



Early Years Infrastructure Community Consultation 2021

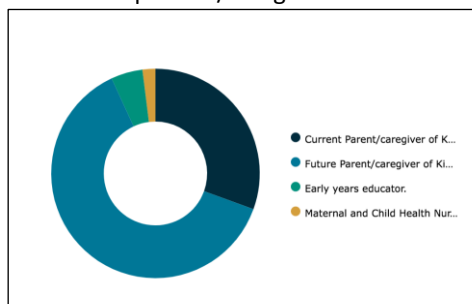
Public consultation has provided the community with the opportunity to express their views on what is important in early years facilities and for children to gain a quality learning experience in Greater Bendigo. In November 2021 current and future parents/caregivers of kindergarten children and early years providers were invited to participate in an online survey to provide feedback including factors influencing decisions on accessing kindergarten services and barriers to participation to help provide guidance on the development of the City's Early Years Infrastructure Strategy (EYIS).

The survey was open for almost four weeks and accessible online through the City's Let's Talk Platform. It was promoted through early year providers, and local primary schools and the City's Facebook page. A total of 347 online survey responses were received from the community.

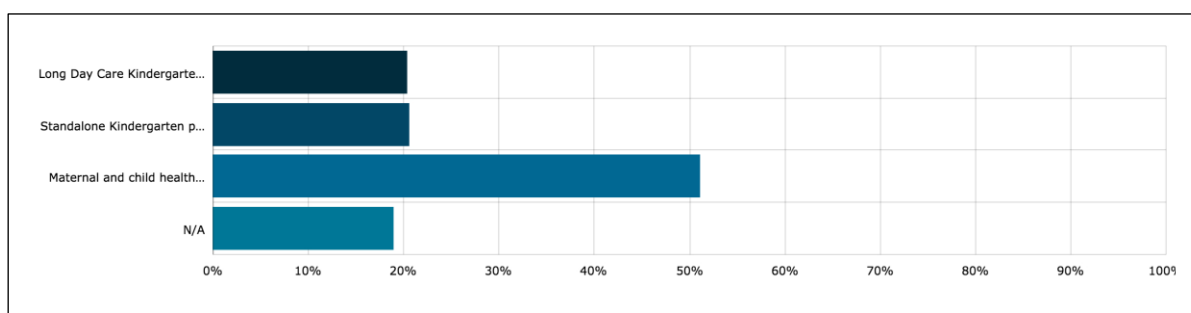
The graphs below provide a summary of the people completing the survey, programs currently being accessed and a willingness to travel.

Persons connection with Kindergarten Services in Greater Bendigo.

The survey results found participants connection with kindergarten services in Greater Bendigo was 62.54% were future parents/caregivers and 30.55% were current. 4.9% early years educators and 2.02% MCHN



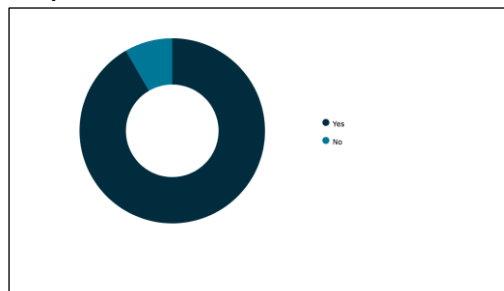
The type of program people was, currently accessing showed 51% responses from people currently using MCHN services and 40% equal split across people using long day care kindergarten or standalone kindergarten.



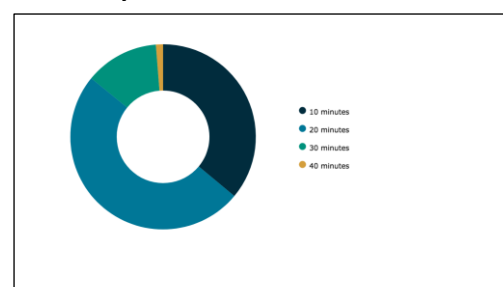


The EYIS will closely align with the city's Community Hubs strategy as a preferred model. To gain an understanding of the communities, willingness to travel to access kindergarten services, participants were asked if they would travel and if so how many minutes. More than 91% responded they would travel with close to 50% prepared to travel up to 20 minutes and 30% 10 minutes.

