



# Assessing Childcare Needs in Hedland

Town of Port Hedland

**Creating  
Communities**

# Report Details

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## 1. Introduction

# Evaluating impact and delivering key insights

### 1.1 Purpose of this document

The Town of Port Hedland engaged Creating Communities to conduct an assessment of childcare provision in Hedland.

The assessment was to determine if:

- The childcare strategy implemented in 2018 has impacted the gap / need for childcare in Hedland
- The initiatives and actions outlined in the strategy had an impact on ensuring effective childcare provision in Hedland

The project comprised a two-phase engagement process, consisting of a childcare survey and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders and organisations.

A total of 305 respondents participated in the childcare survey.

A total of 17 semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives from the following organisations:

- 
- |                                      |                                     |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • Hedland Toy Library                | • EPIC                              |
| • Pilbara Logistics                  | • MacKillop Family Services         |
| • Wells Women's                      | • Pilbara Ports Authority           |
| • Port Hedland Chamber of Commerce   | • BHP                               |
| • Blossom Au Pair Australia          | • St Celas Primary School           |
| • Bloodwood Tree                     | • Pilbara Regional education office |
| • Port Hedland Early Learning Centre | • Treloar                           |
| • Child Australia                    | • Youth Involvement Council (YIC)   |
| • Ngala                              |                                     |

This approach was undertaken to determine the barriers and opportunities associated with childcare delivery in Hedland and to ensure collective action continues for the betterment of childcare provision in the community.

### 1.2 Project background and context

In 2018, The Town of Port Hedland conducted a survey to identify gaps in childcare provision and build a cohesive understanding of community need for childcare places in Hedland.

The survey identified a need for approximately 380 additional childcare placements across Hedland. Following community engagement and consultation, a childcare strategy was developed by the Hedland Collective. This strategy identified a number of initiatives that would address gaps and issues in childcare provision in the short, medium and long term.

The primary focus of the childcare strategy was reducing the waitlist for childcare positions in Hedland. Specific actions included:

- Investing in additional childcare facilities
- Developing approaches to reduce the shortage of qualified childcare workers
- Working with childcare providers in Hedland.

Some of the key successes that were achieved in 2020 to address childcare needs in Hedland were:

- Thriving Futures partnership funded by BHP established to develop a sustainable workforce strategy. A jobs fair was run in 2020
- \$740,000 from BHP funded the refurbishment of the South Hedland Play and Learn
- \$274,000 from the Town of Port Hedland repurposed the Port Hedland Library
- A total of 82 new childcare places at centres were created in 2020
- 10 School Based Trainees started their Certificate II in Child Care in 2020
- 11 School Based Trainees started their Certificate II in Child Care in 2021

This report reviews the progress of the strategy and assess its impact on childcare in Hedland. This will enable the Town of Port Hedland to determine next steps in ensuring effective childcare provision in the community.

## 2. Insights and Recommendations

# Co-designing for the future

This section details key insights that have emerged from the engagement process and puts forward overarching recommendations for the Town of Port Hedland to implement to ensure effective childcare provision in Hedland.

TABLE 1: KEY INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FOCUS	INSIGHTS	RECOMMENDATION(S)
THERE IS STILL A COMMUNITY GAP/NEED FOR CHILDCARE IN HEDLAND.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The majority of those who were surveyed indicated that they were either seeking childcare for their children or were seeking additional or alternative childcare placements.</li> <li>Similarly, the majority of interviewees either disagreed or strongly disagreed that childcare service delivery is equipped to cater to the demographic needs of families and the community in Hedland.</li> <li>Survey data indicated that an additional 305 childcare placements are needed across all age groups. 136 survey respondents also indicated that they have been on a childcare waitlist for 6 months or more.</li> <li>A quick win for additional child care placements would be to support existing residents to set up family day care centres. 10 survey respondents were interested in being home-based child-care providers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to participate the Hedland Collective Childcare Working Group meetings to collaboratively monitor existing childcare arrangements, establish ownership/responsibility for developing solutions to key issues, and consolidate resources, where appropriate, across the childcare sector.</li> <li>Support Thriving Futures to spearhead the creation of a centralised childcare waitlist to minimise duplication of placement applications.</li> <li>Develop information and supports run through the Town of Port Hedland for residents wanting to set up and provide home based child care.</li> </ul>

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This pulls on the existing resident pool and has the following benefits:

- providing employment for existing residents,
  - does not require the provision of additional housing,
  - does not require large outlays for the set-up of substantial facilities,
  - can be implemented relatively quickly.
- 

THERE IS  
DESIRE FOR A  
GREATER  
VARIETY OF  
CARE OPTIONS  
AND SERVICES  
SUCH AS  
AFTERSCHOOL  
CARE AND MORE  
FLEXIBLE  
OPTIONS.

