylum seeker and refugee children ▶ An appropriate visa identifies the child and/or parents as a refugee or asylum seeker. ▶ Children eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A child or parent holds a Commonwealth Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Veteran's Affairs Card, or ○ multiple birth children triplets or quadruplets ▶ Children with additional needs, defined as children who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ require additional assistance to fully participate in the kindergarten program ○ require a combination of services which are individually planned ○ have an identified specific disability or developmental delay ▶ The child: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ is assessed as having delays in two or more areas and is declared eligible for a second funded year of kindergarten ○ holds a Child Disability Health Care Card ○ has previously been approved for the Kindergarten Inclusion Support Package, or referred by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the National Disability Insurance Scheme ▪ an Early Childhood Intervention Service ▪ a preschool field officer or ▪ a Maternal and Child Health nurse ▪
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Preschool	Current PoA	OPTION A	OPTION B
Priority 2 (Level 2)	Children who are /intending to be Nillumbik residents or children of Nillumbik rate payers AND (is attending a 3 year old program at the preschool) – applies to	Children who have been assessed as requiring a second year of either 3 or 4 year old kindergarten	Children who have been assessed as requiring a second year of either 3 or 4 year old kindergarten



	four year old registrations Children who are/intending to be Nillumbik residents or children of Nillumbik rate payers		
Priority 3 (Level 3)	Children who have a connection to Nillumbik ie parents work or study in the Shire or the childcare arrangements are in the Shire (four year old only - Children who are not residents/ratepayers but are enrolled in the 3 year old program at the preschool.)	Is attending a 3-year-old program at the preschool (4-year-old ONLY)	Is attending a 3-year-old program at the preschool (4-year-old ONLY)
Priority 4	Children who are non-residents and do not have a connection to Nillumbik (four year old children - who are residents/intending to be residents or are ratepayers but are not enrolled in the 3 year old program at the preschool)	Is a current resident AND The preschool is the closest to the child's home (as the crow flies)	Is a current resident AND Families who reside in the same suburb as the preschool
Priority 5	Children who are non-residents and do not have a connection to Nillumbik (four year old – children who are not residents but have a connection to the preschool/Nillumbik)	Is a current resident AND have/had a sibling attending the service	Is a current resident AND have a sibling attending the service
Priority 6	Applies to for year old registrations – children who are not residents and do not have a connection to the preschool/Nillumbik.	Any other residents of Nillumbik Shire	Families who are residents and have had a sibling attend the service in the past 2 years
Priority 7		Non resident whos sibling will be attending the preschool at the same time	Any other residents of Nillumbik Shire



Priority 8		Non resident whose closest preschool is a Nillumbik Preschool	Non resident with a close connection to the Preschool ie closest preschool/sibling is attending in the same year (only one connection is honoured)
Priority 9		Non- resident who have a connection to Nillumbik (only one form of connection is required) Including: Sibling has attended preschool parents/guardians who work or study in the municipality	Non- resident who has a connection to Nillumbik Including: Sibling attended preschool in past year, parents/guardians who work or study in the municipality (only one form of connection is honoured)
Priority 10		Children who are non-residents, and do not have a connection to Nillumbik	Children who are non-residents, and do not have a connection to Nillumbik

Table 2: Accumulating scoring(weighted) allocation system – Three- and four-year-old preschool

OPTION C - Priority criteria

3-year-old			4-year-old		
DE requirements	100 points		DE requirements	100 points	
Repeat children	95 points	At same preschool or	Repeat children	95 points	At same preschool or
	80 points	At different preschool		80 points	At different preschool
Residents	50 points	Include note that must be residents during years of enrolment (not at time of registration)	Attended 3-year-old program at Preschool applied for	90 points	
Non-residents	35 points		Residents	50 points	Include note that must be residents at during years of enrolment (not at time of registration)
Closest preschool	10 points	To place of residence (Acknowledges connection to preschool)	Non residents	35 points	
Sibling (attending)	10 points	Acknowledges connection to	Closest preschool	10 points	To place of residence.



preschool in same year as another sibling)		preschool and ease of family engaged in one preschool			(Acknowledges connection to preschool)
Sibling attended in prior 2 years	5 points	Acknowledges past connection	Sibling currently enrolled (attending preschool in same year as another sibling)	10 points	Acknowledges connection to preschool and ease of family engaged in one preschool
Connection to the Shire (relevant to non residents only)	4 points	Examples: parent works/studies in Shire	Connection to the Shire (relevant to non residents only)	4 points	Examples: parent works/studies in Shire

Other allocation considerations

- ▶ Council currently offers families a function to accept an offer (at a lower preferred preschool) but wait for a higher preference whilst the offer process is underway. Many organisations are not offering this option as they believe this is an added complication. To support equity of access it is recommended that this process should be reviewed.
- ▶ One smaller council accepts one preference, allocates what they can and then makes calls to all families (average of 50 per year) who did not receive their first preference to enable the most suitable placement to be made. This council reported that this system works well for their community. There might be value in decreasing the number of preferences a family can register for as the hours of education increase and the demand for service changes.
- ▶ Providers indicated that communication to families about the process and the changes to early years could improve. There is currently potentially misleading communication from the Department of Education or political parties in relation to “free preschool”. However, improvement in communication was also mentioned in terms of families understanding application dates, open days and other factors that assist families and children with their preparation and choice for early years education.
- ▶ Some services are offering enrolment for both three and four-year-old preschool in one process. This enables the child to be allocated a place at the same preschool for three- and four-year-old kindergarten. This could be something that Council considers to assist educators and families with their planning.
- ▶ It was indicated by providers that a lot of time is spent assisting families to understand what “free preschool” means. This is consistent with feedback we have received in other early years projects and is an administrative burden on providers. There is room for improvement, and it will be important to seek feedback regularly from providers and families about how Council provides information about early years services available in Nillumbik Shire.
- ▶ With many standalone preschools being operated by committees of management and shifts in the demographic of children accessing preschool, a larger variety of families now consider standalone preschool accessible due to kindergarten funding and the program hours making it more accessible to more families. Previously, children that attended were generally from families who highly valued standalone sessional kindergarten as a starting point for their child’s education and care.
- ▶ Other issues to be monitored, include:
 - There is a sentiment that volunteering at a preschool gives you the right to expect a place for your child over other children that apply.



- Privacy and confidentiality issues need to be further explored, particularly for more vulnerable children who will gain priority access (e.g. requests from providers to have more information about children before they start). It is vital that individual children's information is retained only by staff directly working with the children and families. There is a risk of information privacy breaches for individual children and their families. There are also potential opportunities to discriminate or exclude new children and families if children are perceived as being prioritised over others. This is particularly the case in services that demonstrate great service "ownership" and a sense of entitlement to access.
- ▶ Some historical criteria that have been identified as elements that families would like to see retained, implemented or strengthened might inadvertently create barriers for other cohorts in the community. An example of this is families where a parent or guardian volunteers at the service to have preferential access to their preschool of choice or prioritising sibling attendance, which can disadvantage children who do not have a sibling or whose parent/guardian does not have the capacity to volunteer on the parent committee. Volunteers are highly valued; however, the CRES process must be equitable; services possibly need to articulate to families that volunteering does not guarantee preferential access to the service.
- ▶ It was suggested by one service that prioritising older children in the age group would be fairer, and it was intimated that the Department of Education agreed to prioritising "older children" within the age criteria. However, this suggestion is contrary to the Victorian Government's priority criteria. The suggestion of prioritising older children in the cohort was discussed with the Department of Education and the Municipal Association of Victoria, and they both confirmed it was not in line with the current policy. The rate that children mature and are ready for preschool varies; date of birth is only one element of preschool readiness.
- ▶ Most providers indicated that the policy change that allows approved children to repeat three-year-old preschool was likely to mean that most repeats would happen a year early and could be allowed for. The data available on the number of children repeating indicates that currently there is a very small number of repeats that needs to be considering when finalising intake numbers. Currently, approximately 30 children attending sessional standalone preschools within Nillumbik Shire repeat four-year-old kindergarten each year.
- ▶ As demand for services increase, offering preschool places will remain a contentious issue; there are some communities in Nillumbik that are more engaged in contributing to and advocating for priorities to retain the traditional sessional preschool experience. Communication, consultation and transparency will remain vital.

Supporting processes and practices

- ▶ Review the practices of information-sharing to protect children's privacy and the risk of members on committees of management having more information about children or family than they need for their role.
- ▶ Add a line to the role of the preschool services enrolment officer section of the PoA policy and in service/lease agreement to clearly articulate who should have access to and under what circumstances private information about a child and their family should be accessed. Ensure practices are in place to limit access to those who need information for the core purpose of their job as educator or administrator. Information at a committee of management level should be limited to cohort information to assist with resourcing etc. and should not be at the individual level of detail.
- ▶ Review communication about central enrolment to providers and families, determine key messages, apply a readability tool to communications and test with a group of families as a way of improving communication regarding preschool and how PoA works. As this was raised



by preschools and emphasised as creating a challenge, it would be important to allow them to provide feedback on significant early years communication to families.

- ▶ The new policy needs to retain the notion that council reserves the right to assess and make decisions based on individual circumstances. This will support the intention of a central registration system function, increasing the emphasis on equity and reducing barriers and the variation in circumstances for individual children seeking to access early years services.
- ▶ Continue to engage with providers on the effects of the change, which allows three-year-old preschool children who have approval to repeat three-year-old preschool.
- ▶ Include a gender equity lens across the PoA policy by including the family and gender equity officer in the review of the recommended options.
- ▶ Apply the proposed points system for 2026 enrolments and review and evaluate outcomes after the enrolment allocation process has been completed.

Supporting change

It is a significant time of change for the early years sector. Council has a role to play in supporting this change. Based on our discussions, we recommend:

- ▶ Investing in training and development for services to strengthen the focus on child access and prioritising all children's education needs above individuals' needs.
- ▶ Consider reigniting and refreshing the early years network that Nillumbik successfully delivered before the pandemic.
- ▶ Consider engaging a facilitator/consultant to support work around adapting to the Best Start, Best Life reform with a focus on building providers' capacity to understand what the wholesale change means in terms of supporting contemporary knowledge and practice, which would include supporting vulnerability, understanding the barriers to accessing education and care and supporting philosophical change in service delivery to meet the statewide subsidised preschool changes.
- ▶ Share a timeline of review and evaluation of the new PoA to allow continued feedback and ensure people are kept informed.
- ▶ Work with providers on determining the amount of information that they need from families to deliver quality education and care, particularly for those that need extra support to transition into preschool (where identified). Some services mentioned items that would assist them during the online consultation.



Useful links

Victoria State Government Kindergarten Funding Guide – www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/funding/J641-Kindergarten-Funding-Guide-v6.pdf

Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission – <https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/human-rights/>

Nillumbik Gender Equity and Inclusion Plan – <https://www.nillumbik.vic.gov.au/Community/Diversity-and-inclusion/Gender-equity/Gender-Equality-Action-Plan-2022-25>

Nillumbik Priority of Access and Officer Policy Guidelines

Nillumbik Social Atlas – [https://atlas.id.com.au/nillumbik/Preschool_Enrolments_Hexagons_200m_a\\$P_Revision_B.pdf](https://atlas.id.com.au/nillumbik/Preschool_Enrolments_Hexagons_200m_a$P_Revision_B.pdf)

Appendix

Appendix 1 – Scenarios based on accumulating scoring/weighing allocation

Scenario-based application of the proposed priority criteria

	3 year old	Score 3-year-old	Total Score	Score 4-year-old	Total Score	Comments
Child 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Meets vulnerability criteria ▶ They are a Nillumbik resident ▶ Applying for same preschool in 4-year-old program 	100 50 N/A	150	100 50 90	240	
Child 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ They are a Nillumbik resident ▶ The preferred preschool is their closest preschool to their home ▶ Applying for same preschool in 4-year-old program 	50 10 N/A	60	50 10 90	150	
Child 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ They are a Nillumbik resident ▶ Their sibling attends 3-year-old program and will attend the same preschool in 4-year-old preschool in the same year as this applicant ▶ Applying for same preschool in 4-year-old program 	50 10 N/A	60	50 10 90	150	
Child 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ They are a Nillumbik resident ▶ The preferred preschool is their closest preschool to their home ▶ Their sibling attends 3-year-old program and will attend 	50 10	70	50 10	160	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the same preschool in 4-year-old preschool in the same year as this applicant ▶ Applying for same preschool in 4-year-old program 	10 N/A		10 90		
Child 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ They are a Nillumbik resident ▶ The preferred preschool is their closest preschool to their home ▶ They had a sibling attend the same preschool within the previous 2 years (N/A to 4 year old) ▶ Applying for same preschool in 4-year-old program 	50 10 5 N/A	65	50 10 N/A 90	150	
Child 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ They are not residents of Nillumbik ▶ The preferred preschool is their closest preschool to their home ▶ Applying for same preschool in 4-year-old program 	35 10 N/A	45	35 10 90	135	
Child 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ They are not residents or ratepayers of Nillumbik ▶ They have a connection to the Shire ie work/volunteer and live in Nillumbik and assist with pick ups ▶ Applying for same preschool in 4-year-old program 	35 4 N/A	39	35 4 90	129	
Child 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Non-resident/ratepayer ▶ Meets vulnerability criteria 	35 100	135	35 100 90	225	

Appendix 2 – Where two children score the same amount of points

Where two children score the same points in the central registration system, the system will allocate places randomly.

