



TATIARA DISTRICT COUNCIL

CHILDCARE NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

June 2025



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Childcare shortfalls in the Tatiara region are not abstract – they are experienced daily by families and employers. This report uses quantifiable data and grounded case examples to provide a realistic picture of demand, gaps, and consequences.

The scale of unmet need combined with structural barriers (workforce, infrastructure, regulatory design) requires a coordinated, localised response. Council, working with the community, has a strong foundation to advocate for funding and test solutions that restore access, strengthen the workforce, and build long-term resilience.

This Childcare Needs Assessment Report, commissioned by the Tatiara District Council (TDC), identifies critical service gaps in early childhood education and care across the region. The findings are grounded in community consultation, survey responses from over 120 families and 40 businesses, stakeholder interviews, and broader demographic and policy analysis.

Key data indicates that only 19.5% of families have childcare that fully meets their needs, with an estimated shortfall of 50 – 60 childcare places conservatively and over 917 hours of unmet care per week. These gaps disproportionately affect infants and toddlers, with significant demand for flexible, part-time, or extended hours care that current service models are unable to accommodate.

The workforce and economic implications are substantial. Many parents – especially women, report being unable to return to work, study, or take on additional hours due to lack of care. Local employers across healthcare, retail, trades, and education note recruitment and retention challenges linked directly to childcare accessibility. More than 60% of businesses report that childcare availability affects their ability to hire and grow.

The report highlights four key recommendation areas:

- Infrastructure investment
- Workforce development, including training pathways and incentives.
- Flexible service models, such as occasional or casual care, integrated kinder-care, or mobile services.
- Advocacy and leverage of funding through programs like the federal Building Early Education fund and SA's Flying Start grants.

Without intervention, the current system risks entrenching gender and economic inequality, limiting children's early development, and undermining regional prosperity. TDC is well-placed to champion targeted solutions based on clear, data-informed need.

2. CONTEXT + PURPOSE

This Childcare Need Assessment Report was commissioned by the Tatiara District Council (TDC) to gather information about current and future childcare needs for the Council region. Specifically, the report will:

- Address region-wide shortages, with only 0.2 places per child and 59% of the area deemed a "childcare desert".
- Respond to pressures from families, businesses and service providers.
- Anticipate growing demand from population changes and policy reforms such as universal 3-year-old kindergarten.
- Advocate for infrastructure and workforce investment under new federal initiatives.

The information gathered compiled in this document will help inform both Council and the broader community and support better decision making, development and advocacy moving forward.

3. METHODOLOGY

Consultation and research have been undertaken to prepare this report. It draws on a range of information gathered from the local community, RDA Limestone Coast and information provided by the State and Federal Governments through documentation and via interviews. The following provides an overview of the source material.

- **Online Surveys.**
Two surveys were distributed online via Council's databases. One related specifically to the needs of individual families, which received 123 responses. The other related to the impact of Childcare Services deficits on local business, which received 40 responses.
- **Interviews**
Seven Interviews were undertaken with key people including representatives from childcare centres situated in TDC, parents, business owners and Government representatives.
- **Consultation Sessions**
Three community consultations were undertaken which attracted approximately 25 people.
- **Targeted meetings**
Targeted meetings were undertaken with TDC's Economic Development Group and the Childcare Working Group.
- **Document Review**
A number of documents have been reviewed as part of this project including government reports, guides and policy, newspaper articles and other research reports. These include:
 - Australian Competition and Consumer Commission Childcare Inquiry 2023¹ – Final Report released in December 2023
 - Australian Productivity Commission Early Childhood Education and Care Inquiry 2023² – A draft report was released in November 2023 with the final report expected to be available June 2024.
 - South Australian Government's Royal Commission into Early childhood Education and Care 2023³ – Final report released in August 2023.
 - Other Materials
 - ABC news publications and reports⁴
 - Department for Education SA – various online publications including the Early Learning Strategy and regulatory documents⁵.
 - Australian Childcare Alliance SA⁶
 - Victoria University⁷

4. OVERVIEW OF KEY DATA

***7072**

Current population
of TDC as of 2021.

65%

The number of businesses
suggesting childcare
shortages is affecting growth
capacity – based on survey
responses.

917

The number of unmet
childcare hours based on
survey responses.

.06%

Population growth in TDC in
the last 12 months.