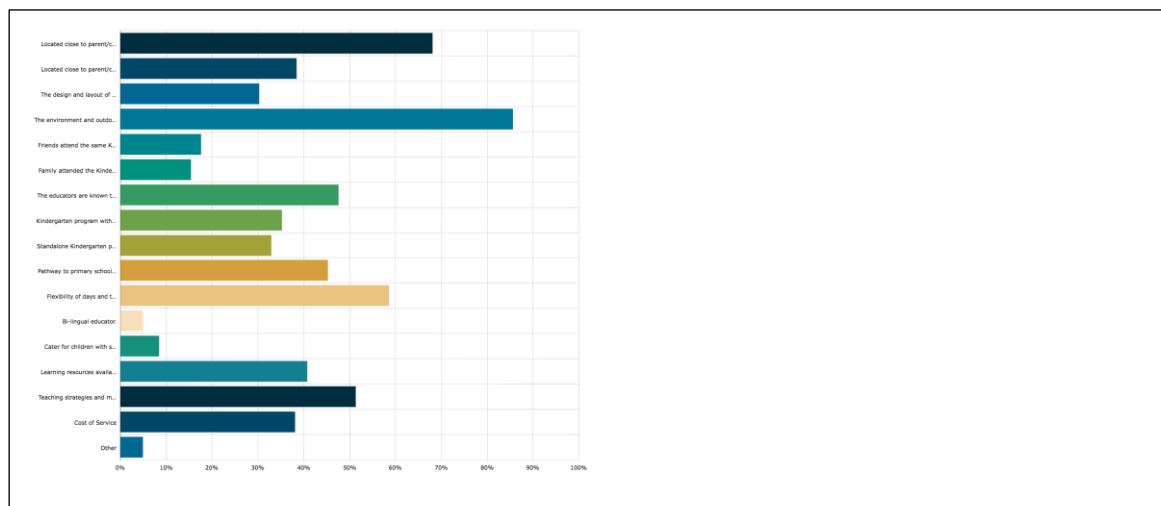
Prepared to travel



How many minutes of travel



Factors influencing the decision to choose a Kindergarten Service.



Key findings of the factors influencing decisions included;

- The environment and outdoor play spaces 85.59%
- Located close to parent/caregivers home 68.01%
- Flexibility of days and times sessions are available 58.5%
- Educators are known or have been recommended 47.55%



What could make it easier to access kindergarten programs?



Of survey participants 54.2% responded to the question in relation to what could make it easier to access Kindergarten programs within Greater Bendigo.

Top responses included:

- Information 17.6%
- Availability 12.2 %
- Hours 8.5%

Information was the top contributor in making it easier to access Kindergarten services. With suggestions of improved enrolment process, access to information of services and a way to easily compare services.

Featured contributions and additional comments from participants in relation to information included:

- More information on what kinder's are located in my area.
 - More info on how to know when my child is ready for kinder.
 - More information given to parents in early years.
 - More availability
- Choice guide to make it easier to choose a facility- what each offer, price, inclusions, what sets them apart from the others.
- A better enrolment system and more easily accessible information.

Early Years provider Focus Groups

In addition to the online survey, a focus group was conducted with Early Years Providers operating from Council owned and/or operated facilities. The focus group comprised of representatives from Helen Jessen and Annie Galvin Early Learning Centres, Ballarat YMCA, Shine Bright Early Years Management and Bendigo Preschool].

In facilitated discussions around what are the most important aspects of a kindergarten service, the opinion of Early Years providers aligned with the key findings from the survey results, being:

- Outdoor Play Space
- Access to bush/natural environment
- Sensory spaces

Other factors were highlighted such as Safety – drop off/pick up, facilities to include additional Early years services in the same building, ability to change room sizes and staff and storage spaces.