- Survey data identified gaps in childcare provision, such as more afterschool care and more flexible options. Interviewee data further indicated that one of the top challenges was the need to cater more for different work shifts.
- More flexible options (e.g. 1 or 2 days, 7 days, after 6pm) were a frequently suggested key opportunity identified by interviewees.
- One of the most important things to improve childcare identified by the community was to provide more flexible options for shift workers or occasional care, such as childcare for 1 or 2 days, childcare after hours and making childcare available 7 days a week (23.5%).
- Afterschool care was an area of care that is strongly desired by the community. The most common comments provided by survey respondents related to more afterschool care (22). Providing before and afterschool care (17.7%) was also one of the top 5 most important things to improve childcare provision.
- Interviewees most commonly (52.9%) either agreed (23.5%) or strongly agreed (29.4%) that afterschool care is most appropriately provided at a primary school.
- With Thriving Futures and Centre Directors explore viability and functionality of 'place sharing positions' both within and across centres to accommodate for the rostered nature of work in Hedland.
- Facilitate discussions with the Department of Education and the Hedland Network of Principals to fast track the establishment of afterschool care.
- Investigate the capacity of existing commercial afterschool care operators who provide services in Perth and other areas to establish a service in Hedland
- Recommend the invitation of a representative from local schools and the au pair industry to the Hedland Collective Child Care Working Group.
- In collaboration with Thriving Futures facilitate an information session(s) for residents who are interested in becoming family day care providers and connect them in with the appropriate services to support them.

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- Interviewees believed that one of the most important things to improve childcare provision was to encourage additional family day care centres to open (23.5%). 10 survey respondents were interested in becoming a family day care provider.
- 

STAFFING-RELATED ISSUES ARE A KEY BARRIER FOR CHILDCARE PROVISION IN HEDLAND.

- Interviewees were generally positive about the childcare staff and acknowledged the efforts of the childcare centres in responding to community need for childcare.
  - However, interviewees also raised staffing-related issues such as recruitment and retention of qualified/experienced educators, the underpayment of childcare staff and the lack of qualified/experienced childcare staff.
  - The majority of interviewees (82.4%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed that there is sufficient support to attract and retain quality and experienced educators in Hedland.
- Investigate the opportunities associated with the creation of a Pilbara Designated Migration Area for childcare employees, and initiate advocacy to the Federal Government.
  - Partner with Thriving Futures to spearhead the creation of a childcare worker cluster scheme with childcare centres and au pair agencies to assist with relief staff and short-term staff shortages (see Teaching Staff example <https://www.education.sa.gov.au/working-us/working-teacher/temporary-relief-teacher-trt-cluster-schemes>).
  - Liaise with and support Thriving Futures in their workforce development strategies to ensure coordinated approach.
  - Review housing support that could be made available for childcare employees.
  - Continue ongoing community safety strategy implementation to increase perception of Hedland as a liveable community.
  - Continue working with State government to ensure affordable availability of residential housing long term.
  - Partner with other members of the Hedland Collective to offer discounts to childcare centre staff at Town of Port Hedland facilities as part of centre attraction and retention packages.

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CENTRE-BASED  
CHILDCARE IS A  
POPULAR OPTION  
FOR CHILDCARE  
IN HEDLAND.

- The most preferred childcare method according to those surveyed is Centre Based Childcare.
- The community believes that the most important thing to improve childcare provision in Hedland is building a new childcare facility (41.2%). However, interviewees further mentioned that this new childcare facility would benefit from being publicly funded and/or subsidised through involvement with schools, governments and/or industry in order to keep childcare costs down.
- Conduct a business case to assess the viability for an additional care facility in Hedland, including exploring funding requirements for the proposed centre and impact on financial viability of existing centres.
- Work with Childcare centres to conduct a review of the cost of providing childcare in Hedland and collaboratively develop a strategy for fee minimisation.

### 3. Key findings

# Evaluating childcare provision for the community

This section details key findings that have emerged from the childcare survey and semi-structured interview.