.20

The formal number of
childcare places available per
child aged 0 – 4 in TDC.

372

Number of children aged
between 0 – 4 in TDC (5.4%
of the population).

50 - 60

Estimated deficit number of
childcare places based on
survey responses.

74

Approximate number of
childcare places in accredited
Early Childhood Education
Centres (ECEC) in TDC –
excluding kindergarten places

80%

The number of survey
respondents reporting
childcare needs are either
completely or partially unmet.

60%

The number of business
reporting hiring and retention
issues linked to childcare
shortages – based on survey
responses.

18

The number of months
people are spending on
waiting lists to access
childcare.

*Population Breakdown

- Keith 1355
- Bordertown 3095
- Padthaway 321
- Mundulla 436
- Wolseley 207
- Willalooka 136
- Other 1522

5. STATE + NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

The situation in TDC is not unique and childcare shortages have been an issue for communities across Australia for a number of years – particularly in regional and remote Australia. Research undertaken by Victoria University's Mitchell Institute stated that 35% of the population lived in what is being called a "childcare desert". This means there are more than 3 children aged four or under, per childcare place available.

In response both State and Federal Governments have conducted several inquiries and introduced or proposed several strategies to support improved delivery of childcare to support early childhood development and education and better productivity. The following provides an overview of State and Federal Government initiatives.

- **Three-Year-Old Preschool**

Based on recommendations in its Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care, the South Australian Government is rolling out Pre-School for all 3-year-olds between 2026 and 2032. The impact on long day care is somewhat unknown with Government estimating that in some cases it may alleviate some pressure on childcare demand. If parents have some of their childcare needs met through 3-year-old pre-school and potentially requiring less long daycare. At integrated sites however, this may cause further shortages with 3-year-old pre-school attendees counted in quotas and therefore reducing the capacity to offer long day-care places.

Roll out of 3-year-old pre-school for the TDC is estimated to commence in 2027. There are several challenges to address including the provision of suitable infrastructure to deliver 3-year-old pre-school and securing suitably qualified staff to deliver the services not only in TDC but across South Australia. Several funding and workforce initiatives have been put in place to address these challenges to a point.

At this stage there are several unknowns and the Department are continuing to gather data and work with a range of stakeholders including Councils and childcare providers to prepare and roll out 3-year-old pre-school from 2026.

There are infrastructure grants (Flying Start) available through the State Government but these are focused on increasing infrastructure within existing facilities to support the accommodation of 3-year-old pre-school and dependent on demand modelling with the designated area.

- **Three-Day Guarantee**

From 1 January 2026 all Childcare Subsidy (CCS) eligible families will receive three days of subsidised childcare per week regardless of their work or study commitments. This is expected to provide a significant saving for families who will be able to access more care at less of a direct cost to the families. Whilst this is a positive step forward, some are expecting that the Guarantee will increase demand for long day care services across Australia. Based on discussions with the Federal Government's representatives from the Australian Government's Department of Education Early Childhood and Youth team, the Three-Day Guarantee will not have a significant increase in demand for childcare. Their modelling suggests that the majority of people who are eligible for the support are already using childcare and this will essentially just make it more affordable. They anticipate a small spike but nothing that will cause major additional strain – on top of existing challenges including service provision deficits.

Some who work in the childcare industry within TDC believe that the Guarantee will have an impact and potentially increase demand further. As parents have access to further funding to support childcare, they will want to utilise more of the service and waiting lists may increase in numbers and also timeframes into the future.

- **Building Early Education Fund**

The Federal Government has promised an allocation of \$1billion to increase the supply of early childhood education and care places across Australia, especially in under-serviced areas. This funding is expected to support the establishment or expansion of approximately 160 childcare services with a preference for locations on school sites.

The allocation of funding being split into two parts with \$500million for upfront funding for infrastructure. Some of these funds (\$74million) have already been committed as part of election promises and \$50million has been allocated for partnerships with philanthropic organisations.

The remaining funds will be prioritised for the development of Early Childhood Education Centres (ECEC) on school sites, supporting high-quality not-for-profit providers and high priority areas. High priority areas are those where under-supply is significant and there is disadvantage, based on the SEIFA Index.

- **Workforce Development**

Attracting staff within the sector continues to be very challenging across Australia but particularly in regional and remote parts of the country. Both the State and Federal Governments are proposing strategies to support this – as detailed below.

