



Child Care Study

For Maitland City Council

Families At Work
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Families At Work

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Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
CCB	Child Care Benefit
Council	Maitland City Council
CSA	Children's Services Adviser from NSW Department of Community Services
DoCS	NSW Department of Community Services
FaCS	Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services
FAW	Families At Work
FDC	Family Day Care
LGA	local government area
MUSS	Maitland Urban Settlement Strategy
OOSH	Outside of school hours services, generic term used to include before, after and vacation care
SNSS	Special Needs Subsidy Scheme
SUPS	Supplementary Services Program

Executive Summary

Maitland City Council's commitment to the community is to ensure that "Maitland remains an attractive and healthy place in which to live"¹. This report has been undertaken to respond to anecdotal evidence indicating that there is an unmet need for children and related services in the Maitland local government area (LGA).

Existing supply of children's services in the Maitland local government area

There are a number of existing children's services in the Maitland LGA. These include:

- 13 long day care centres, catering for children aged under 5 years;
- 1 Family Day care Scheme catering for children aged 0-12 years;
- 8 preschools catering for children aged 2 or 3 to 5 years;
- mobiles operating from six locations through the Maitland LGA;
- 4 before school care services for primary school age children;
- 9 after school care services for primary school age children;
- 3 vacation care programs for primary school age children; and
- a range of informal activities for young people aged 12 to 16 years.

Key considerations emerging from the investigation

The issues relating to the provision of care for children aged 0- 16 years include:

- the lack of places for children aged under 2 years;
- limited services available for children and young people aged 9 to 15 years;
- very limited services for children and young people with disabilities;
- all family and children's services working together to support vulnerable families;
- lack of visibility for out of school hours services;
- very limited data on young people and their needs in relation to service provision;
- improved access to information to support better service delivery including the provision of new child care centres;
- affordability of child care fees;
- improving processes relating to children's services planning and approvals; and

¹ <http://www.maitland.nsw.gov.au/community.html>, accessed 3 August 2004.

- the development of planning tools to inform Council about potential child numbers for service provision.

Recommendations

Council does not have a role in the direct provision of services to families and children. Council's community services role is to advocate, support and plan to "develop a range of community-based services to meet identified needs"². This is done in partnership with other government and community agencies as required. These recommendations have been developed to continue the important role that Council has in partnering and supporting local agencies to meet the needs of local families and children.

Recommendations are listed in the order they appear in the report. The recommendation numbers refer to the report section in which they are discussed.

1. That Council consider Council consider the development of a DCP to ensure that long- day care centres will continue to provide children's services to 0-2 year olds. In the development of the DCP, consideration be given to accessible design for children 0-16 with a disability.
2. That Council as one of the community partners identified in the Better Futures Hunter Region Youth Plan commence working with other partners (PCYC, DET, Department of Sport and Recreation, and local youth development officers) to provide vacation care for children and young people aged 9 or 11 to 16 years. This is to be a priority activity. (See Field of Activity 1.9³.)
3. That Council promotes its community directory information relating to young people through a Z-card specifically targeted to young people. This is to be printed and made available through high schools, youth workers, and providers of youth activities and similar.
4. That Council as part of its community development role advocate in all forums for assistance for children and young people with disabilities and vulnerable families.
5. That Council in its role as facilitator arrange and host a dinner for all child, youth and family services as part of family celebration for Child Protection Week (September every year). This dinner could be used to share information about services, network and provide a guest speaker on themes relating to child, youth and families.
6. That Council continue to facilitate and host annual or six monthly meetings/forums for any services that relate to child, youth and families throughout Maitland LGA. Council to convene and host meetings including invites, venues and speaker. Any speaker is to add value to all

² <http://www.maitland.nsw.gov.au/community.html>, accessed 3 August 2004.

³ *Better Futures Hunter Region Youth Plan 2003-2006*. p. 16.

invitees, for example, transition from child care to school and transition from primary to secondary school.