#### 3.1 Semi-structured interviews

- When interviewees were asked whether there were good childcare options in Hedland, 52.9% answered 'yes' and 47.1% indicated 'no'.
  - While those who answered 'yes' raised positives such as high-quality childcare and the variety of childcare options, they also raised issues such as the limited availability of childcare and the lack of placements in Hedland.
  - In addition to the issues raised above by the 'yes' group, those who indicated 'no' further specified that the facilities were under-staffed and that better quality childcare was needed.
- When interviewees were asked to reflect on the top 3 things that childcare in Hedland was doing well, they were positive about the professional development provided by centres, educators being proactive, and the childcare centres being responsive to community needs.
- When interviewees were asked to comment on the top 3 challenges for childcare in Hedland, they raised issues around not enough placements, recruitment/retention of skilled/quality childcare staff and the need to cater more for different work shifts.
- Interviewees were asked to rate 5 statements relating to childcare service delivery and the recruitment and retention of childcare staff on a scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree.
  - The majority of interviewees (70.6%) either **disagreed** or **strongly disagreed** that childcare service delivery is equipped to cater to the demographic needs of families and the community in Hedland.
  - Interviewees most commonly (53.0%) either **disagreed** or **strongly disagreed** that there is sufficient support to expand service delivery and increase childcare placements in Hedland.
  - Regarding the delivery of afterschool care, interviewees most commonly (52.9%) either **agreed** or **strongly agreed** that afterschool care is most appropriately provided at a primary school.

- The majority of interviewees (82.4%) either **disagreed** or **strongly disagreed** that there is sufficient support to attract and retain quality and experienced educators in Hedland.
- Interviewees most commonly (52.9%) either **agreed** or **strongly agreed** that training school leavers is an effective way to ensure there are enough childcare staff in Hedland.
- Interviewees believed these were the most important things to improve childcare provision in Hedland<sup>1</sup>:
  - Building a new childcare facility (41.2%)
  - Reducing the cost of childcare places at childcare centres (23.5%)
  - Encouraging additional Family Day Care centres to open (23.5%)
  - More flexible options for shift workers or occasional care e.g. 1 or 2 days, 7 days, after 6pm (23.5%)
- When interviewees were asked what could be done to improve childcare in Hedland, recruitment and retention of childcare staff arose as a key theme, with interviewees noting that more competitive recruitment and retention strategies for educators were needed.

Other suggestions centred on gaining external support, such as involving schools more in childcare and more support from local/state governments and industry.

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<sup>1</sup> The top 4 options were summarised as there were 3 options with the same percentages, making them equal responses.

## 3.2 Childcare survey

TABLE 2: KEY FINDINGS FROM THE CHILDCARE SURVEY

QUESTIONS	ALL RESPONSES
REASONS FOR SEEKING CHILDCARE PLACEMENT	<p>The top three reasons for seeking childcare are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary caregiver is currently employed (59.2%)</li> <li>• Primary caregiver is seeking employment / seeking to return to employment (33.1%)</li> <li>• Primary caregiver is currently completing education / training (3.0%)</li> </ul>
IMPACT ON PLANS TO STAY IN HEDLAND	<p>88.8% of respondents who answered this question said that not having access to childcare would impact their plans to stay in Hedland.</p> <p>This demonstrates the importance of childcare provision and its ability to impact on the long-term plans of families in choosing their place of residence.</p>
CURRENT HOUSEHOLD CHILDCARE NEEDS	<p>78.5% of respondents said that they were either seeking childcare for their children or they had some childcare but were seeking additional or alternative childcare placements. This indicates that a majority of respondents' household childcare needs were not met.</p>
NO. OF CHILDREN IN EACH AGE GROUP REQUIRING CHILDCARE	<p>Survey data indicated that an additional 305 children required childcare. 151 of those were between the ages of 'Less than 1 year old' and '2 years – less than 3 years old'.</p>
DAYS OF THE WEEK FOR CHILDCARE	<p>Weekdays had the highest number of responses, with Tuesday – Wednesday being the most popular days for community members seeking childcare for their children. 63 responses indicated they were seeking childcare for their children on weekends.</p>
CHILDCARE WAITLIST LOCATIONS	<p>The two most common responses were YMCA Port Hedland Early Learning Centre and After School Care (101) and One Tree Len Taplin Children's Service (97). Next was Treloar Child Care Centre (70).</p>
LENGTH OF TIME ON WAITLIST	<p>136 respondents have been on a waitlist for 6 months or more.</p>
PREFERRED CHILDCARE METHOD	<p>The top three most preferred methods for childcare are<sup>2</sup>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Centre Based Childcare (weighted average 3.57 / 4)</li> <li>• Family Day Care (weighted average 2.49 / 4)</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> Respondents were asked to rank their option in order of preference on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being the highest and 4 being the lowest. These answer choices were then assigned a weight according to their preference, with their most preferred choice carrying the largest weight of 4 and the least preferred choice being assigned the lowest weight of 1. Weighted average scores were then calculated based on the average ranking for each childcare method.