There are a couple of other initiatives currently in place including partnerships between training organisations, the Roxby Downs Early Learning Centre and BHP <https://thrivingfutures.org.au/about-us/our-project/> and an initiative based on the Yorke Peninsula which involved a partnership between Yorke Peninsula Council and Adelaide Family Learning and Care.

Government investment in this space includes:

- State Government have allocated almost \$100million dollars over four years to help develop the early childhood workforce, which will hopefully help address some of the existing staff shortages.
- The Federal Government has \$5 billion aimed at building and expanding childcare services and increasing educators' pay by 15%. This initiative seeks to attract and retain qualified professionals in the early childhood education sector, ensuring the delivery of quality services.

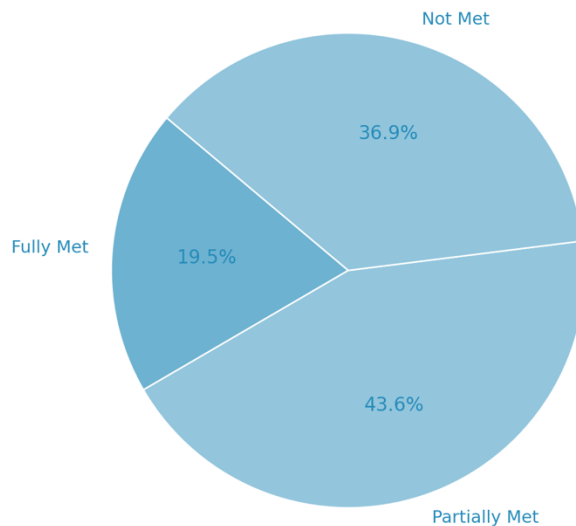
It is important to note that neither Keith or Bordertown Childcare facilities are eligible for the Workforce Development funding opportunity outlined above or the Infrastructure Grants that are currently available from the SA Government including the Flying Start Funding program mentioned under the first dot point.



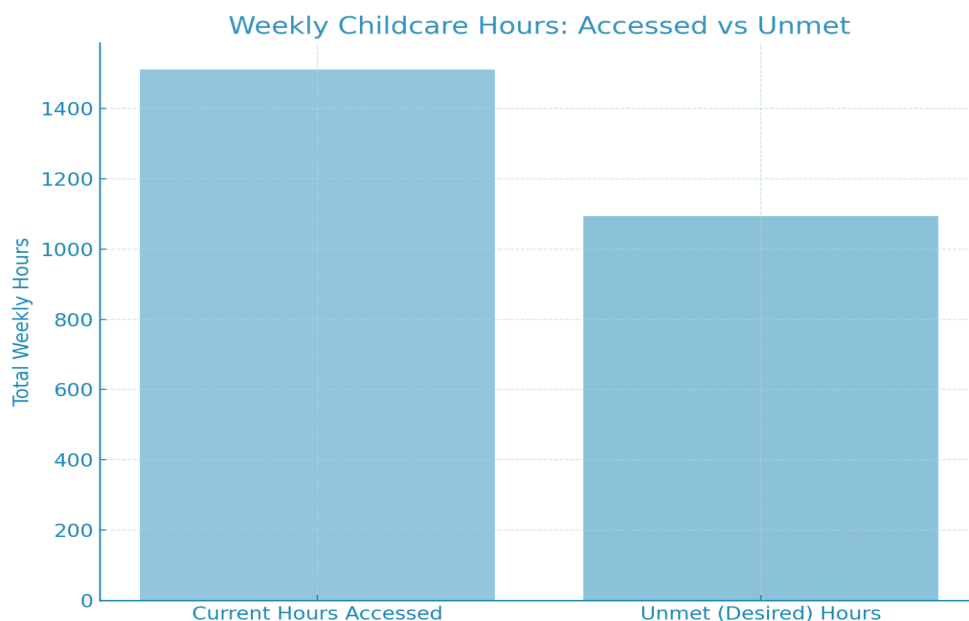
6. KEY FINDINGS

6.1 Service Capacity + Demand

- **Low Rate of Need Being Met:** Based on the survey results, only 19.5% of families report having childcare that fully meets their needs. - Of 65 families with identified childcare needs, 36.9% stated their needs were not met.