7. That Council holds an annual meeting with school principals to discuss OOSH needs and support, population projections and potential impact on schools and related services. The goal of this type of meeting would be to increase support and visibility for OOSH services.
8. That Council identify what data it would like to collect on young people to assist in its planning and commence processes to collect this data.
9. That Council identifies ways to engage with young people in the community, and commences work on this area as a priority.
10. That Council initiate and facilitate a child, youth and family services contact list. This would be an email list that current and future service providers are invited to join. Council and email list participants could use this to provide information on government grants, new LGA information that may be relevant such as a new program or service offering. Council would be the manager of the list and a conduit for relevant information.
11. That Council adds web links to related child and young people sites to assist services and community to access relevant information.
12. That Council raise awareness of the breadth of the Child Care Benefit eligibility criteria and how these may assist families who are not in the paid workforce access children's services.
13. That Council, to increase awareness of its Community Services Directory, actively promotes the Directory through its Customer Services areas.
14. That Council, to facilitate inclusion and accuracy of information in the Directory provide a fax back form to all services for annual update of entry.
15. That Council launches the annual updated directory at an annual family networking dinner.
16. That Council continues to provide the Directory as hard and soft copies.
17. That Council provides hard copy or web link of the current Directory to new children's services developers as part of the development package. This package should also include a blank fax back form to be completed and faxed back once the service is operational.
18. That Council planners and community services representatives provide opportunities for a pre-DA lodgement meeting for new children's services developers. This meeting could be combined with the current DoCS CSA pre-assessment meeting to facilitate effective and consistent communication.

19. That Council planning and community services personnel meet with the DoCS CSA annually to review design considerations and any emerging issues in relation to children's services. This could take the form of a half day seminar where each party briefs the other and then works on forward planning considerations.
20. That Council provides a checklist of information for potential new developers outlining issues and questions to consider for a new development. This checklist should include existing supply and demand of similar services, population projection data availability, key contacts for information and assistance, broad outline of DA process and relationship with DoCS and similar. The checklist to be available in hard copy and on-line.
21. That Council provides a checklist of information for new developers outlining child care centre design considerations. This checklist could include items that have been identified by DoCS as common design problems that should be addressed prior to pre-assessment and pre-DA meetings with DoCS and Council respectively.
22. That Council identify whether its current IT platform could support a weekly updated children's services vacancy and reservation list, and if so review any existing models, and look for opportunities for external sources funding for the project and ongoing operations.
23. That Council review child population and service supply and demand annually to ensure that it is aware of provision levels. Depending on the outcomes of these annual reviews Council may need to consider provision of additional services through s94 contributions, and/or private development.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Maitland City Council's commitment to the community is to ensure that "Maitland remains an attractive and healthy place in which to live"⁴. Council's community services role is to advocate, support and plan to "develop a range of community-based services to meet identified needs"⁵. This is done in partnership with other government and community agencies as required.

This report has been undertaken to respond to anecdotal evidence indicating that there is an unmet need for children and related services in the Maitland local government area (LGA). Preliminary research has indicated that there are long waiting lists for long day care, particularly children aged under 2 years and outside school hours services both before and after and vacation care. It is not known whether families with additional needs such those from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and those with disabilities are accessing the services or not.

The unmet demand for children's services has been compounded by rapid population growth in the Maitland LGA. Data provided in the initial project brief indicates growth of 1.54% per annum between 1996 and 2001, and this growth is projected to continue at an estimated rate of 2.5% per annum in the ten years from 2001. Maitland is also attracting commercial growth with large employers moving into the area. The Infringement Processing Bureau and NSW Department of Mineral Resources are examples of two employers who are relocating their operations to Maitland.

1.2 Project objectives

The Project Brief identifies the following primary objectives⁶ for this research.

1. The mapping of existing service provision across the City.
2. Establishing demand for child care on existing services and to consider how that demand will be satisfied by proposed and approved new developments.
3. Establishing a benchmark for childcare provision that will inform Council's internal planning instruments, and planning by both State and Commonwealth agencies.