- 
- Paid home-based care (weighted average 2.01 / 4).
- 

MAIN REASON FOR  
PREFERRED OPTION

The top three most common responses for their preferred method of childcare were:

- The quality of the facilities (31.4%)
  - Convenience (23.2%)
  - Cost (8.7%).
- 

INTEREST IN  
BECOMING A FAMILY  
DAY CARE SERVICE

10 respondents (4.8%) indicated they were interested in becoming a family day care provider.

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FINAL THOUGHTS  
ON CHILDCARE  
PROVISION IN  
HEDLAND

Respondents most commonly gave suggestions such as more afterschool care and more flexible options for shift workers or occasional care. Respondents also highlighted issues such as no/limited childcare available and the negative impact that childcare has on parent/families' quality of life.

## 4. Methodology

# Informing the Findings

### 4.1 Overview

The two (2) key elements of this assessment were a childcare survey and semi-structured interviews.

This section provides an overview of the methodology that was used to evaluate childcare needs and provision in Hedland.

TABLE 3: METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

TASK	DESCRIPTION
<b>PHASE 1:</b> Project Initiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One (1) inception meeting was conducted with the Town of Port Hedland via Zoom</li><li>• A community and key stakeholder list was developed</li></ul>
<b>PHASE 2:</b> Childcare Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The previous childcare survey questions were updated</li><li>• The survey was uploaded to Survey Monkey and promoted online via<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Town of Port Hedland website, EDM and social media</li><li>○ Hedland Collective Community Board, EDM and social media</li><li>○ Childcare Centre directors were requested to distribute through their mail lists</li></ul></li><li>• Survey responses were analysed and a summary was consolidated in a survey report</li></ul>
<b>PHASE 3:</b> Semi-structured Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A set of interview questions were developed</li><li>• Semi-structured interviews were conducted by the Town of Port Hedland with key stakeholders and organisations identified in Phase 1</li><li>• These interviews were delivered over the phone and entered into Survey Monkey to assist in streamlining backend analysis</li></ul>

- 
- Stakeholder responses were analysed and consolidated in the final report
- 

## PHASE 4: Report

- A final report containing key insights, stakeholder engagement data and the survey report was consolidated and delivered

### 4.2 Phase 1: Project initiation

A project inception meeting was conducted with the Town of Port Hedland via Zoom on 12 November 2020, 10:00 – 11:00 am to confirm the scope, methodology, timeline and deliverables of the project.

The Town of Port Hedland provided names and details of key stakeholder organisations to be engaged. Creating Communities crosschecked with existing Hedland Collective Master Stakeholder list and consolidated the Final Community and Key Stakeholder list.

The Final Community and Key Stakeholder list was finalised and agreed upon with the Town of Port Hedland.

### 4.3 Phase 2: Childcare survey

Building on the past community survey, an updated survey was drafted and developed. The survey questions focused on questions such as: number of children on waitlists, preferred type of care, length of time on waitlists, the ages of children on waitlists and the type of care that the community member was seeking.

Following the Town of Port Hedland's review and the Childcare Centre Directors' meeting, the survey was refined further and uploaded to the online platform, Survey Monkey.

Once finalised and as per the Town of Port Hedland's request, the Survey Monkey was delivered through two (2) web links, one for general community members and the other for Town of Port Hedland staff. The survey was open for three (3) weeks from 30 November 2020 to 21 December 2020.

The survey was delivered in a targeted approach to the community lists via electronic direct mailing service (EDM) and promoted more broadly via Hedland Collective online platforms.

### 4.4 Phase 3: Semi-structured interviews

A set of semi-structured interview questions were developed based on insights gathered from the community survey and Childcare Centre Directors' meeting.

Following the Town of Port Hedland's review, the interview questions were updated and uploaded to the online platform Survey Monkey. Data from semi-structured interviews were entered into Survey Monkey to assist in streamlining backend analysis.

An email inviting stakeholders to participate in the phone interview was drafted and sent to Town of Port Hedland to circulate. Following the email, the Town of Port Hedland

contacted stakeholders between 3 December 2020 and 12 January 2021 to schedule a phone interview.

Based on these emails and phone calls, 17 phone interviews were scheduled.

These interviews typically took 15 – 20 minutes to complete. The questions were solutions-based with a focus on the barriers and opportunities around childcare needs identified in the community survey.

#### 4.5 Phase 4: Reporting

Ongoing communication with the Town of Port Hedland was maintained throughout the process to ensure that the products and deliverables were aligned with the Town of Port Hedland's needs.

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