If after using the above order of allocation, there are still a greater number of registrations than places available at the specified preschool, the remaining places will be allocated by a computerised ballot process.

In the best interests of all children and families, Nillumbik reserves the right to factor in aspects such as group size, group dynamic and other special considerations when allocating registered places to children (this might be at the service end when they are considering session allocation).

Preschool registrations submitted with exceptional circumstances noted will be assessed by Children's Services management. (Frankston had this. This could set off a surge in "exceptional circumstances", but it is an option to allow the protection and prioritisation of places in exceptional circumstances.




Examples of exceptional circumstances might include:

- a parent with a disability
- a parent or child with a diagnosed mental health illness
- homelessness
- drug and/or alcohol misuse
- A court order that limits the choice of preschool
- multiple births
- other situations verifiable by a child/family support service.

The list above is not exhaustive; there are many exceptional circumstances that might meet these criteria and therefore it is not possible to list all reasons that would meet the definition of exceptional circumstances.

Where exceptional circumstances are identified, supporting documentation may be requested to support the application and should include parent and child names and contact details of the person supplying the document, which should be less than 12 months old.

For further information on the DET priority of access please visit:

 education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/Priority-of-Access-Criteria.aspx

Appendix 3 – Responses to kindergarten survey to families 2024

Please see separate attachment of survey results.



Participate Nillumbik

Report Type: Form Results Summary

Date Range: 11-11-2024 - 01-12-2024

Exported: 03-12-2024 13:11:16

Open

Kindergarten survey
Kindergarten in Nillumbik

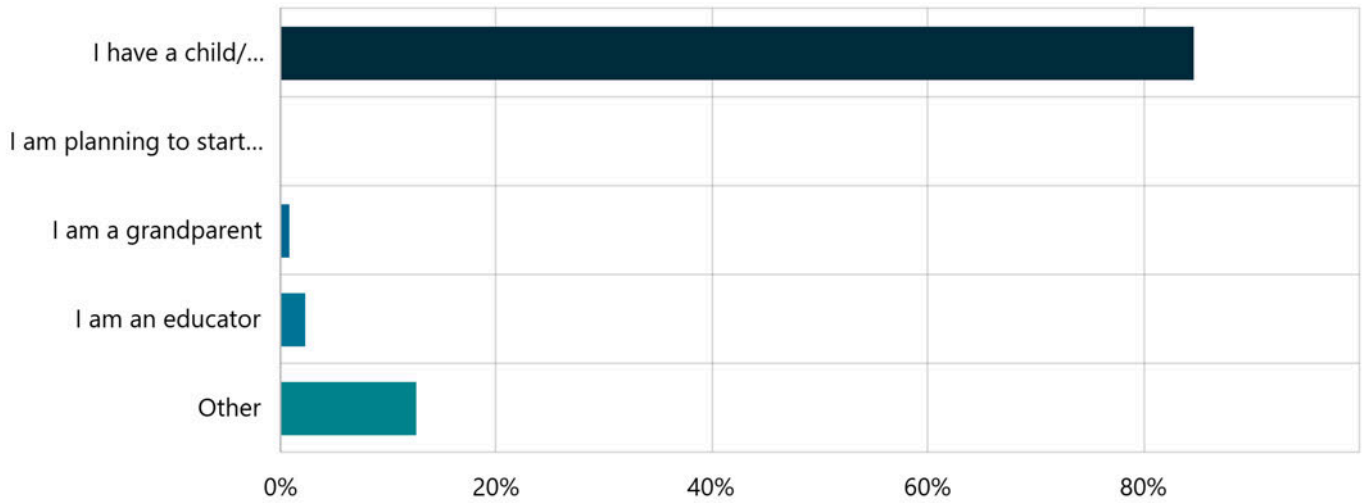
133
Contributors

136
Contributions

Contribution Summary

1. Which of the following statements applies to you Required

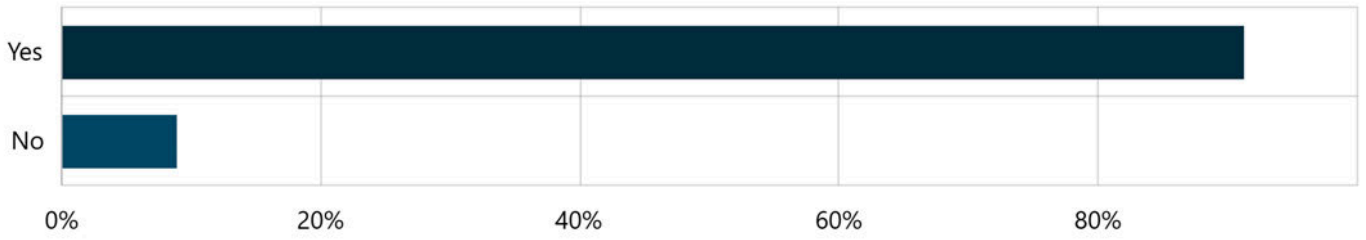
Multi Choice | Skipped: 0 | Answered: 136 (100%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
I have a child/children 5 years of age or under	84.56%	115
I am planning to start a family in the near future	0%	0
I am a grandparent	0.74%	1
I am an educator	2.21%	3
Other	12.50%	17
Total	100.00%	136

2. Are you a resident of Nillumbik? Required

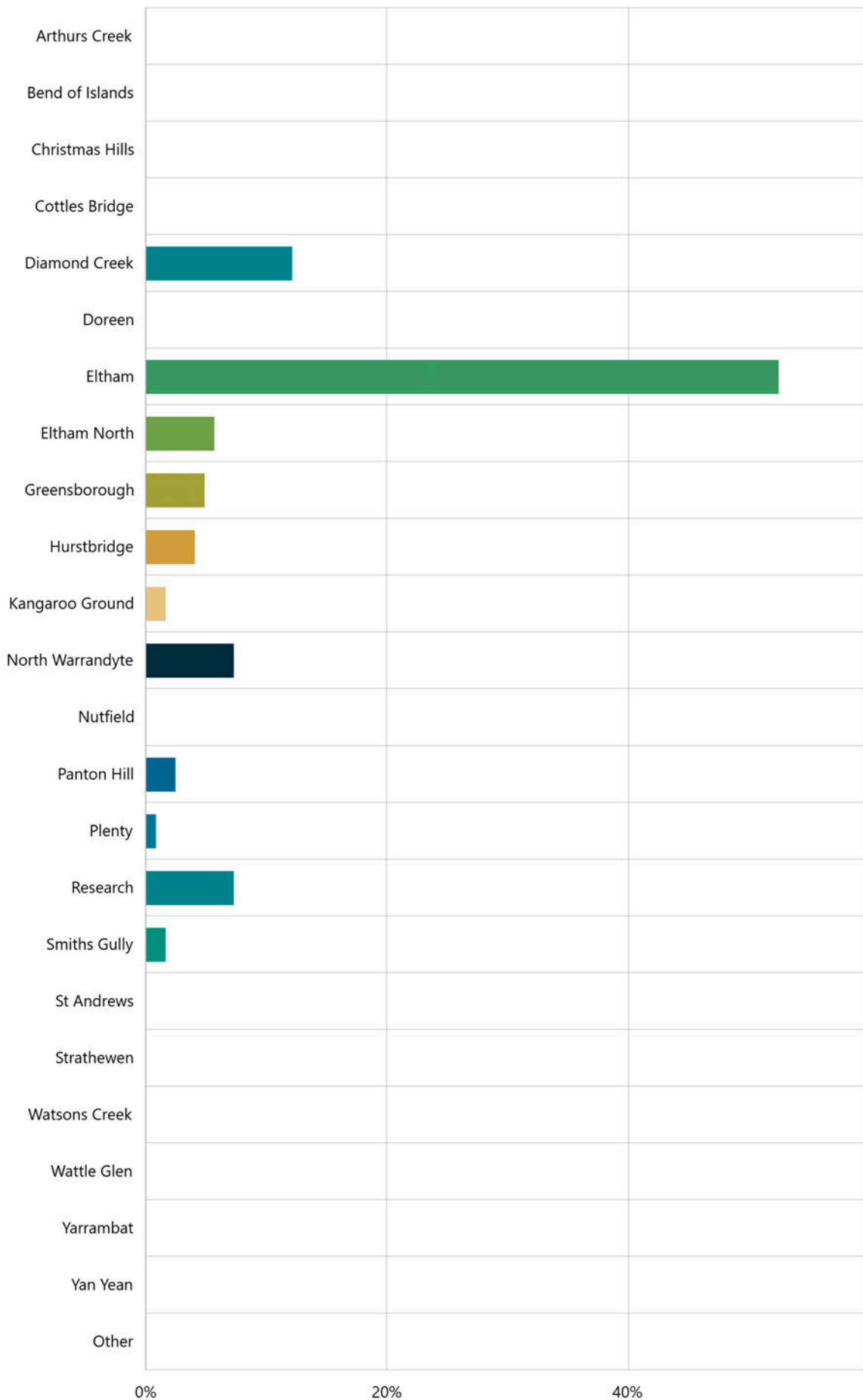
Multi Choice | Skipped: 0 | Answered: 136 (100%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
Yes	91.18%	124
No	8.82%	12
Total	100.00%	136

3. Suburb

Multi Choice | Skipped: 12 | Answered: 124 (91.2%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
Arthurs Creek	0%	0
Bend of Islands	0%	0
Christmas Hills	0%	0
Cottles Bridge	0%	0
Diamond Creek	12.10%	15
Doreen	0%	0
Eltham	52.42%	65
Eltham North	5.65%	7
Greensborough	4.84%	6
Hurstbridge	4.03%	5
Kangaroo Ground	1.61%	2
North Warrandyte	7.26%	9
Nutfield	0%	0
Panton Hill	2.42%	3
Plenty	0.81%	1
Research	7.26%	9
Smiths Gully	1.61%	2
St Andrews	0%	0
Strathewen	0%	0
Watsons Creek	0%	0
Wattle Glen	0%	0

Yarrambat	0%	0
Yan Yean	0%	0
Other	0%	0
Total	100.00%	124

4. Suburb/postcode Required

Short Text | Skipped: 124 | Answered: 12 (8.8%)