The research focuses on the following specific population groups⁷ as indicated in the original brief to consultants.

1. Children (0 to 5 years), and their families or carers who access or wish to access both nursery and toddler child care.
2. Children (6 to 16 years), and their families and carers, who wish to access care.

⁴ <http://www.maitland.nsw.gov.au/community.html>, accessed 3 August 2004.

⁵ <http://www.maitland.nsw.gov.au/community.html>, accessed 3 August 2004.

⁶ Maitland City Council Child Care Study Project Brief, p.1-2.

⁷ Maitland City Council Child Care Study Project Brief, p.2.

3. Children and young people, as above, who are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.
4. Children and young people, as above, who are from a culturally or linguistically diverse background.
5. Children and young people, as above, who have a disability.

This report documents the research undertaken for this project to ensure that the project objectives are met. Each of the section headings reflects the key tasks identified by Maitland City Council for this research.

1.3 Methodology

The following investigation was undertaken for this project.

- Literature review of relevant documents.
- Stakeholder forums – child, youth and family service providers (direct and indirect).
- Reference group comprising of local service providers.
- Phone interviews with related government employees involved in child and youth services.
- Phone interviews with several large employer representatives.
- Survey – available to all large employers in the Maitland LGA, families currently using care and those wanting to use care.
- Survey of community supply and demand for child and youth services.

2 Profile of the target populations in relation to children's services

2.1 Children's services in Australia

Services

Currently there are around 8,719⁸ children's services throughout Australia that receive Child Care Benefit or some other type of ongoing funding from the Commonwealth Government. This is an increase of around 10% of services since 1999. These services include long day care, Family Day Care, outside school hours care (before and/or after and vacation care), occasional child care, toy libraries, playgroups and Aboriginal children's services. This does not include state or territory only funded services such as preschools.

These Commonwealth funded services⁹:

- provided services for around 732,100 children (0-12 years) in the census week – an increase of around 27% since the last census in 1999;
- employed 76,185 staff (long day care, out of school hours services, mobiles), a growth of 28% of employed staff since 1999;
- for long day care -
 - charged on average of \$184 (\$161 in 1999) per week for full-time care in private long day care centres and \$188 (\$171 in 1999) for community-based long day care centres;
 - had 79% (same as 1999) of children attending 30 hours of long day care per week;
 - had utilisation rates of 88% (72% in 1999) for long day care;
- for Family Day Care -
 - employed 12,816 Family Day Carers, a growth of only 1% of Family Day Carers since 1999;
 - charged \$163 (\$139 in 1999) per week for Family Day Care;
 - had 79% (same as 1999) of children attending 30 hours of Family Day Care per week; and
 - had utilisation rates of 77% (70% in 1999) for Family Day Care; and
- for outside school hours services –
 - charged \$5.91 (\$5.19 in 1999) per session for before school care and \$9.34 (\$8.23 in 1999) per session for after school care, and \$126 per week for vacation care.

⁸ Department of Family and Community Services (2003). 2002 *Census of Child Care Services*, Commonwealth of Australia. p.5.

⁹ *ibid.* p.5, 6.

Extensive searches have been conducted to gather similar data for young people accessing services, but to date only very limited information has been found. This relates mostly to population projections and anecdotal information relating to usage.