- **Estimated Shortfall in Places:** It is difficult to estimate the exact shortfall in places for childcare but there are a number of indicators in that suggest the unmet need is quite significant. This includes the following:
 - **The Weekly Hour Gap** – the survey data indicates a total of 1511 hours of care is currently being accessed and an additional 1093 hours desired weekly (see graph below). This equates to 29 full-time childcare places, but only accounts for the survey respondents.



The following provides a breakdown of unmet hours based on location.

Location	Respondents	Hours in Care	Unmet Hours
Bordertown	70	959	580
Keith	17	335	110
Padthaway	14	53	243
Mundulla	8	78	96
Wolseley	3	16	0
Rural Location	6	70	40
Outside of TDA	4	0	24
Did not answer	1	NA	NA
TOTAL	123	1511	1093

- **Waiting Lists:** Existing waitlists are long in both numbers of families looking to access care and the amount of time spent waiting. Carol Murray Children's Centre in Bordertown indicated they currently have 140 children (including 14 unborn) on their waiting list and the average number of days spent on the waiting list is 647 days/ 21 months. The majority of children on the waitlist is for the 0 – 2 age group. This represents a significant increase from August 2020 when the wait list was 45 people – keeping in mind that was during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Keith Childcare Centre, which services a much smaller community, indicated they have 34 children (including 6 unborn) on their waitlist, the majority of these is in the 0 – 2 age range. This has increased by 20% over the last two years. Wait times vary at the Keith Centre and is largely dependent on the flexibility of the families with those who can be more flexible more likely to get a spot in childcare sooner. For the 0 – 3 age group, those that put their name on a waitlist during pregnancy, the wait time averages 12 – 14 months. Those who delay and put it down later the wait time can be 14 – 16 months. For the 3 – 5 age group, the wait time is significantly less with families waiting an average of 3 – 4 months depending on the time of year they add their names to the list.

If all of these families want part time care (estimated of 20 hours per week) it equates to an additional 87 full-time childcare places. Based on the metric provided by Victoria University (See below) a minimum of 57 additional places is required – 11 places in Keith and 46 in Bordertown.

- **Childcare Desert:** Based on Victoria University's research a community needs to provide .33 places for each child in the community aged between 0 – 4 years to avoid being considered a "childcare desert". TDC currently has 74 long day-care places excluding kindergarten, based on the Victoria University's metric, it should have 123, which is a shortfall of almost 50 places, which is a conservative estimate in the context of the increased demand for childcare due to the current financial climate and industry demand in the TDC.
- **Under-reporting:** Anecdotally, community members and those working in the industry indicate that there is also a number of families are not represented on waiting lists. The lack of availability of childcare places and the long wait lists are well known throughout TDC and families don't bother registering for that reason.

- **Mismatch in Service Models:** The shortfall reflects not just a lack of places but a mismatch in the type of care available — many families require flexible, part-time or non-standard hour care. Most acute need is for children under 2 years old, where care options are most limited. For example, families in the region that have agricultural / farming businesses, and their childcare needs can vary according to the seasons.

Many others also indicated that the care shortages extend to the 5 years and over. **Out of Hours School Care** which supports before and after school hours, school holiday periods and pupil-free days for primary aged children is also lacking and causing social and economic challenges for the community.

Given the shortages both Childcare facilities also indicated that they try and be as flexible as possible in terms of providing as much childcare to as many families as possible. There are families who currently access childcare that would like to increase the number of days but are unlikely to be able to do so, with those on the waiting list prioritised to receive some care rather than giving additional care to others.

- **Future Demand:** Based on Plan SA's Population Projection Report⁸ (March 2024) TDC's population will experience an 8.1% increase between 2021 and 2041. This translates to an additional 575 people living in the Council area and 31 additional children aged between 0 – 4 years old. If half of these require part time childcare this brings the unmet number of hours to 1237 hours and an additional 8 childcare places on top

Key Finding: Based on an analysis of the above metrics, it is estimated that there is **a shortfall of approximately 55 - 65 Full time childcare places** in the Tatiara District – relative to the size of the towns.

