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## Project Summary

Residents of Towong Shire have a range of early childhood needs for their families. Some of these services, such as kindergartens, maternal and child health services and immunisations, are delivered directly by Towong Shire Council (Council) or by a contractor on behalf of Council. Other services are provided to local residents by the private sector.

To meet expected future needs of the community in a sustainable manner, Council is undertaking a review of early childhood services with a view to developing a strategy that meets future service delivery needs.
Project Detail

Towong Shire Council delivers a range of early childhood services throughout the Shire, including kindergartens, maternal and child health services, and immunisations. Council is also currently developing the Tallangatta Integrated Community Centre which will encompass early childhood services, including the introduction of Long Day Care, for the Tallangatta community. This facility will open in late 2015 / early 2016.

In addition, Council has obtained funding for improvements to the Berringa Community Centre to cater for new early childhood services for the Bellbridge and Bethanga communities, including long day care, after school care and a range of family and children’s services. Council has also obtained funding to deliver improvements to the infrastructure at Corryong Kindergarten.

It is therefore timely to undertake a review of all early childhood services delivered by Council, and to analyse and recommend the most effective models for ongoing sustainable service delivery throughout the Shire.

This project will:
- Undertake service mapping to identify all early childhood services delivered throughout the Towong Shire
- Review and evaluate all current early childhood services currently delivered by Towong Shire Council, including examination of the associated Service Improvement Plans and Quality Improvement Plans
- Undertake research to better plan for future service demand
- Identify community needs and associated gaps in current service provision
- Review available options for the future delivery of early childhood services throughout the Shire
- Provide recommendations to Council on the most appropriate service delivery model(s) to provide the range of early childhood services throughout the Shire, including the role(s) to be played by Council
- Develop a three year strategic plan, the Early Years Children’s Services Plan to support the implementation of proposed recommendations.

Recommendations to support informed council decision making are to include:
- Clear governance model(s), including roles and responsibilities of the community, families, Council, service providers, other agencies and any other parties
- Financial modelling and resourcing plan
- Workforce development planning to support any transition associated with future service delivery
- Infrastructure / building assessments and if required, conceptual plans for improved service delivery
- Measures of success that are realistic and relevant.
Project Stakeholders

Towong Shire Council will be the lead agency in this project, with support from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) and the Department of Human Services (DHS), Ovens Murray region.

Council will appoint an independent consultant (the Consultant) to undertake this project. The Consultant will engage with Council, external service providers, MAV, DEECD and a range of other stakeholders, to deliver a comprehensive report detailing appropriate models of service delivery, financial modelling, resourcing, sustainable practices and recommendations for Council consideration.

The Consultant will liaise with DEECD and DHS and other regional partners to assist with the development of the Early Years Children’s Services Plan and improved delivery of children’s services across the Shire.

Identified stakeholders to engage with through this project include but are not limited to:

- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
- Department of Human Services
- Towong Shire Council and employees:
  - Kindergarten staff – Berringa, Corryong and Tallangatta
  - Library staff - Tallangatta
  - Corporate Services staff
  - Maternal and Child Health nurses
- Local primary schools – Tallangatta Primary School and St Michael’s Primary School
- ChildFirst
- Wodonga Tafe and local universities
- Wodonga City Council
- Mother Goose
- Local Primary Schools
- Local Health Services and associated agencies
- Child Care service providers within the Shire
- Neighbouring Councils
- Municipal Association of Victoria
- Sustainability Victoria.
Evidence Base for the Strategic Plan

The following documents will inform the plan:

- ‘Tallangatta Tomorrow’ Strategic Plan
- ‘Our Bellbridge’ Strategic Plan
- Mitta Valley Strategic Plan
- Towong Shire’s Maternal and Child Health birth data reports
- Wodonga City Council’s Immunisation reports
- Tallangatta Kindergarten Quality Improvement Plan 2013
- Corryong Kindergarten Quality Improvement Plan 2013
- Berringa Kindergarten Quality Improvement Plan 2013
- National Quality Framework
- Towong Shire KCM Service Improvement Plan 2014
- Towong Shire Healthy Communities Plan 2014 – 2017
- Towong Shire Economic Development and Residential Strategy
- Towong Shire 0-8 Network Strategy
- Towong Shire Youth Strategy 2013 -2017
- Towong Shire Council’s Children’s Services Review 2003
- Towong Alliance Plan
- Towong Shire Access and Inclusion Plan
- Towong Shire Council Plan 2013-2017
- Early Childhood Services Workplans
- Towong Shire Council’s staff training policy
- Towong Shire Council’s Long Term Financial Plan
- Towong Shire Council’s Asset Management Plan – Children’s services
- Annual School Enrolment reports from across the Shire
- Towong Shire Council’s staff training policy
- Towong Shire Council’s Long Term Financial Plan
- Towong Shire Council’s Asset Management Plan – Children’s services

The above documents will be utilised to shape the direction, governance and operational model(s) best suited for the delivery of early childhood services within the Towong Shire.

ABS Census data will be utilised to identify target markets, potential growth, and expected supply and demand for children’s services across the Towong Shire. Access to services and the use of technology will be key considerations for children’s services planning and program delivery.

Relevant facts and data will inform the plan and may open up opportunities for non-traditional strategic partners to become more actively involved in the delivery of children’s services across the Shire.
## Project Plan

The Consultant will work with stakeholders to gain an effective level of input into the *Early Years Children’s Services Plan* to support an informed decision making process.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Responsible Officer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 2013</td>
<td>Meet with DHS to confirm requirements</td>
<td>MComS Joanne Bruce - DEECD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2014</td>
<td>Finalise approach and Project Plan</td>
<td>MComS and DEECD</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 2014</td>
<td>Finalise Consultants Brief</td>
<td>MComS DEECD DCCS</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 2014</td>
<td>Advertise Consultant position</td>
<td>MComS</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 2014</td>
<td>Appoint suitable applicant</td>
<td>Consultant MComS DCCS DEECD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Milestone 1</td>
<td>Set KPI’s</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 2015</td>
<td>Stakeholder Engagement Plan developed</td>
<td>Consultant MComS DCCS DEECD</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Auditing Plan developed</td>
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<td>February 2015</td>
<td>Desktop Review</td>
<td>Consultant MComS DCCS DEECD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Milestone 2</td>
<td>Meet with stakeholders</td>
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<td>Communications Plan to be developed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Formal Agreement to be reached with stakeholders</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Media Opportunity</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 2015</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Consultant MComS DCCS DEECD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Milestone 3</td>
<td>Analysis of current environment</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Financial modelling considered and data presented</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>April 2015</td>
<td>Draft report presented to key stakeholders: identifying service gaps, options for service delivery improvement, recommended priorities. Formal agreement reached with DEECD, MAV, Council and other relevant stakeholders that the process is robust and has achieved planned mutually agreed deliverables.</td>
<td>Consultant MComS DCCS DEECD</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 2015</td>
<td>Present Report to Council</td>
<td>Consultant MComS DCCS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Milestone 4</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>– Final Report</td>
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Budget

Funding has been provided by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to deliver this project.

Planning Cycle

Council will adopt the following service development planning model to plan and deliver early childhood services within the Shire. The consultancy forms a key component in this planning model, including surveying the environment, analysing data and establishing options for future service delivery.
Existing Early Childhood Services

Towong Shire Council delivers a range of early childhood services throughout the Shire, including kindergartens, maternal and child health, and immunisations. Council is also developing a new long day care facility in Tallangatta and has obtained funding to make improvements to the Berringa Community Centre and Corryong Kindergarten.

Further information on existing early childhood services is available on request.