Sentiment

No sentiment data

Tags

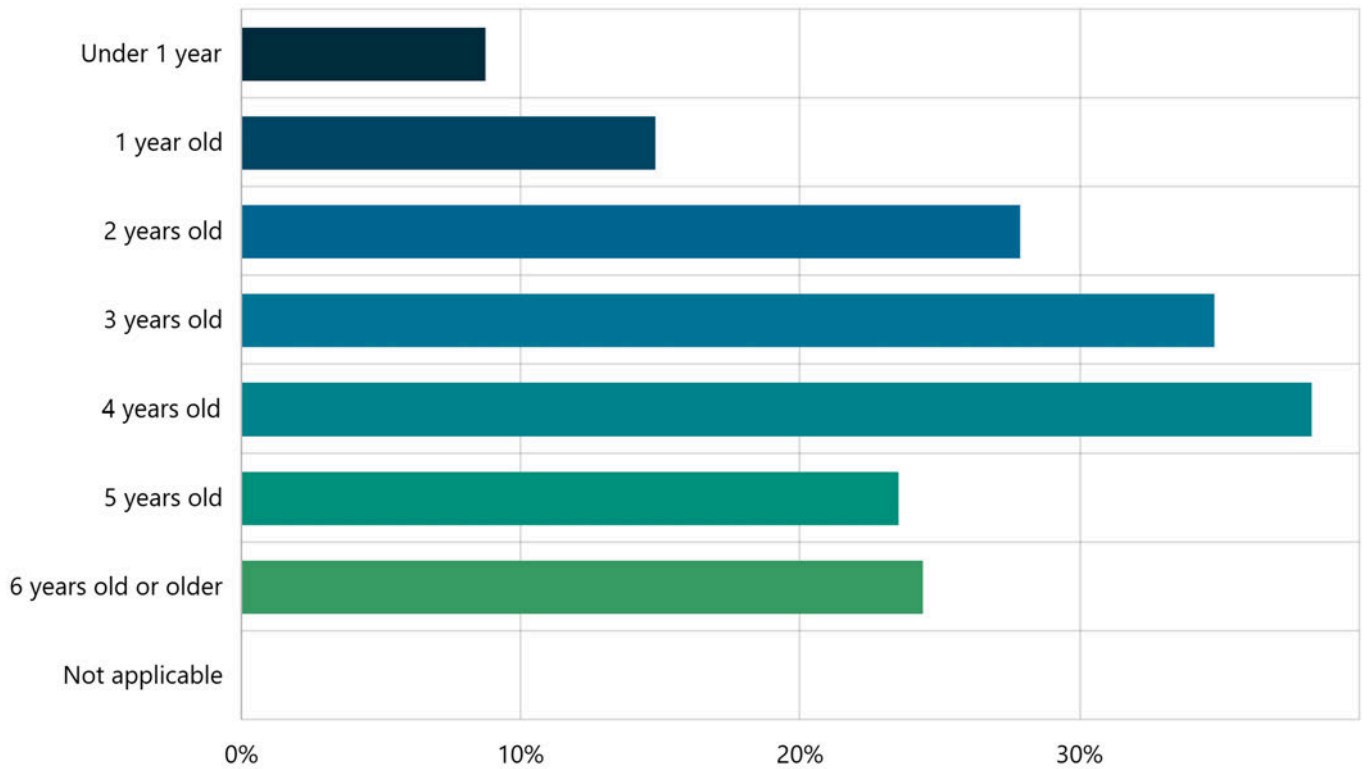
No tag data

Featured Contributions

No featured contributions

5. How old is your child/children? Required

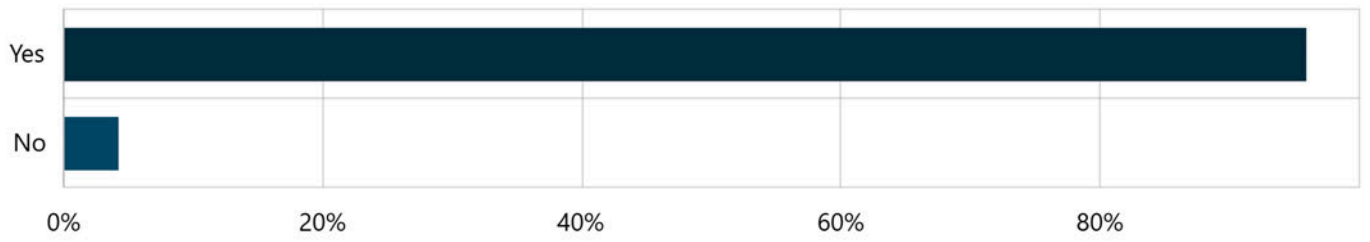
Multi Choice | Skipped: 21 | Answered: 115 (84.6%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
Under 1 year	8.70%	10
1 year old	14.78%	17
2 years old	27.83%	32
3 years old	34.78%	40
4 years old	38.26%	44
5 years old	23.48%	27
6 years old or older	24.35%	28
Not applicable	0%	0

6. Did your child attend a kindergarten/preschool program?

Multi Choice | Skipped: 112 | Answered: 24 (17.6%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
Yes	95.83%	23
No	4.17%	1
Total	100.00%	24

7. What year and kindergarten did your child attend?

Short Text | Skipped: 113 | Answered: 23 (16.9%)

Sentiment

No sentiment data

Tags

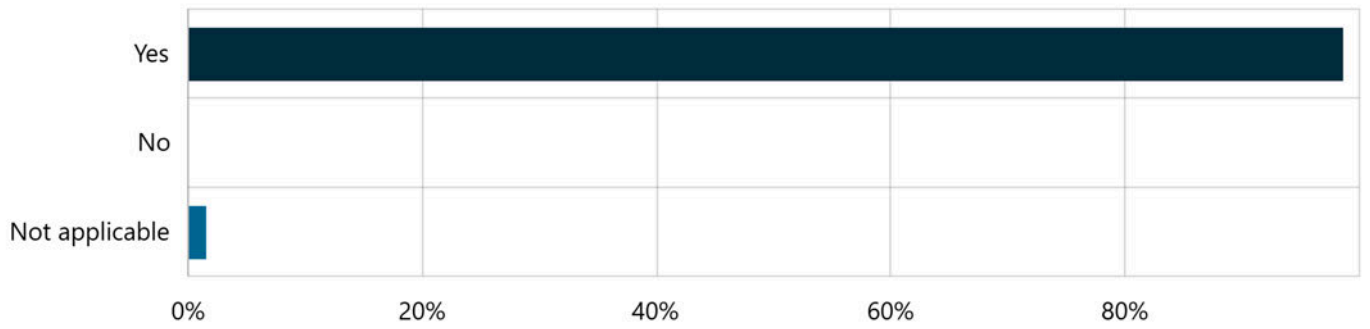
No tag data

Featured Contributions

No featured contributions

8. Do you know 3 and 4 year old kindergarten is now free? Required

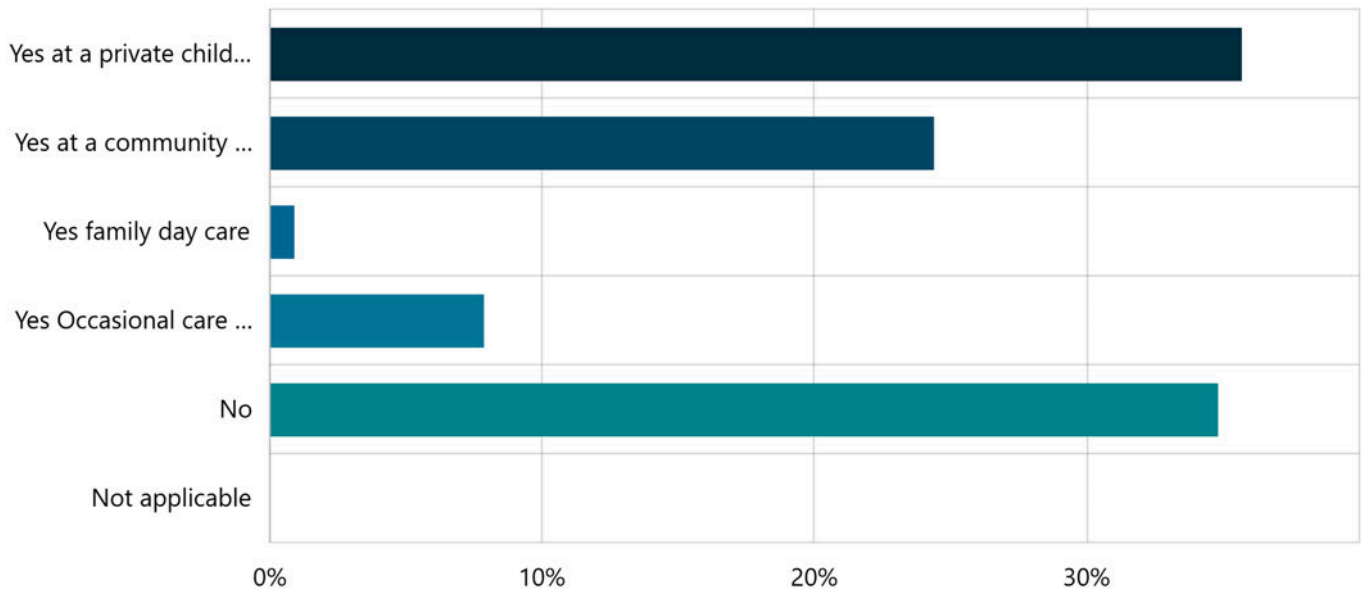
Multi Choice | Skipped: 0 | Answered: 136 (100%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
Yes	98.53%	134
No	0%	0
Not applicable	1.47%	2
Total	100.00%	136

9. Are you accessing formal child care for your child/children this year? Required

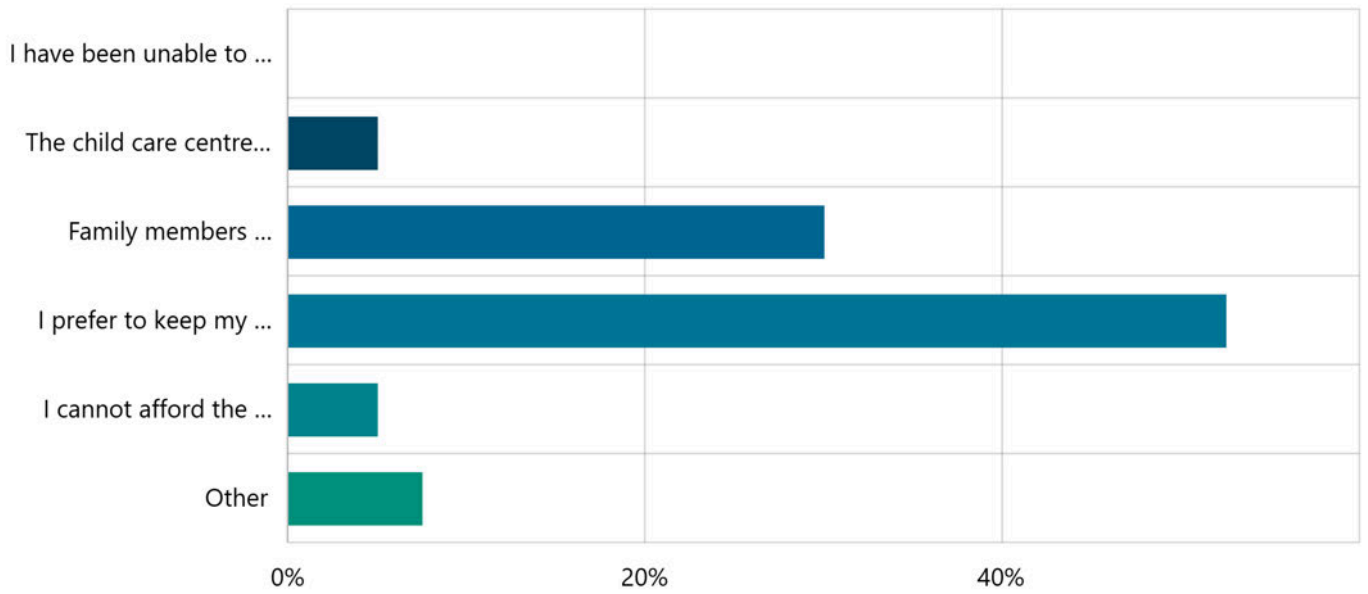
Multi Choice | Skipped: 21 | Answered: 115 (84.6%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
Yes at a private child care centre	35.65%	41
Yes at a community managed child care centre	24.35%	28
Yes family day care	0.87%	1
Yes Occasional care centre	7.83%	9
No	34.78%	40
Not applicable	0%	0