This estimate relies heavily on the Victoria University (VU) Research which suggests that a community needs at least 1 childcare place for every 3 children in the community. The data collected via surveying for this project provides the necessary verification for the VU estimate. This estimate takes into consideration that many families do not require full time care and that some do not require care at all. Given the current economic conditions in TDC and the data collected as part of this project an additional 5 - 15 places on top of the 50 additional places indicated by the VU estimates is recommend. TDC has a very high workforce participation rate at the moment, which is almost 12% higher than the participation rate for regional South Australia. This creates greater demand for childcare within the community.

If the population growth projected by Plan SA is achieved the Council area this may increase to 65 - 70 places required, particularly if the workforce participation rate remains high.

It is also important to note that the biggest priority is for the 0 – 2-year age group, where there is the most demand and the longest wait times. This makes solutions more challenging due the staff ratios and space required for this younger age group.

Any insignificant investment in childcare should factor in “future proofing” childcare with a view to ensuring the new or expanded infrastructure can accommodate future growth in terms of the footprint and space ratios required.

6.2 Social + Wellbeing Impact

Both survey respondents and people that participated in workshops indicated that a childcare shortage had a negative impact on them and their families. The following provides an overview of the survey results.

- **53%** indicated it had a considerable or significant **impact on the mental health** of parents and guardians.
- **24%** indicated that it had a considerable or significant **impact on their child's wellbeing and/or development**.
- **41%** indicated that it influenced their **decisions relating to expanding their family**. Anecdotally, community members suggested they had delayed having further children because of the childcare shortage.

The Tatiara District Council also has experienced a substantial influx of migrants over the last decade. Based on 2021 Census results almost 13% (896) of the TDC's population were born overseas. 39% of these arrived in Australia within the 5 years prior to 2021. Whilst this project did not specifically capture the impact that childcare shortages have on new migrant families, participants in the consultation indicated that these families were impacted more severely than others due to the lack of family networks around them to rely for informal childcare support.

6.3 Workforce + Equity Impact

- **Impact on Parental Workforce Participation:** Many parents, especially mothers, are unable to return to work or study due to a lack of childcare. During the consultation, there were countless comments from parents indicating they were unable to return to work due to the lack of childcare availability.

67% of the survey respondents indicated that childcare shortages had delayed their return to work.

67% of the survey respondents indicated that childcare shortages had prevented them from taking on additional hours at their workplace with 77% suggesting they would increase their work hours if more childcare was available. In the context of the recent cost of living crisis, which included significant inflation and increased mortgage stress, the inability for people to return to work and increase their household income caused some financial stress.

One parent, a primary school teacher, delayed her return to work by three months, due to an inability to access the necessary childcare at the conclusion of her maternity leave. She was also forced to utilise long-service leave to cover the gap between maternity leave and returning to work. Others working in administration, accountancy and other roles indicated they were unable to return to their jobs and had resigned outright, because they couldn't access the childcare they needed.

Others indicated they were needing to return to work with infants or toddlers in tow (where possible), particularly if they were small business owners. This is not ideal from the perspective of the parents, the children or the business owners, posing safety, productivity and wellbeing risks

- **Circular Barriers for Educators:** Some trained early childhood workers are unable to re-enter the workforce as they have no access to care for their own children. Both Childcare Centres indicated the challenge in providing adequate childcare for their own staff when they are returning to work after maternity leave or when they are recruiting potential staff.
- **Increased Pressure on Informal Care:** Families resort to informal arrangements or irregular work patterns, impacting wellbeing and income. Data suggests that of the 1446 people in TDC providing unpaid childcare 26% of these were caring for children other than their own and another 3% were caring for their own and other children.

There is a non-accredited private childcare service, located in Bordertown (Babies and Beyond Babysitting Service). The reputation of this facility is very good, and it is generally fully subscribed. Due to its non-accreditation, users of the facility are not eligible to receive any government childcare subsidies.

Users of this facility have suggested that they do so due to lack of access to other services and if and when places become available in accredited facilities, they will transfer their children across.

- **Difficulty Attracting and Retaining Staff:** Services struggle to recruit qualified educators and retain them due to regional limitations and job demands.

6.4 Business + Economic Effect

- **Workforce Availability:** 60% of business who responded to the survey reported difficulty hiring or retaining staff because of childcare shortages. Many consultation participants discussed strategies to provide flexible options within the workplace to support parental responsibilities, which made retaining staff a little easier. They also noted that these concessions, whilst necessary were not always conducive to running a small business. 87% indicated that in the last 24 months a lack of access to childcare had impacted their capacity to maintain, recruit or attract staff. 57% of these suggested it was "often" or "always" an issue.