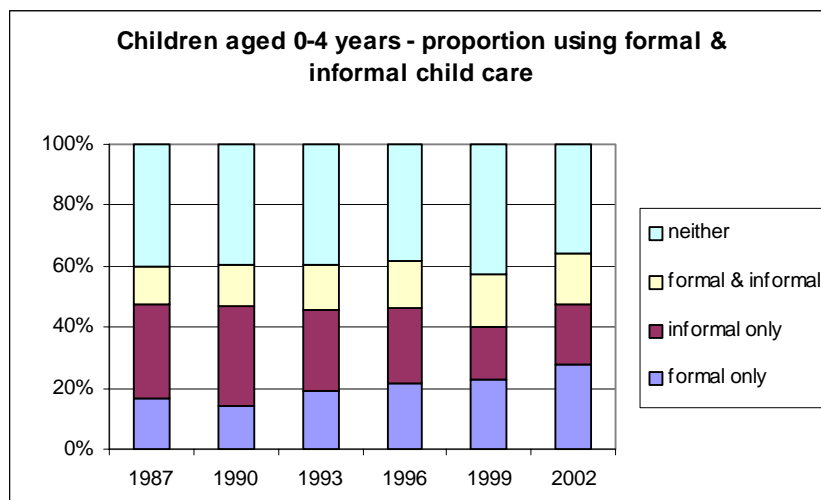
The NSW Government has recently funded a new initiative – Better Futures Strategy – that focuses on young people aged 9 to 18 years. The strategy is to increase the effectiveness of services for young people. This focus is based on three key findings:

- services do not always meet the needs of young people resulting in seeking assistance after a major crisis, as young people may not trust, be aware of or believe a service flexible enough to meet their needs;
- enhancing positive relationships between young people, their friends, families, schools and communities to build resilience and protective factors; and
- early intervention works and is cost effective.¹⁰

Who uses children's services

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data supports the Census data, showing an increase in the use of formal¹¹ care only or a combination of formal and informal¹² care from 1987 to 2002 for children aged 0 to 4 and 5 to 12 years. The use of informal care only has decreased for both age groups.

Children aged 0 to 4 years



Total number of children aged 0-4 years ('000)	
1987	1214.3
1990	1251.1
1993	1293.5
1996	1292.4
1999	1274.2
2002	1242.2

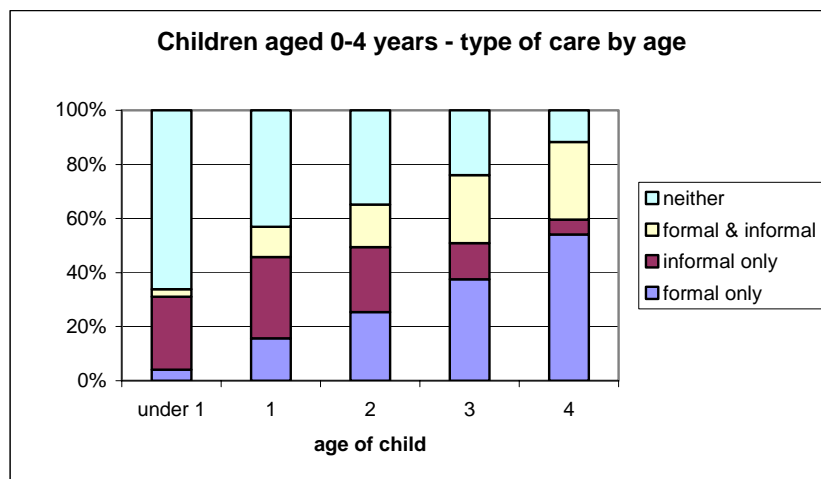
¹⁰ Better Futures Hunter Region Youth Plan 2003-2006. p. 4.

¹¹ Formal care is defined as "Regulated care away from the child's home. The main types ... are before and/or after school care, long day care, family day care, occasional care and preschool." ABS (2002), *Child Care Australia*, Catalogue No. 4402.0.

¹² Informal care is defined as "Non-regulated care, arranged by a child's parent/guardian, either in the child's home or elsewhere ... by (step) brothers or sisters ... grandparents ... other relatives (including a parent living elsewhere) and care by ... unrelated people such as friends, neighbours, nannies or babysitters. It may be paid or unpaid." ABS (2002), *Child Care Australia*, Catalogue No. 4402.0.