10. Why is your child/children not attending child care this year?

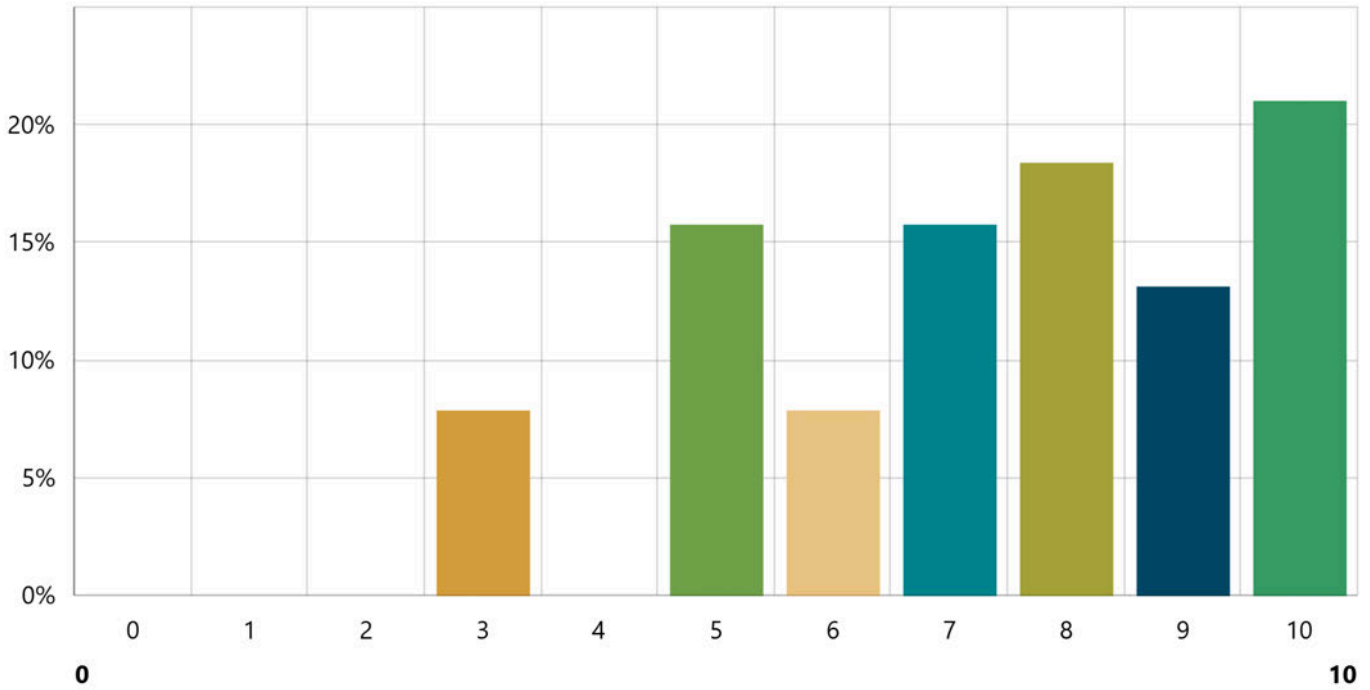
Multi Choice | Skipped: 96 | Answered: 40 (29.4%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
I have been unable to find a place at a child care centre	0%	0
The child care centre I want my child to attend has no vacancies	5.00%	2
Family members provide child care when I need it	30.00%	12
I prefer to keep my child at home	52.50%	21
I cannot afford the costs associated with child care	5.00%	2
Other	7.50%	3
Total	100.00%	40

11. On a scale from 1 - 10 (1 poor to 10 excellent) how satisfied are you with the education and care your child receives at this service? Required

Slider | Skipped: 98 | Answered: 38 (27.9%)

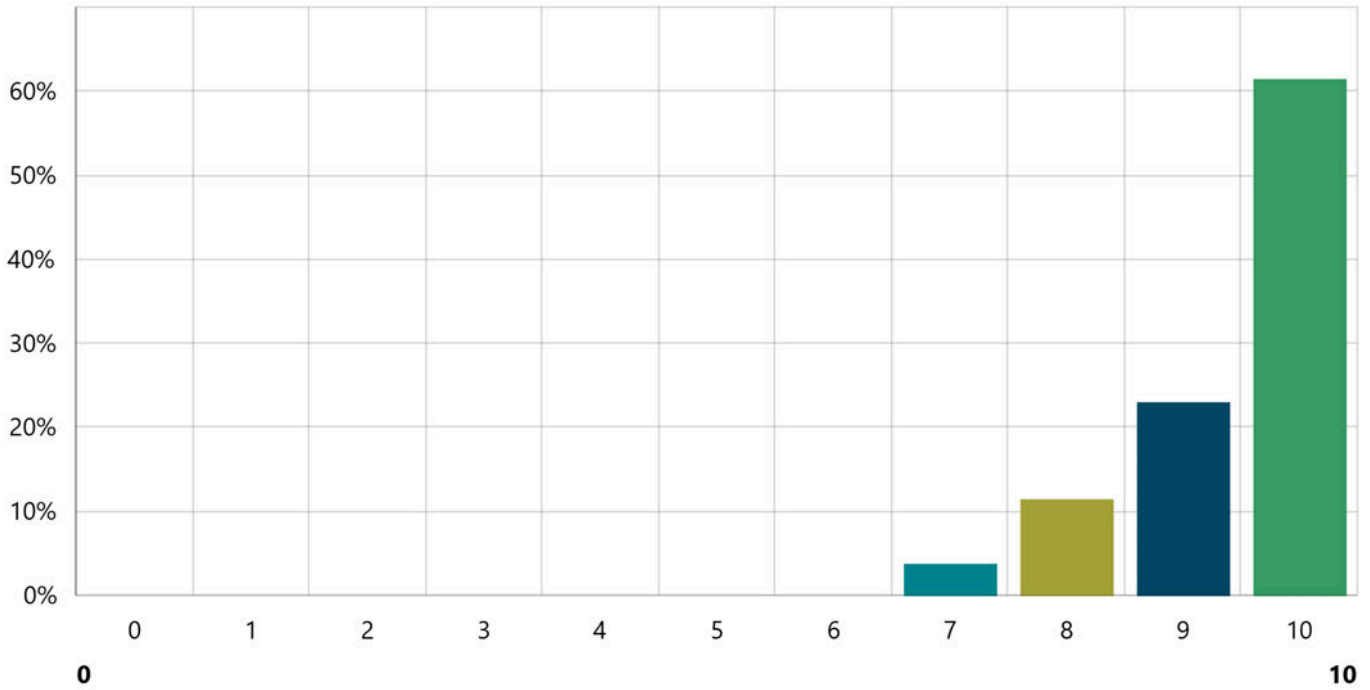


Count	Average	Median	Min	Max
38	7.37	8.00	3	10

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
0%	0%	0%	7.89%	0%	15.79%	7.89%	15.79%	18.42%	13.16%	21.05%
0	0	0	3	0	6	3	6	7	5	8

12. On a scale from 1 - 10 (1 poor to 10 excellent) how satisfied are you with the education and care your child receives at this service? Required

Slider | Skipped: 110 | Answered: 26 (19.1%)

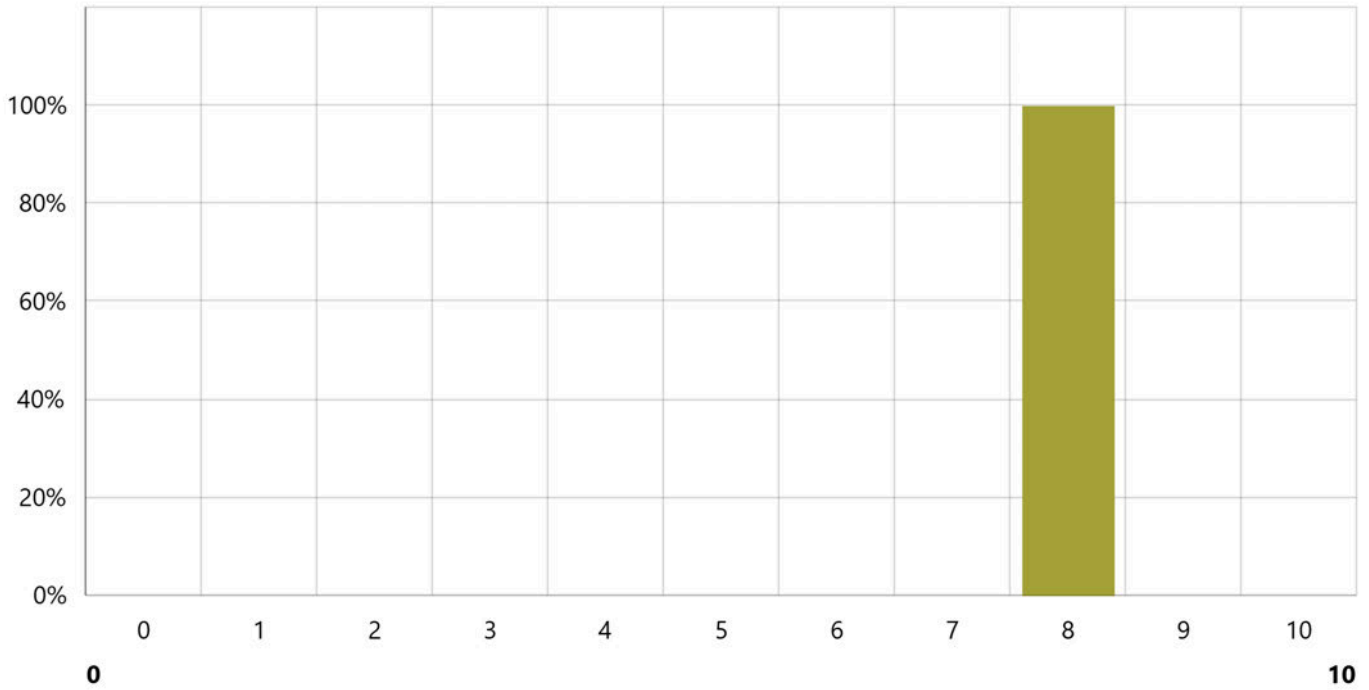


Count	Average	Median	Min	Max
26	9.42	10.00	7	10

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3.85%	11.54%	23.08%	61.54%
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	6	16

13. On a scale from 1 - 10 (1 poor to 10 excellent) how satisfied are you with the education and care your child receives at this service? Required

Slider | Skipped: 135 | Answered: 1 (0.7%)

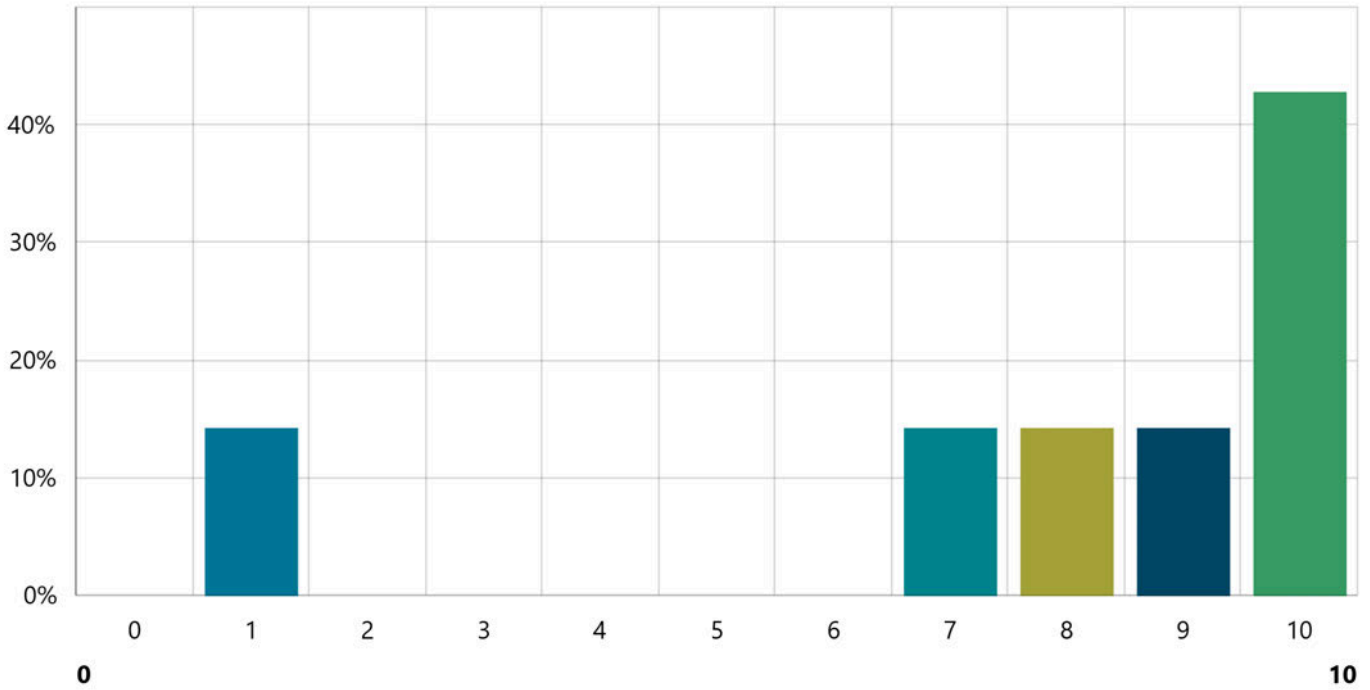


Count	Average	Median	Min	Max
1	8.00	8.00	8	8

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100.00%	0%	0%
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0

14. On a scale from 1 - 10 (1 poor to 10 excellent) how satisfied are you with the education and care your child receives at this service? Required

Slider | Skipped: 129 | Answered: 7 (5.1%)