Anecdotally, the retail sector in particular reported challenges in trading after 3 – 4pm because parents need to collect and care for children. This potentially relates to a lack of access to Out of School Hours Care as well as long day care.

- **Constraints on Business Growth:** 65% of the survey respondents indicated say that a lack of childcare limits their capacity to grow, innovate, or invest.
- **Sector-Wide Impact:** According to the consultation, the negative effects of childcare shortages are particularly strong in retail, trades, healthcare and education.

- **Job Vacancy Levels:** As documented by Tatiara District Council the unemployment rate in the Council Area is .7% as of June 2024. This is significantly lower than the unemployment rate in Adelaide during the same period, which is reported as being 7.6%. Anecdotally businesses report that they struggle to recruit staff and that they have rolling advertisements for job vacancies with a view to hiring whenever possible. It is difficult to draw a direct causal link between this challenge and the childcare shortages but as indicated below, this would deter people from relocating to the region to take up roles if they cannot access childcare.

Evidence gathered as part of this initiative also indicates that there are women in the community that could return to the workforce if there was improved access to childcare – helping to address workforce deficits.

- **Regional Competitiveness at Risk:** Businesses fear long-term effects on Tatiara’s ability to attract skilled workers and support economic development.

Based on research by the Regional Australia Institute⁹ after employment prospects, the liveability of a place is critical in their decision to relocate. Along with access to health services and cost of living and natural amenity, access to education services is extremely desirable. In other words, if the prospective new resident doesn’t feel there are suitable school and childcare services, they are less likely to relocate to the community. Without adequate childcare services, TDC is at risk of being overlooked by people looking to relocate to regional areas, particularly those in essential services (health, teaching, emergency services etc).



6.5 Personal Stories

Throughout the consultation period, parents shared their personal struggles relating to the lack of childcare services. The following quotes convey a sense of some of the information captured during the project and the experience of people living in TDC in relation to accessing childcare.

"Our experience with childcare in Keith has been very positive, however we put names on waiting lists before the kids were even born to ensure we had a spot."

"We have consistently used a babysitter and nanny when working full-time. The lack of availability and travel required to use formal care in Naracoorte, Bordertown or Keith coupled with the opening hours doesn't meet our needs."

"I live remotely and with my workplace 25kms away from home and childcare situated 50kms away in the other direction, I would have to travel over 200kms a day to access childcare".

"We have a family business and to allow family members to return to work they had to bring the baby with them and then as they got older, I have had to take days off to care for the grandchildren"

"I am constantly juggling children and work and I feel like I am lacking in being able to do a good job at both"

"Very scary, as I already pay a private babysitter 4 days per week and can only get my child in for 1 day per into childcare. It is costly and affects my work and homelife. I am desperate for more care"

"I have a staff member that wants to come back to work 1 – 2 days a week. Unfortunately, she has been told she can't get childcare in Bordertown until January 2026. She wants to come back to work, and I feel that she needs to for her own mental health. We also want and need her back."

"I had to resign at my job that I had been at for 9 years because I could not get a single day of childcare. I also don't have the luxury of parents or grandparents nearby. I need to desperately look for work as my family is struggling to bet by on one minimum wage."

"My wife wants to look for work but can't do that until she knows she can get childcare. She can't get childcare until she has a job - it's a catch-22. The childcare centres prioritise parents who are at work, which I understand and not very helpful if you are looking for work."

"I am a teacher and am currently on extended unpaid parenting leave to care for my children until they have all commenced pre-school/ primary school. Without access to childcare in our community I am unable to return to work in any capacity."