The total number of children aged 0 to 4 years has grown by around 40,000 from 1987 to 2002, but the proportion of children using formal and/or informal care has only increased by around 5% for the same period. The use of formal care only or a combination of formal and informal care has increased by 11% and 5% respectively, while the use of informal care only has decreased by 11%. This reflects the growth in the number of child care places available, particularly in the private sector. A primary influence on this growth has been from having no cap on accessing the Commonwealth Child Care Benefit – funding that makes child care more affordable for families.

Child care use varies by age. The younger the child the less formal care used. The following table clearly shows that the use of formal care only, and a combination of formal and informal care increases as the child gets older. Only 7% of children aged less than 1 year used some type of formal care, compared with 83% of children aged 4 years¹³. The main reason that the use of some type of formal care increases for children aged 0-11 years is due work/study (37.2%), followed by preparations for school or started school (28.5%)¹⁴.



The use of formal care increases for children aged 3 to 4 years and much of this increase is related to preschool attendance. Fifty-one percent of children aged 0-4 years who use some type of formal care are in long day care. Long day care use drops from 35.8% of 3 years olds who use some type of formal care to 25.1% of 4 year olds, while preschool use increases from 18.3% of 3 years olds to 59% of 4 years olds¹⁵.

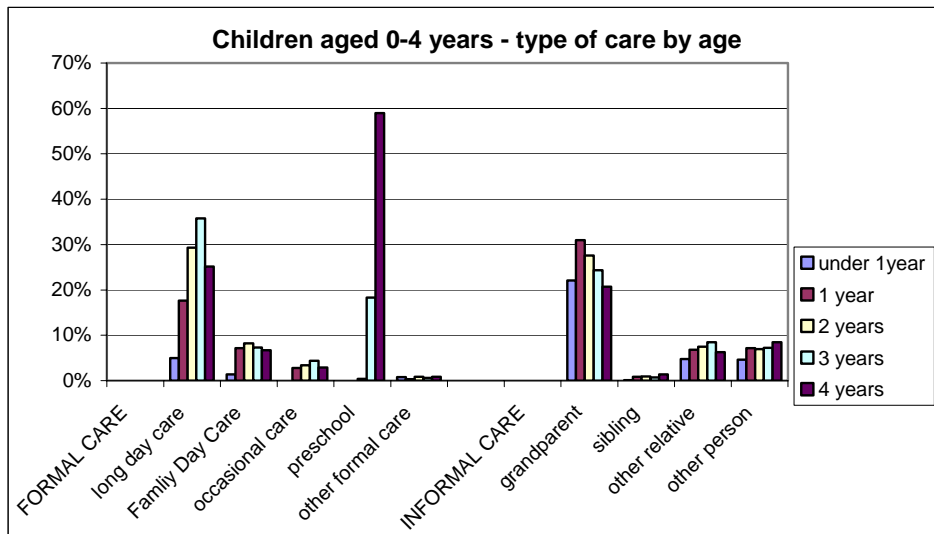
The following table shows the use of different types of formal and informal care by age¹⁶.

¹³ ABS (2002), *Child Care Australia*, Catalogue No. 4402.0. p. 14.

¹⁴ *ibid.* p. 22.

¹⁵ ABS (2002), *Child Care Australia*, Catalogue No. 4402.0. p. 14.

¹⁶ *ibid.* p. 14.

