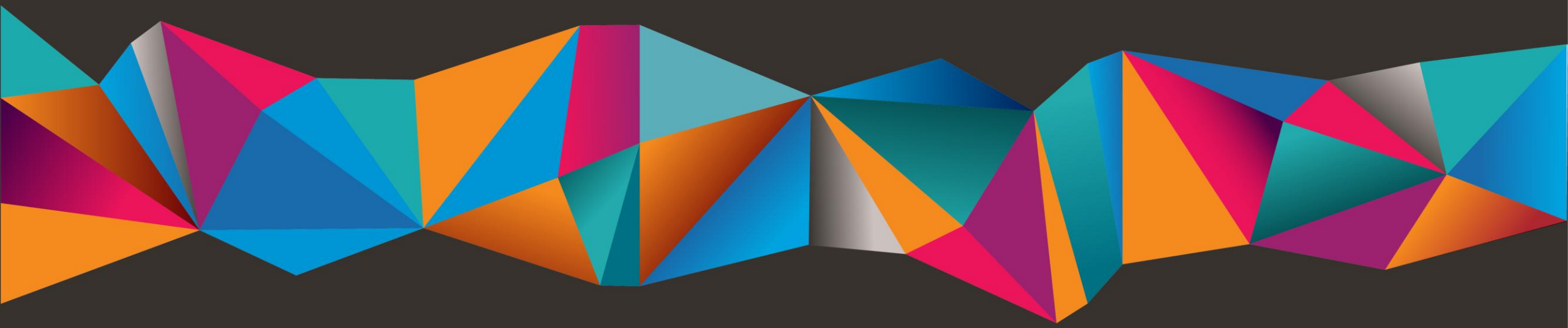
Proposed Changes

Coventry & North St Kilda Children's Centres



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Wominjeka

Council respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Kulin Nation. We acknowledge their legacy and spiritual connection to the land and waterways across the City of Port Phillip and pay our heartfelt respect to their Elders, past, present, and emerging.

Agenda

Item	Lead	Timing
Welcome and Purpose of Session	Mayor	3 minutes
Presentation Proposed Changes Coventry	Manager Families Youth & Children Manager Portfolio Projects	15 minutes
Questions on Coventry Proposal	Families facilitated by the Mayor	10 minutes
Presentation Proposed Changes North St Kilda	Manager Families Youth & Children Manager Portfolio Projects	5 minutes
Questions on North St Kilda Proposal	Families facilitated by the Mayor	5 minutes
Feedback on the Proposals	Families facilitated by the Mayor	20 minutes
Next Steps & Close	Mayor	2 minutes

What is currently being considered by Council?

Council is currently considering a proposal which involves:

- Use of Coventry Children's Centre as a temporary decanting site for South Melbourne community managed childcare services during redevelopment.
- Approaching the South Melbourne Primary School to use a currently vacant room at Barring Djinang Kindergarten to support Emerald Hill Toy Library requirements in 2027.
- Temporary withdrawal of the remaining Council operated childcare service from North St Kilda Children's Centre from 2027 to allow the site to be used exclusively for decanting community manged childcare services during 2027 and 2028 until Lilian Canam development is complete.
- Temporary reconfiguration of Council-operated childcare services to support delivery of the Children's Infrastructure Program and to improve the sustainability of Council's childcare network.

Why is Council considering this proposal?

Council is delivering the Children's Infrastructure Program, a multi-year partnership with the Victorian Government to redevelop six early years facilities across Port Phillip.

The Program represents a significant investment in community infrastructure and will provide modern facilities to support current and future generations of children and families in Port Phillip. While significant Council and State Funding has been contributed to the Program there is a funding shortfall across the life of the Program.

To enable redevelopment works to occur, services must temporarily relocate from sites undergoing construction.

Council also needs to look at ways to improve the sustainability of the childcare network it operates in Port Phillip and is currently undertaking a range of activities to strengthen performance.

What does Council need to balance in its decision making?

The challenge for Council is finding temporary locations for community managed centres that:

- minimise disruption for children, families and educators in Port Phillip as much as practicable
- meet strict regulatory requirements that are in place for early learning facilities
- enable community managed centres to continue to operate as separate businesses as they provide care to a number of families in Port Phillip and are local employers
- can be delivered in time to meet the timeframes required for the Childcare Infrastructure Program
- are financially responsible and sustainable for Council, and respond to current service use and demand trends.

Port Phillip Childcare Network - Council's Involvement

Council owns and operates five childcare centres. It also manages a waitlist for both its own and community-managed centres.

Council also owns properties and provides these to community managed centres who are separate community-based organisations that provide early years care for Port Phillip families.

Utilisation across Council-operated services is below optimal levels.

Current utilisation is approximately 48 per cent at Coventry Children's Centre, 49 per cent at North St Kilda, and approximately 58 per cent at Barring Djinang. Utilisation at Clark Street Children's Centre is approximately 48%, and at Bubup Nairm Family & Children's Centre approximately 70%.