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Advocacy

Coordinated and ongoing advocacy to government representatives should be undertaken by Council in conjunction with other stakeholders. Forming productive relationships with key Elected and Department Representatives will be essential to keep the needs of TDC front of mind – particularly when funding and other support is made available. This report will be a good first step in commencing a dialogue with key people and creating a foundation to identify and realise practical solutions in the context of the economic, social and educational growth and sustainability for TDC. Key actions include:

- Collaborating with neighbouring Councils. Considering Coorong District Council has also undertaken some research in relation to childcare, it may be worth some joint advocacy strategies, alongside Naracoorte Lucindale Council and others that are experiencing similar challenges.
- Present unmet demand data to the Department of Education and Government Elected Members.
- Advocate for regional weighting in infrastructure grants and workforce strategies
- Advocate for the extension of the 88-day Ag Visa for Au-Pairs in regional locations and for the development of a childcare subsidies to support these programs.
- Advocate for TDC to be considered as a pilot site for the development of an Integrated Hub by the State Government. The region may have the necessary qualities and is well positioned to support the development of an Integrated Hub as detailed in their eligibility information including the mixed market options. <https://www.earlychildhood.sa.gov.au/for-providers/integrated-hubs/eligibility-criteria-integrated-hubs>

7.2 Expand Infrastructure

Whilst the expansion of infrastructure takes time, it is the only realistic solution to addressing the childcare shortages in TDC. There are challenges with both the existing sites including site constraints that can accommodate growth and governance / management structures deeming them ineligible for current funding opportunities. Both Centres are looking at future growth opportunities. Keith Management Committee has allocated some funds to support expansion planning and development, and Carol Murray Childcare Centre Staff continue to engage with the Department on future planning discussions.

The following actions are recommended to support development of new facilities for the region:

- Prepare a detailed plan for childcare infrastructure development that positions the region as “shovel-ready”. This means that when the Federal Government’s funding programs are announced, TDC will be in a strong position to apply and be successful in securing financial support.
- Identify suitable sites that can support an expansion of childcare infrastructure.
In Keith, there is space to expand nearby but this should be looked at formally with a view to surveying the current footprint as well as surrounding land and nominate the best option moving forward.

- The Bordertown facility appears to be land-locked, but it is across the road from the local primary school. Options include relocating the whole facility to a new location, potentially on school grounds or opening a second facility in Bordertown at a different site.
- It is important to note that representatives from the Federal Government indicated that childcare infrastructure development on school sites may be prioritised in its funding program.
- Research the potential to construct modular expansions or partner with community buildings to create new facilities. From a case-study perspective, the Mallee Kids Childcare Centre, developed in 2019 by Karoonda Council, who partnered with Ausco to build a purpose-built facility in modular form. The nature of construction provided a level of affordability for Council and reduced overall financial risk. It also truncated planning and construction timelines. Further information can be found here <https://ausco.com.au/case-studies/karoonda-early-learning-centre>
- Scope the development of services in underserved towns like Padthaway and Tintinara using hybrid or mobile models. These may also support some of the seasonal requirements of agricultural business in the region.

7.3 Workforce Attraction + Retention

Essential to resolving the challenge of childcare shortages the region also needs to be able to attract and retain qualified early childhood educators. Strategies to improve the childcare workforce in TDC, should be undertaken concurrently with the scoping of new infrastructure. Council is already investigating training and development opportunities. The following actions should be continued/considered:

- Working closely with local and distance-ready education providers to identify and facilitate training pathways via local secondary schools and TAFEs. As a reference, a partnership between an RTO / Private Childcare Provider and the Yorke Peninsula Council has provided some good outcomes for the region there in terms of childcare services and workforce development.
- Determine other benefits that could be put in place to attract qualified childcare workers including housing subsidies, relocation support, or free care for staff's children. Carol Murray Childcare Centre currently pays 10% above award to attract and retain staff.
- Discuss the option and/or advocate for access to government housing for childcare workers.
- Invest in leadership, mentoring and professional development to reduce burnout and boost retention.
- Encourage members of the migrant community to upskill and train as qualified childcare educators.
- Incentivise retired qualified childcare workers to return to the workforce for part-time and casual roles.

7.4 Scope Flexible + Diverse Models

Feedback received throughout the consultation is that the childcare needs in TDC are not a one-size fits all solution. For example, the need for out-of-school-hours care and vacation-care programs alongside additional early childhood education program, emerged repeatedly throughout the consultation. The following actions are recommended:

- Bring stakeholders together to pilot out-of-school-hours care (OSHC) and holiday programs for school-aged children. This would include childcare facilities, schools and Council and in the short term could make use of existing facilities in the community.
- Scope mobile and flexible childcare options for rural and remote areas that can also be wound up and down with seasonal demand and potentially provide support for shift-workers.

8. REFERENCES

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