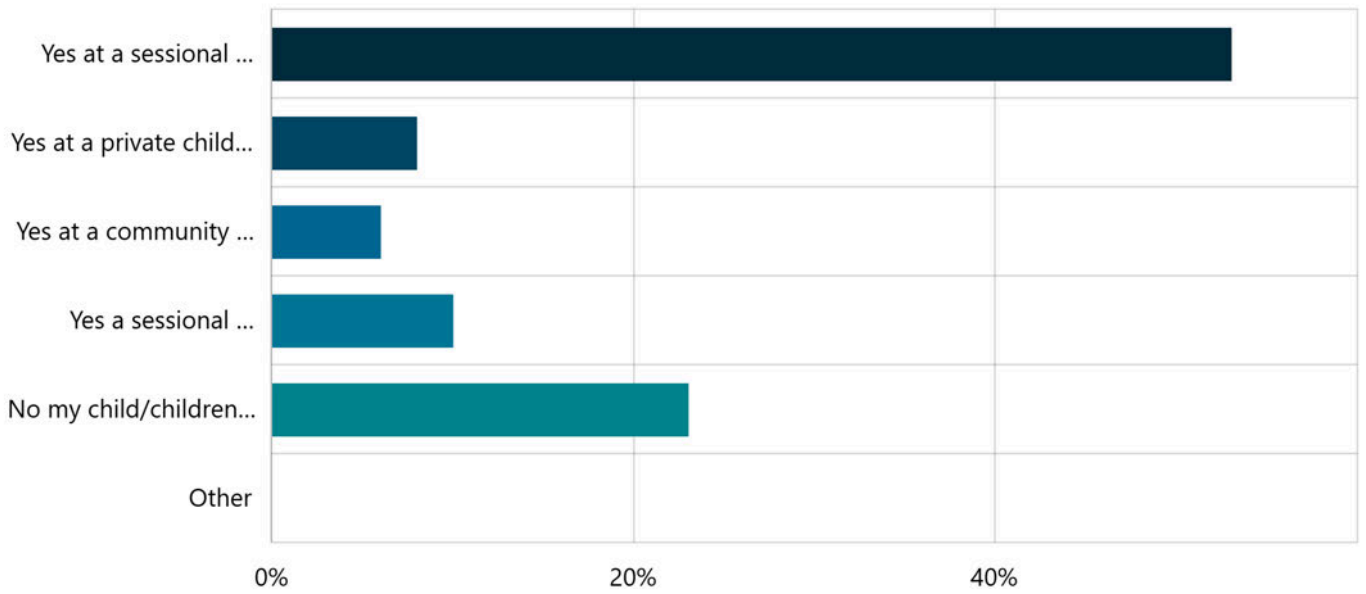


Count	Average	Median	Min	Max
7	7.86	9.00	1	10

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
0%	14.29%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	14.29%	14.29%	14.29%	42.86%
0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3

15. Is your child attending a kindergarten program this year? Required

Multi Choice | Skipped: 36 | Answered: 100 (73.5%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
Yes at a sessional preschool/kindergarten	53.00%	53
Yes at a private child care centre	8.00%	8
Yes at a community managed child care centre	6.00%	6
Yes a sessional preschool/kindergarten as well as attending a child care centre on other days of the week and during school holidays	10.00%	10
No my child/children are not attending a kindergarten program this year	23.00%	23
Other	0%	0
Total	100.00%	100

16. Which preschool/kindergarten is your child currently attending?

Short Text | Skipped: 84 | Answered: 52 (38.2%)

Sentiment

No sentiment data

Tags

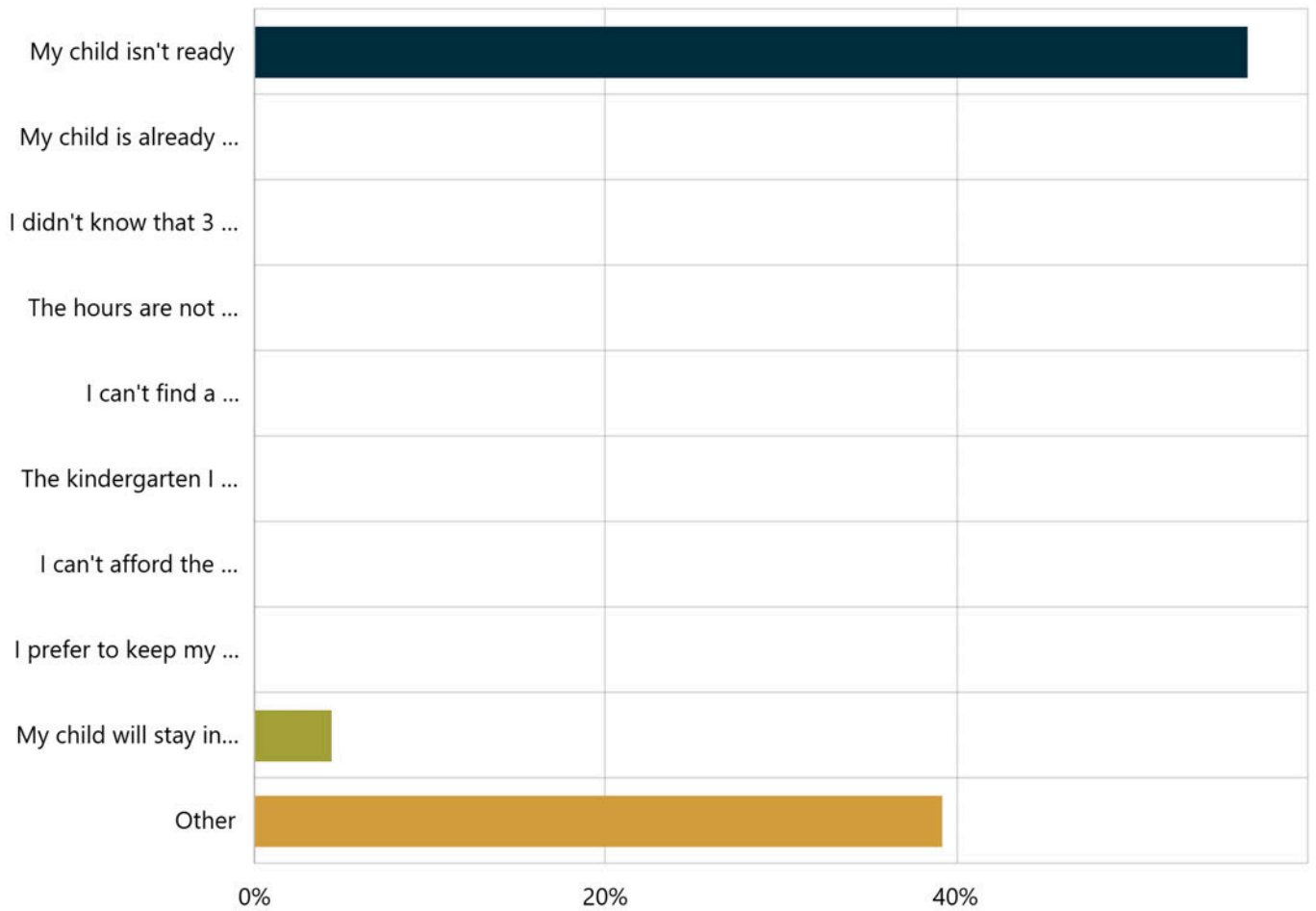
No tag data

Featured Contributions

No featured contributions

17. Why have you decided not to send your child/children to kindergarten this year? Required

Multi Choice | Skipped: 113 | Answered: 23 (16.9%)

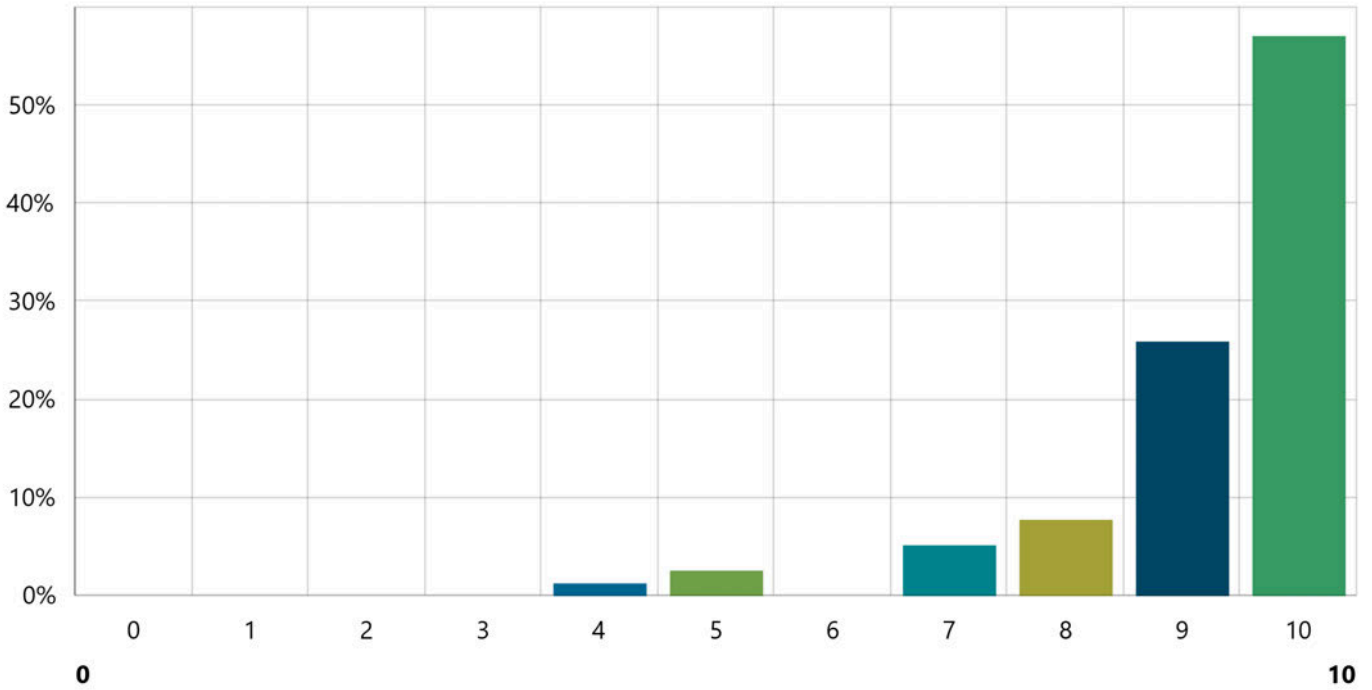


Answer choices	Percent	Count
My child isn't ready	56.52%	13
My child is already at school	0%	0
I didn't know that 3 year old kindergarten is available	0%	0
The hours are not suitable for our family	0%	0
I can't find a kindergarten program close enough to me	0%	0
The kindergarten I want to send my child to does not have any vacancies	0%	0
I can't afford the cost associated with attending/getting to kindergarten	0%	0
I prefer to keep my child at home	0%	0
My child will stay in a child care program without doing the kindergarten program and will not be accessing the kindergarten program offered within the service	4.35%	1
Other	39.13%	9

Total	100.00%	23
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18. On a scale from 1 - 10 (1 poor to 10 excellent) how satisfied are you with the education and care your child receives at this service? Required

Slider | Skipped: 59 | Answered: 77 (56.6%)