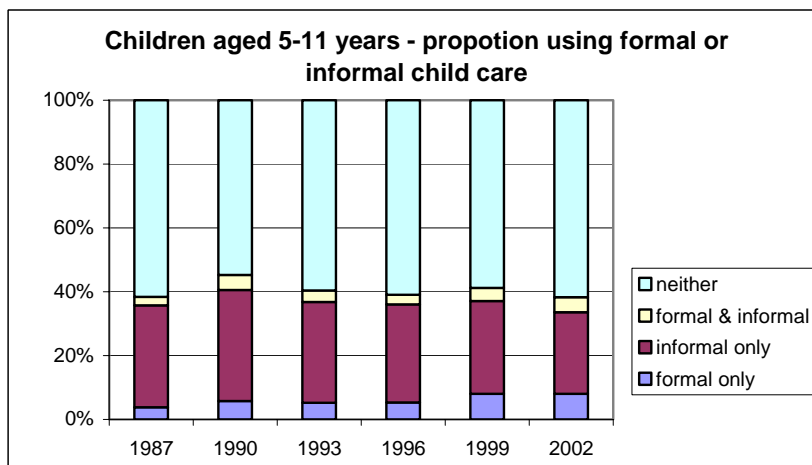


The most used informal care option is grandparents.

Families with children aged 0-4 years opted to use formal care as they believed it was beneficial for their child (44.2%), and for work-related (38.8%) and personal reasons (13.7%)¹⁷. Personal reasons included any activity that was not work-related.

Children aged 5- 12 years

The population of children aged 5 to 11 years has grown by 184,200 from 1987 to 2002 while the proportion of children using formal and/or informal care has only risen by 0.1% for the corresponding time. There have been shifts in the types of care used and while these follow a similar pattern to children aged 0 to 4 years, the change is much smaller. There has been a 4% increase in the use of formal care only and a 2% increase in the use of a combination of formal and informal care. The use of informal care only has decreased by around 6%.

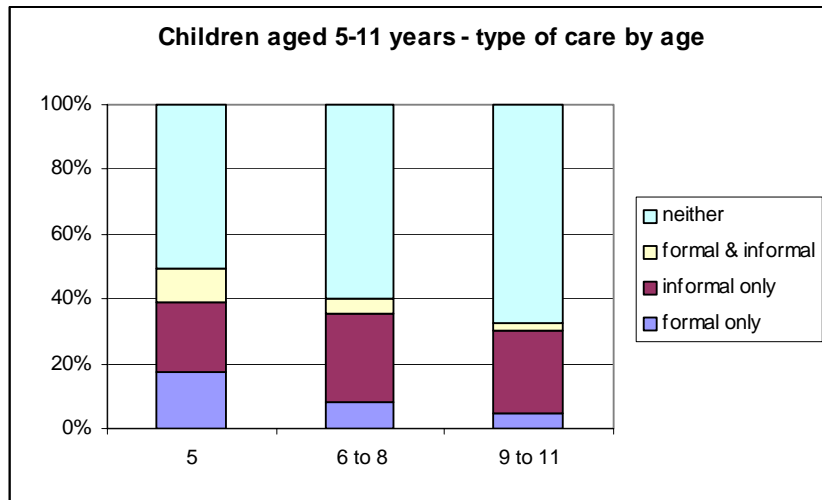


Total number of children aged 5-11 years ('000)	
1987	1673.6
1990	1752.6
1993	1792.4
1996	1810.5
1999	1848.7
2002	1857.8

¹⁷ ABS (2002), *Child Care Australia*, Catalogue No. 4402.0. p. 19.

Child Care Australia (ABS, 2002)¹⁸ reports that the use of formal child care services drops dramatically once a child reaches school age. Twelve point six percent¹⁹ of children aged 5 to 12 years used some types of formal before and after school care (BASC) arrangement, and 14.7%²⁰ of children aged 5 to 12 years attended a vacation care program. The use of formal care also changes as the child ages.

The following table shows the use of formal and informal care by children aged 5 to 11 years. (The 5 year olds figures include both long day care and before and/or after school care. It is not possible to separate these easily.) As a child ages towards 11 years, the use of any combination of formal care decreases, with 67.4% of children aged 9 to 12 years using neither formal nor informal care.