Port Phillip birth notices have declined from 949 (2022-23), to 807 (2024-25) and in South Melbourne birth notices have declined from 177 (2022-23) to 104 (2024-25).

Port Phillip Childcare Network - Council's Involvement

Facility	Current capacity (No. places)	Nov 2024 actual	Feb 2025 actual	Nov 2025 actual	April 2026	June 2026
Barring Djnang	22	63%	40%	54%	52%	58%
North St Kilda	22	72%	71%	77%	46%	49%
Coventry	60	69%	55%	48%	37%	48%
Clark St	65	73%	48%	55%	48%	48%
Bubup Nairm	152	68%	66%	78%	68%	70%

What is Council doing to improve performance?

Council is implementing a range of actions to improve service performance and sustainability of its childcare services.

This includes:

- strengthening service leadership and governance;
- undertaking independent operational and compliance reviews;
- delivering workforce training focused on improving quality and safety;
- implementing marketing and engagement initiatives, and
- reviewing enrolment systems.

Coventry Proposal

What sites were considered?

Council considered:

- Coventry Childcare Centre and Barring Djinang Kindergarten
- Council community facilities (e.g. Sol Green Community Centre and South Melbourne Community Centre)
- Commercial premises
- Former occasional care space at Melbourne Sports & Aquatic Centre.

How were shortlisted sites assessed?

The two short-listed options were assessed against:

- suitability for childcare operations
- impacts on families and staff
- complexity of required building works, cost and delivery risks
- likelihood of meeting project timelines
- long-term financial implications for Council.

Unfortunately, no option was identified that avoided significant trade-offs.

The criteria were not weighted, but were considered collectively to assess the strengths, weaknesses, risks and trade-offs associated with each option.

Why was Coventry proposed?

Coventry emerged as the preferred option because:

- The facility is already licensed and operating as a childcare centre
- It has capacity suitable for the temporary arrangements to meet the needs of the community managed centre
- Only minor building modifications would be required estimated at approximately $25,000
- There is no lease cost to Council as it is a Council owned site
- It provides a relatively high level of confidence that redevelopment timelines can be achieved to enable construction to commence at Clarendon Children's Centre early in 2027
- While there are impacts on families, these could be reduced through available places within Council's broader childcare network and through other childcare providers e.g. Clarendon Children's Centre.

What places are available in the area?

If the proposal was to proceed, 44 children currently enrolled at Coventry would be impacted.

Clarendon Children's Centre have indicated they will be able to offer 10-15 additional places over their current limit while operating at Coventry due to the larger capacity of the facility (subject to licencing by the State Government).

Depending on days requested by individual families, this would equate to 15-25 additional children being provided with education and care.

Within the South Melbourne area, Council's Barring Djinang service is operating at 58% utilisation.

We understand that two private Centres located near Coventry Children's Centre with a capacity of 90 and 104 places each are operating at around 70% utilisation, lower on some days of the week.

In Port Melbourne, Council's Clark Street Children's Centre is operating at under 50% utilisation.

What is the future of Coventry?

Many families have asked about the long-term future of Coventry Children's Centre.

The current proposal relates only to temporary arrangements required during the redevelopment period.

No decisions have been made regarding the long-term future of any services as part of this proposal.

Any decisions about the future of services beyond the redevelopment period would require separate consideration by Council.

What happens if a suitable decanting site is not found?

Redevelopment of Clarendon Community Managed Centre and Lilian Canam would not proceed until a suitable decanting site is found.

Given the requirements of early years learning facilities this may delay the program for a significant period of time.

Family Questions

North St Kilda Proposal

Why is North St Kilda part of this current proposal?

Council previously resolved to retain a partial service at North St Kilda while supporting decanting of St Kilda, Balaclava and Elwood based community managed childcare centres.

However, utilisation at the partial Council service has declined significantly and demand for places at this service is now limited, likely impacted by the need to significantly decant from this site.

The current Council model is restricted to four-year-old kindergarten and there is an insufficient number of younger children expected to transition into the service in 2027.

Maintaining a partial service alongside decanting services is therefore not considered financially sustainable in 2027 and 2028.

Feedback has also been received from community managed centres currently and planned to use North St Kilda as a decanting site of a preference to have access to the full site to better support their operations.

What places are available in the area?

If the proposal was to proceed, Council's 150 place Bubup Nairm Family & Children's Centre is currently operating at 70% utilisation and is located 1km from North St Kilda Children's Centre.

Council can also work with Eildon Road, The Avenue and Elwood community managed centres to support placements.

Family Questions

Family Feedback

Next Steps

What happens next?

Feedback from families will be documented and provided in the Council report.

Councillors will consider all relevant information before making a decision.

Council will decide on the proposal at its meeting on 19 August 2026.

Families will be advised of the outcome following the decision.



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