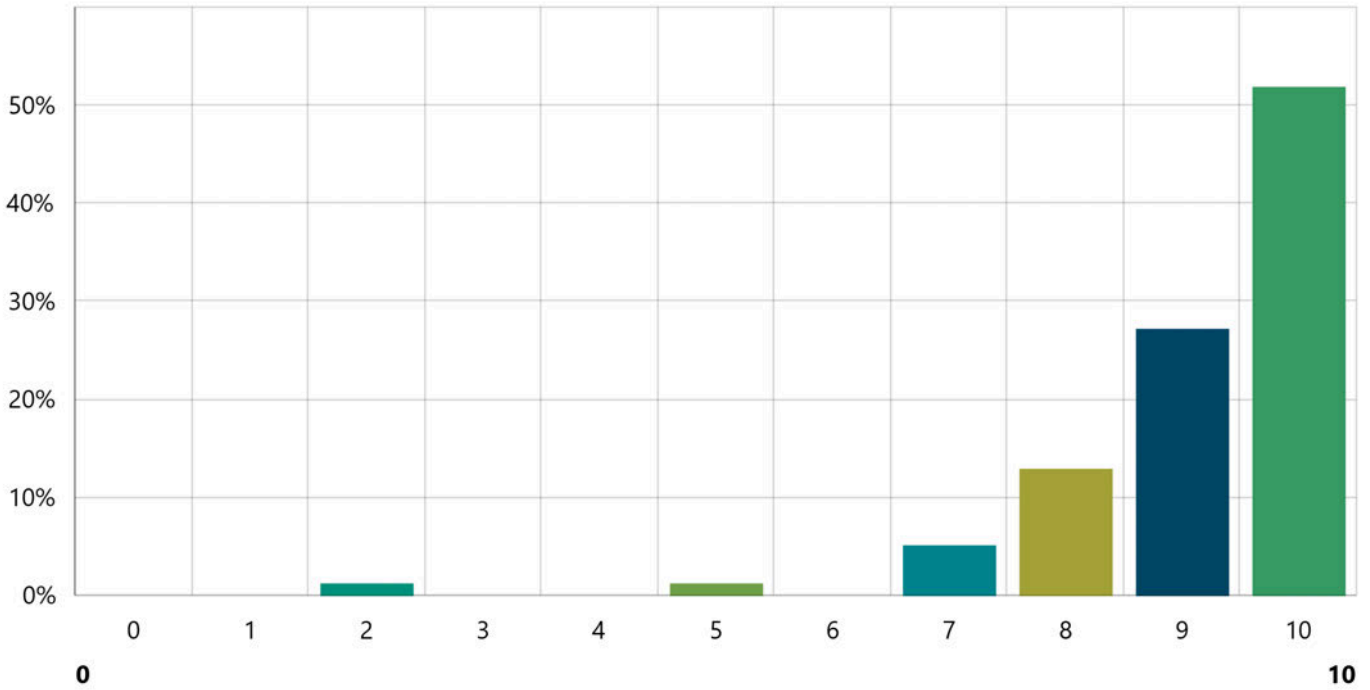


Count	Average	Median	Min	Max
77	9.22	10.00	4	10

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
0%	0%	0%	0%	1.30%	2.60%	0%	5.19%	7.79%	25.97%	57.14%
0	0	0	0	1	2	0	4	6	20	44

19. On a scale from 1 - 10 (1 poor to 10 excellent) how would you rate your family's overall experience attending this service? Required

Slider | Skipped: 59 | Answered: 77 (56.6%)

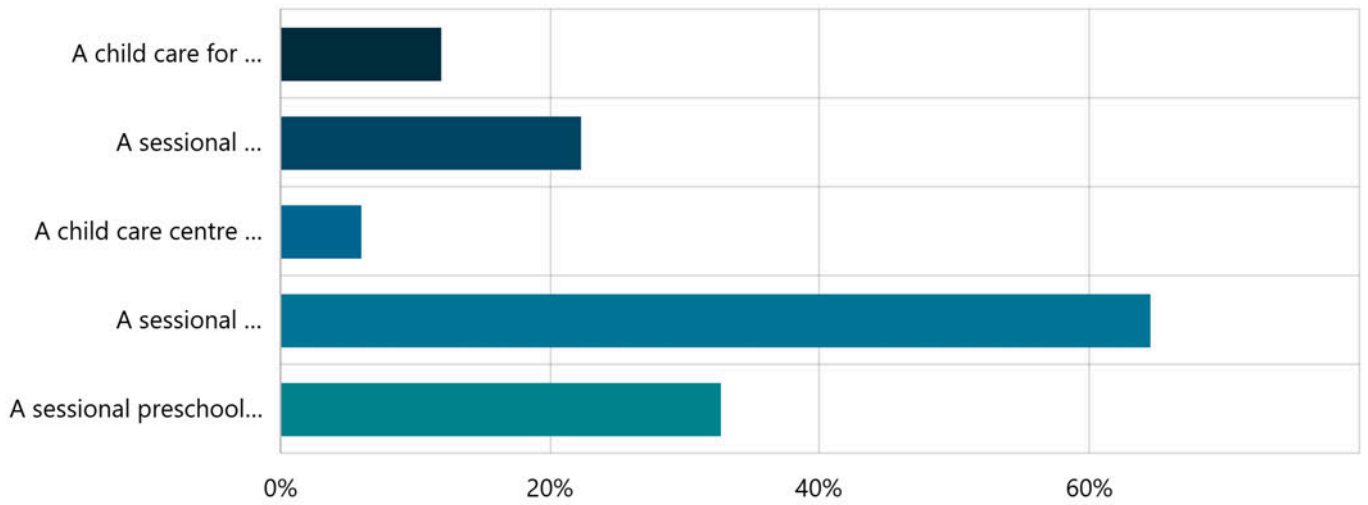


Count	Average	Median	Min	Max
77	9.14	10.00	2	10

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
0%	0%	1.30%	0%	0%	1.30%	0%	5.19%	12.99%	27.27%	51.95%
0	0	1	0	0	1	0	4	10	21	40

20. Considering free kindergarten which of the below would you or have you selected?

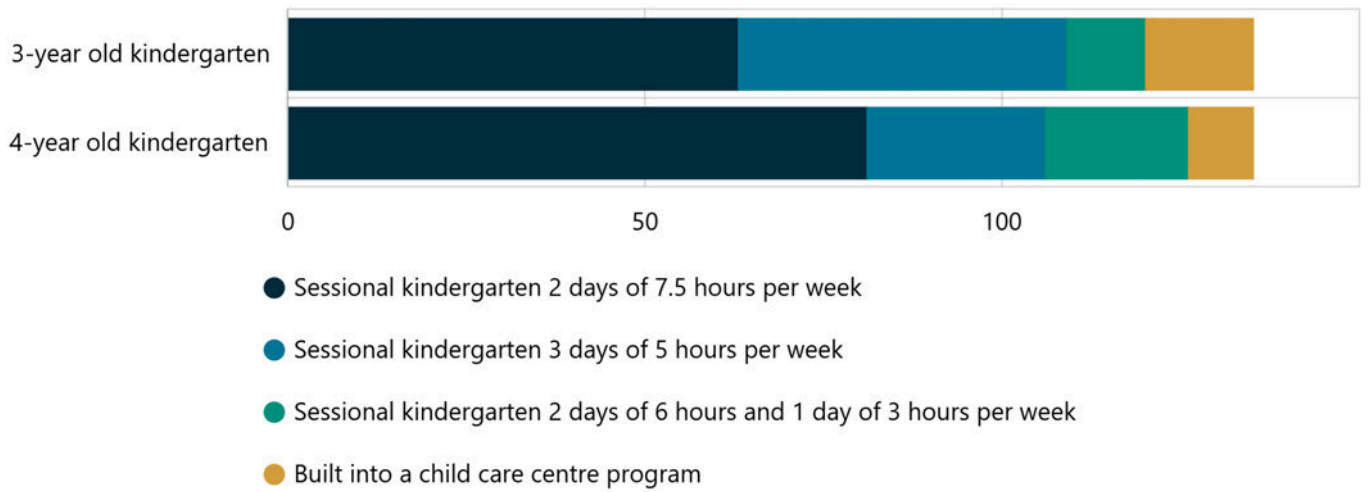
Multi Choice | Skipped: 1 | Answered: 135 (99.3%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
A child care for kindergarten because I need longer and /or flexible hours and school holiday care	11.85%	16
A sessional preschool/kindergarten because there is no charge	22.22%	30
A child care centre for kindergarten because I have been sending them there since they were younger	5.93%	8
A sessional preschool/kindergarten because I prefer this model of kindergarten	64.44%	87
A sessional preschool/kindergarten and also access additional child care at a centre	32.59%	44

21. What type of hours and days would your family most prefer for a 15 hour per week kindergarten program?

Matrix | Skipped: 0 | Answered: 136 (100%)



	Sessional kindergarten 2 days of 7.5 hours per week	Sessional kindergarten 3 days of 5 hours per week	Sessional kindergarten 2 days of 6 hours and 1 day of 3 hours per week	Built into a child care centre program	Count	Score
3-year old kindergarten	46.67% 63	34.07% 46	8.15% 11	11.11% 15	135	1.84
4-year old kindergarten	60.00% 81	18.52% 25	14.81% 20	6.67% 9	135	1.68

22. Other (please explain)

Short Text | Skipped: 121 | Answered: 15 (11%)

Sentiment

No sentiment data

Tags

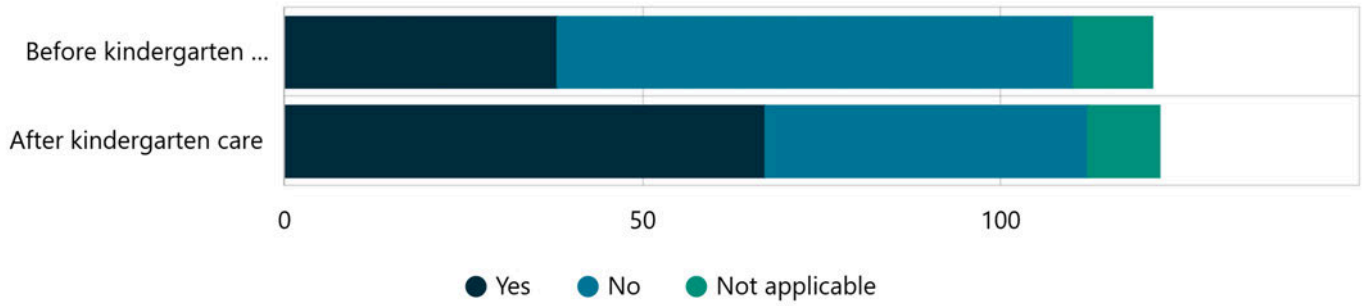
No tag data

Featured Contributions

No featured contributions

23. If you chose a sessional pre-school/kindergarten would you use before or after a kindergarten care if it was available?

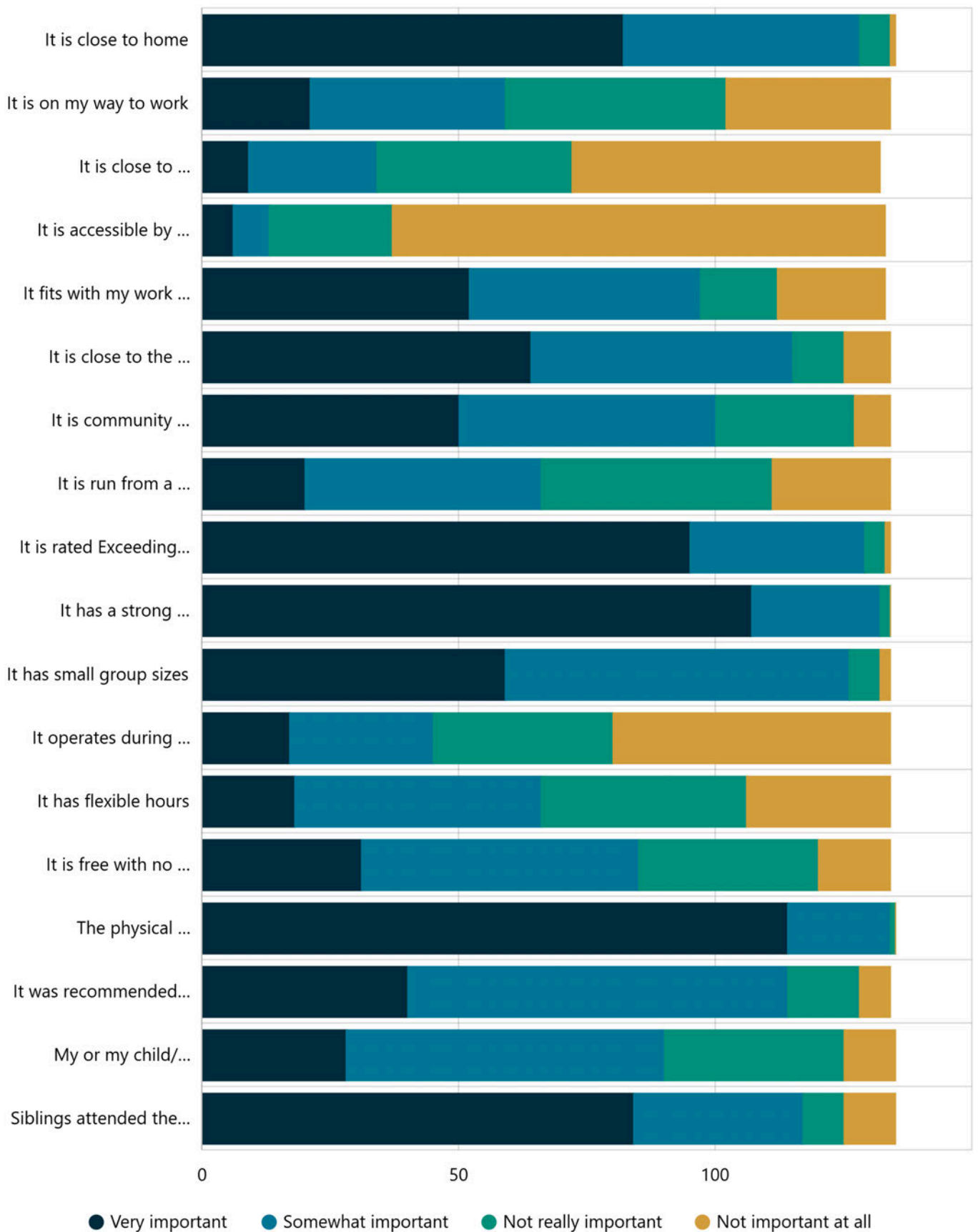
Matrix | Skipped: 14 | Answered: 122 (89.7%)