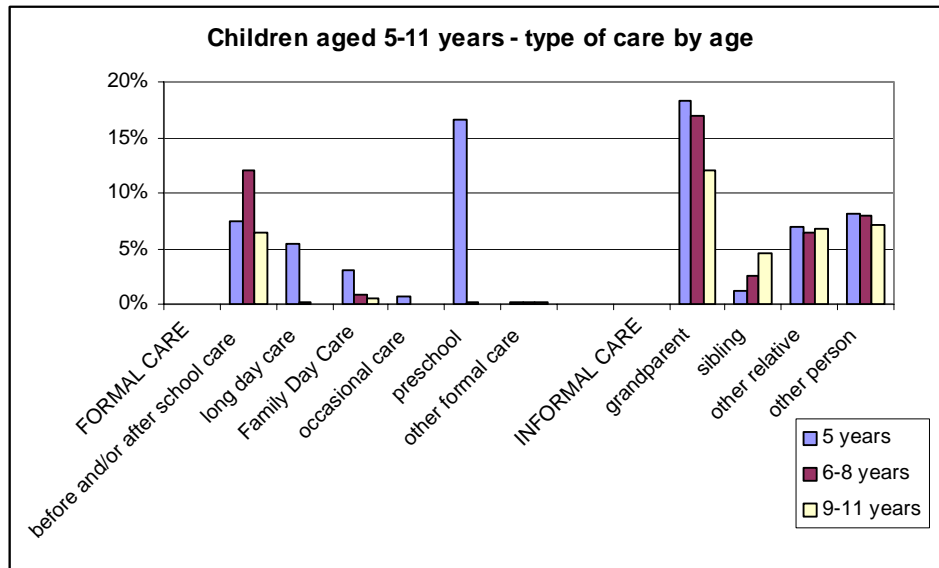
For children aged 5 to 11 years, the preferred type of formal care is preschool for children aged 5 years (17%), followed by before and/or after school care for all other age groups. There is a peak of use of before and/or after school care (12%) for 6 to 8 year olds. Grandparents, followed by another person or relative, provide the most common type of informal care.

The table below shows the individual types of care by age range. Children may use more than one type of care.

¹⁸ The Child Care Survey is conducted as a supplement to the ABS monthly Labour Force Survey. It is conducted approximately every 3 years. The most recent survey (the one used in this report) was done in 2002, the previous survey was conducted in June 1999, and it has been done since 1969. Information is collected via face-to-face interviews from private residences with children aged under 12 years, excluding non-resident children. The survey is conducted throughout Australia in both urban and rural locations (excluding isolated and remote locations).

¹⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2003), *Child Care Australia*, Cat. No. 4402.0. p.12

²⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2003), *Child Care Australia*, Cat. No. 4402.0. p.34



Young people aged 12 to 16 years

There is very little formal data available relating to the types of services that young people may access and population proportions that may access youth services.

Research conducted as part of the NSW Department of Community Services Better Futures²¹ program highlights youth population, and strategies to build resilience in young people, but focuses more on gaps in provision rather than the types of services currently being used.

2.2 Children's Services in NSW

Child and young persons regulations

In NSW long day care centres, mobiles children's services, preschools, occasional child care and Family Day Care fall under the same regulation – *Children's Services Regulation 2004*. The Regulation falls under the *Children and Young persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*.

Out of school hours (OOSH) care is not regulated although there are best practice guidelines and national standards that some OOSH services comply with. Care or leisure activities provided for young people aged 12-16 years are not regulated, nor are there any guidelines that could provide a framework under which to operate. Some individual organisations have developed their own operating guidelines to support their work.

People working or wanting to work with children or young people must complete a Prohibited Employment Declaration stating whether they are a prohibited person. The Working With Children Check prohibits people convicted of sex offences, kidnapping or murder of a child from working in child-related employment. In NSW volunteers are not required to complete this check. A pilot program is currently running with a number of NSW based organisations to check volunteers; PCYC is one of these organisations.

The *Children's Services Regulation* determines:

²¹ *Better Futures, Hunter Region Youth Plan 2003-2006.*

- licensing procedures;
- facilities and equipment requirements;
- staffing requirements;
- child numbers including group sizes and ratios;
- operational requirements; and
- administrative requirements.