	Yes	No	Not applicable	Count	Score
Before kindergarten care	31.40% 38	59.50% 72	9.09% 11	121	1.78
After kindergarten care	54.92% 67	36.89% 45	8.20% 10	122	1.53

24. How important are the following when choosing sessional preschool or child care for kindergarten

Matrix | Skipped: 1 | Answered: 135 (99.3%)

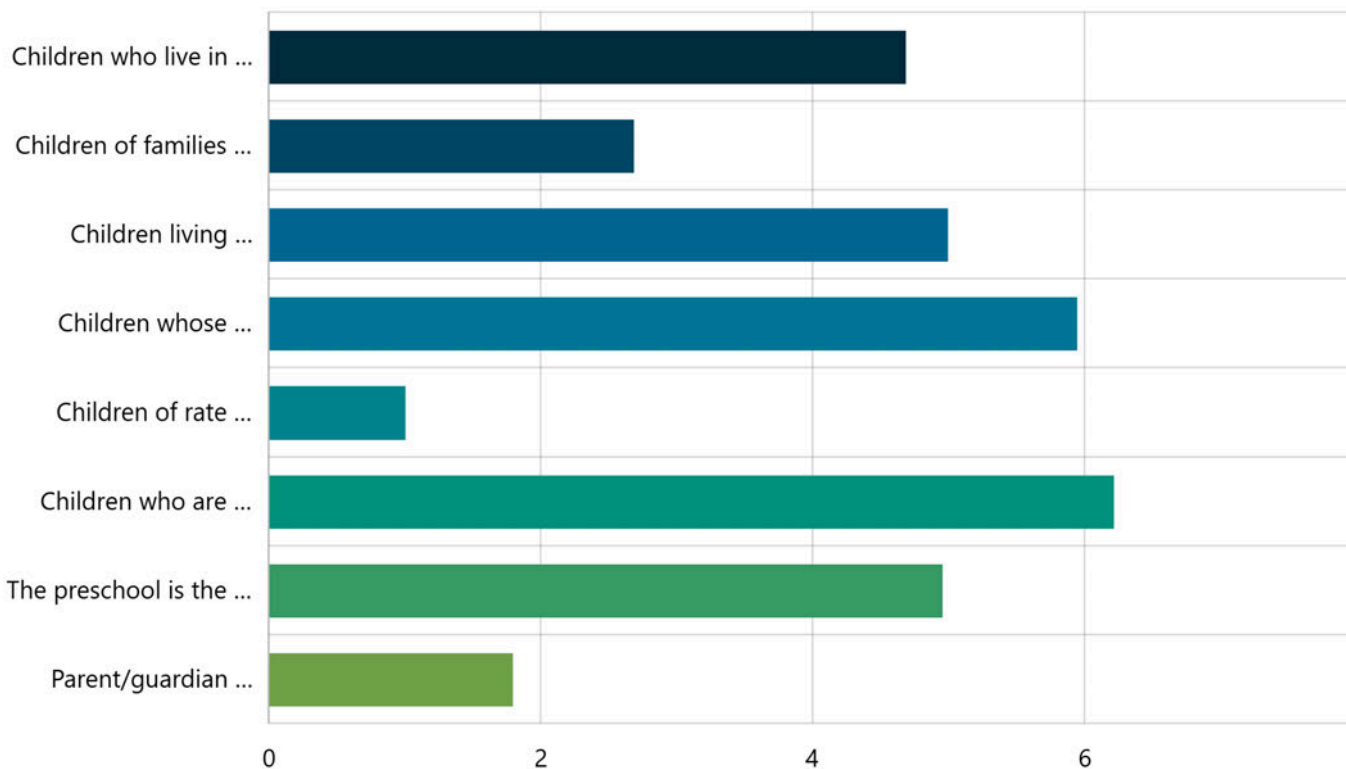


	Very important	Somewhat important	Not really important	Not important at all	Count	Score
It is close to home	60.74% 82	34.07% 46	4.44% 6	0.74% 1	135	1.45
It is on my way to work	15.67% 21	28.36% 38	32.09% 43	23.88% 32	134	2.64
It is close to grandparents or other family	6.82% 9	18.94% 25	28.79% 38	45.45% 60	132	3.13
It is accessible by public transport	4.51% 6	5.26% 7	18.05% 24	72.18% 96	133	3.58
It fits with my work hours	39.10% 52	33.83% 45	11.28% 15	15.79% 21	133	2.04
It is close to the school my child will attend	47.76% 64	38.06% 51	7.46% 10	6.72% 9	134	1.73
It is community managed/not for profit	37.31% 50	37.31% 50	20.15% 27	5.22% 7	134	1.93
It is run from a Council owned facility	14.93% 20	34.33% 46	33.58% 45	17.16% 23	134	2.53
It is rated Exceeding in the National Quality Standard for education and care	70.90% 95	25.37% 34	2.99% 4	0.75% 1	134	1.34
It has a strong educational program	79.85% 107	18.66% 25	1.49% 2	0% 0	134	1.22
It has small group sizes	44.03% 59	50.00% 67	4.48% 6	1.49% 2	134	1.63
It operates during school holidays	12.69% 17	20.90% 28	26.12% 35	40.30% 54	134	2.94
It has flexible hours	13.43% 18	35.82% 48	29.85% 40	20.90% 28	134	2.58
It is free with no additional charges	23.13% 31	40.30% 54	26.12% 35	10.45% 14	134	2.24
The physical environment is	84.44% 114	14.81% 20	0.74% 1	0% 0	135	1.16

inviting						
It was recommended to me	29.85% 40	55.22% 74	10.45% 14	4.48% 6	134	1.90
My or my child/children's friendship network attend the service	20.74% 28	45.93% 62	25.93% 35	7.41% 10	135	2.20
Siblings attended the service	62.22% 84	24.44% 33	5.93% 8	7.41% 10	135	1.59

25. What would you like to see included in Nillumbik's additional priorities? Rank any factors you think should be considered in order of importance

Ranking | Skipped: 5 | Answered: 131 (96.3%)



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Count	Score	Avg Rank
Children who live in Nillumbik Shire	19.64% 22	8.04% 9	16.96% 19	16.07% 18	34.82% 39	3.57% 4	0.89% 1	0% 0	112	4.68	3.53
Children of families intending to live in Nillumbik at the time of attending kindergarten	0.99% 1	7.92% 8	5.94% 6	4.95% 5	11.88% 12	43.56% 44	20.79% 21	3.96% 4	101	2.68	5.52
Children living within the township or suburb	9.48% 11	14.66% 17	25.86% 30	35.34% 41	10.34% 12	3.45% 4	0.86% 1	0% 0	116	4.99	3.36

of the preschool

Children whose sibling is attending or has attended in the last 2 years	15.87% 20	43.65% 55	15.87% 20	7.94% 10	5.56% 7	7.14% 9	2.38% 3	1.59% 2	126	5.94	2.83
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Children of rate payers who don't live in the Shire	0% 0	0% 0	2.22% 2	1.11% 1	2.22% 2	3.33% 3	16.67% 15	74.44% 67	90	1.00	7.54
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Children who are currently enrolled in the preschool	48.31% 57	21.19% 25	16.10% 19	5.93% 7	4.24% 5	3.39% 4	0.85% 1	0% 0	118	6.21	2.10
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The preschool is the closest to the child's residence	16.38% 19	13.79% 16	25.00% 29	20.69% 24	12.93% 15	5.17% 6	5.17% 6	0.86% 1	116	4.95	3.41
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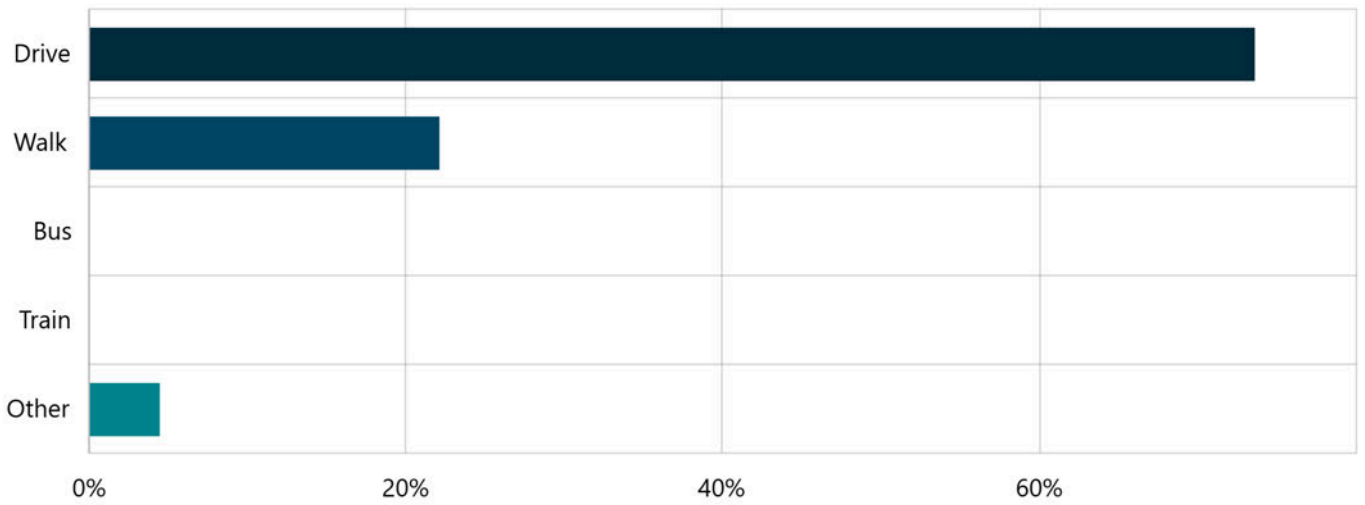
Parent/guardian working or studying in Nillumbik	1.08% 1	0% 0	1.08% 1	5.38% 5	9.68% 9	22.58% 21	44.09% 41	16.13% 15	93	1.79	6.47
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Score - Sum of the weight of each ranked position, multiplied by the response count for the position choice, divided by the total contributions. Weights are inverse to ranked positions.

Avg Rank - Sum of the ranked position of the choice, multiplied by the response count for the position choice, divided by the total 'Count' of the choice.

26. How do you /will you travel to kindergarten or child care centre?

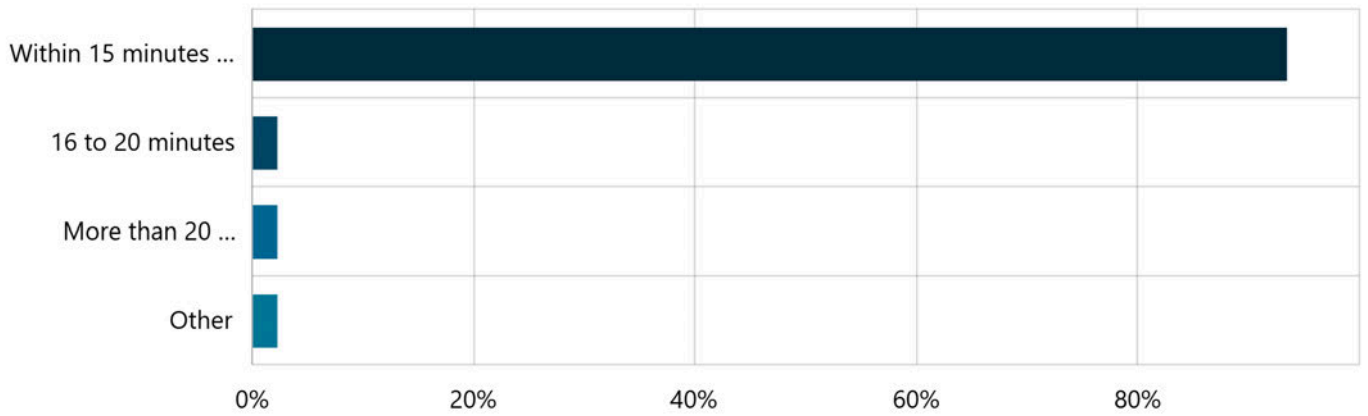
Multi Choice | Skipped: 0 | Answered: 136 (100%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
Drive	73.53%	100
Walk	22.06%	30
Bus	0%	0
Train	0%	0
Other	4.41%	6
Total	100.00%	136

27. How long do you travel/or will travel to attend a kindergarten program at a preschool or child care centre

Multi Choice | Skipped: 0 | Answered: 136 (100%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
Within 15 minutes from home	93.38%	127
16 to 20 minutes	2.21%	3
More than 20 minutes from home	2.21%	3
Other	2.21%	3
Total	100.00%	136

28. Is there anything else you would like to share with Council relevant to future planning for kindergarten in Nillumbik?

Long Text | Skipped: 53 | Answered: 83 (61%)

Sentiment

No sentiment data

Tags

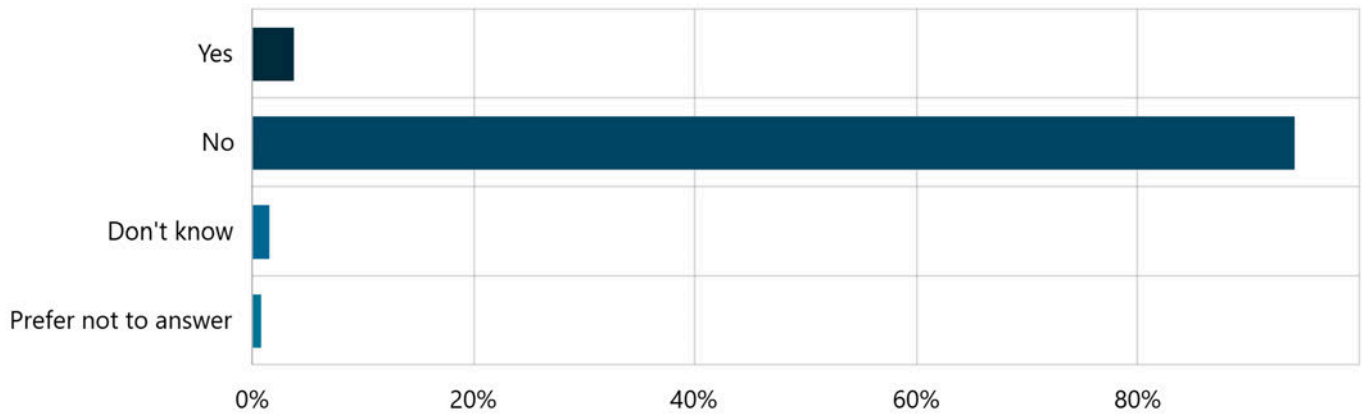
No tag data

Featured Contributions

No featured contributions

29. Do you have a subsidy card like a Health Care Card, Pension Card?

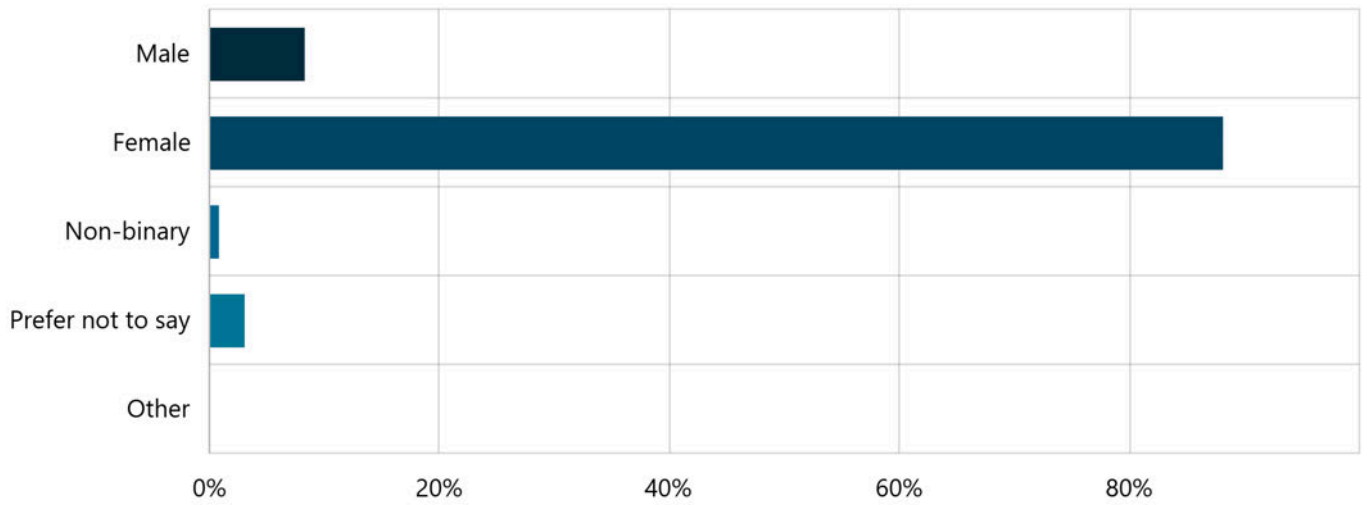
Multi Choice | Skipped: 1 | Answered: 135 (99.3%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
Yes	3.70%	5
No	94.07%	127
Don't know	1.48%	2
Prefer not to answer	0.74%	1
Total	100.00%	135

30. Gender

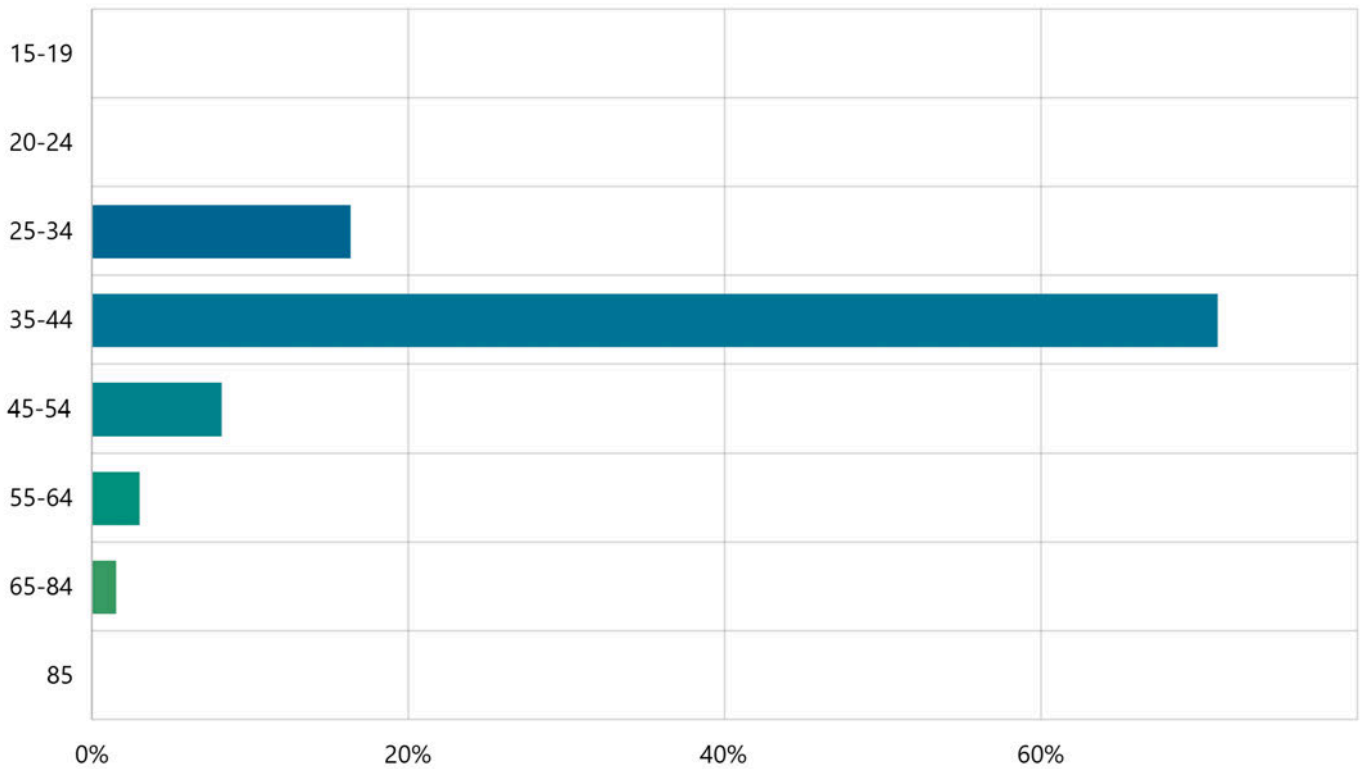
Multi Choice | Skipped: 2 | Answered: 134 (98.5%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
Male	8.21%	11
Female	88.06%	118
Non-binary	0.75%	1
Prefer not to say	2.99%	4
Other	0%	0
Total	100.00%	134

31. Age

Multi Choice | Skipped: 1 | Answered: 135 (99.3%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
15-19	0%	0
20-24	0%	0
25-34	16.30%	22
35-44	71.11%	96
45-54	8.15%	11
55-64	2.96%	4
65-84	1.48%	2
85	0%	0
Total	100.00%	135

34. By opting into this draw I agree to the terms and conditions of the competition.

Single Checkbox | Skipped: 53 | Answered: 83 (61%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
Yes	100.00%	83
Total	100.00%	83

35. First Name

Short Text | Skipped: 49 | Answered: 87 (64%)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Showing 20 latest contributions only. Please see the data results for all contributions to this question.

36. Last Name

Short Text | Skipped: 49 | Answered: 87 (64%)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Showing 20 latest contributions only. Please see the data results for all contributions to this question.

37. Email Required

Email | Skipped: 49 | Answered: 87 (64%)

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

[Redacted]

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Showing 20 latest contributions only. Please see the data results for all contributions to this question.

38. Telephone

Telephone | Skipped: 55 | Answered: 81 (59.6%)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

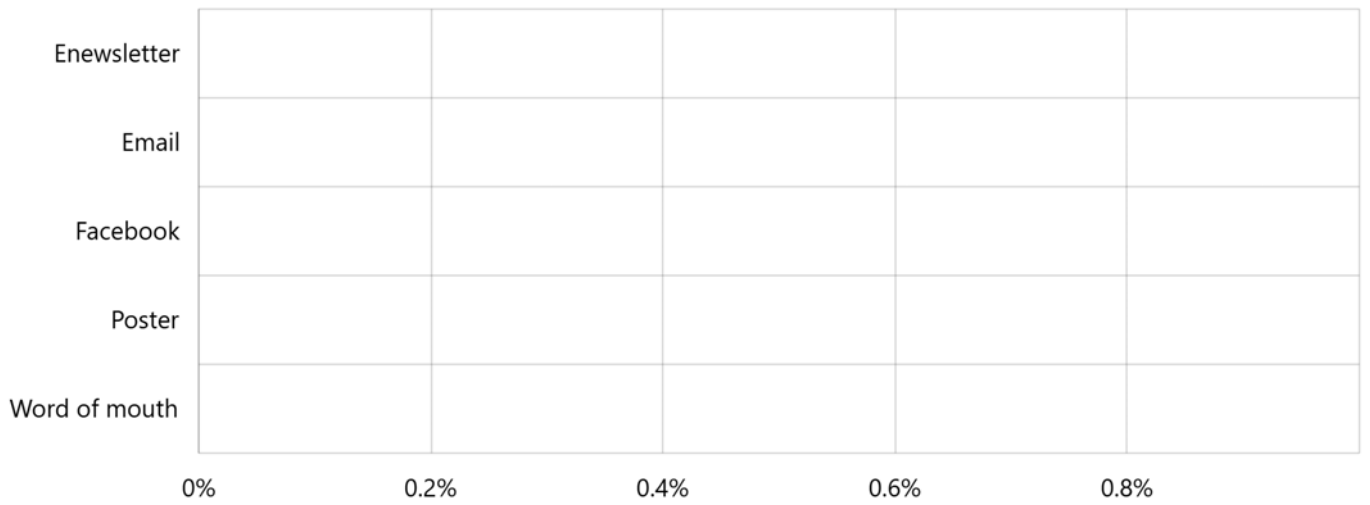
[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Showing 20 latest contributions only. Please see the data results for all contributions to this question.

39. How did you hear about this consultation?

Multi Choice | Skipped: 136 | Answered: 0 (0%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
Enewsletter	0%	0
Email	0%	0
Facebook	0%	0
Poster	0%	0
Word of mouth	0%	0