These regulations are administered by the NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS) through the Office of Childcare. The Regulations stipulate that every child care centre must have a licensee and an authorised supervisor.

The licensee has specific responsibilities to ensure that:

- provision is made for training and development of primary contact staff (clause 13 (1) (a));
- primary contact staff and the authorised supervisor have the appropriate abilities, qualifications, demonstrated capacity, awareness of their responsibilities in relation to child protection and are fit and proper person to care for children (clauses 13 (1) (b) and 15 (2) (a-e);
- Parts 3 through 7 of the Regulation are complied with. These parts relate to facilities and equipment, staffing, child number, operational and administrative requirements; and
- the authorised supervisor and all other staff comply with the provisions of the Regulation that apply to them.

Suspension or revocation of license can occur if the licensee or authorised supervisor is no longer a fit and proper person to conduct children's services, has contravened or failed to comply with a provision of the Regulation or any premises do not comply with the Regulation.

Child care services

There are currently just over 3,000 licensed children's services in NSW, both State and Commonwealth funded. These services provide more than 122,700 places²². Nearly all (86%) of the licensed services in NSW are for children under school age. Child care places currently cater for around:

- 35,000 children aged 3 to 5 years;
- 11,000 children aged under 3 years;

²² Department of Community Services (2003), *Annual report 2002*. Accessed 24 September 2004 from www.community.nsw.gov.au/html/Annual_Report_03

- more than 12,000 places for primary school age children during school holidays; and
- 9,000 children with disabilities, learning difficulties or from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds²³.

Additionally DoCS provides reduced fees to low income families for around 10,000 places. (These 10,000 reduced fee places form part of the above places.)

These 3,000 services employ approximately 21,000 staff, with a variety of qualifications and experience.

The following table shows the number of licensed children's services in NSW.

Table: Number of licensed children's services in NSW

services	1999		2000		2001		2002		2003	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
Family Day Care	114	3.6	118	3.7	110	3.6	113	3.7	111	3.6
Home-based	331	11.0	293	9.3	250	8.1	182	6.0	173	5.7
Mobiles	12	0.4	12	0.4	11	0.4	11	0.4	11	0.4
Centre-based	1362	43.0	1394	43.8	1363	44.4	1385	45.8	1423	46.7
Funded centre-based	1281	40.5	1314	41.3	1290	42.0	1285	42.5	1279	42.0
Funded mobiles	51	1.5	49	1.5	49	1.6	45	1.5	48	1.6
Total	3151	100	3180	100	3073	100	3021	100	3045	100

Data source: Department of Community Services (2003), *Annual report 2002*, p.23.

Over the past four years the total number of children's services in NSW has decreased by around 100 services. Most of this decrease can be attributed to home-based care, with just over 50% (158) of home-based services no longer operating in the four years between 1999 and 2003. This has in part been off set by a growth in unfunded centre-based care (this is mostly private long day care centres), with 61 new services being licensed in the same period – a growth of 4% of this service type.

Specific child and youth population groups

Children and young people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI), culturally or linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds or with a disability are often overlooked in research relating to access to child and youth services.

Limited data pertinent to children and young people in these groups is available for the Maitland LGA. Part of this difficulty relates to the cut off point between children and young people. There are legal, statistical and government definitions of age ranges. The following data, while not comparable, provides some background to ATSI, CALD and disability populations in the Maitland LGA.

- There are 8,636²⁴ young people aged 9 to 18 years in the Maitland LGA. This equates to 16% of the total LGA population.

²³ NSW Department of Community Services (2002). *Children's Services: Childcare Factsheet*. www.community.nsw.gov.au/document/factsheets/childcare.pdf

- 639 (7.3%)²⁵ of these young people have an indigenous background. Although the total Maitland ATSI population comprises 2.3%²⁶ of total LGA population.
- Around 4% of children aged 0-4 years, and 8% of children aged 5-12 years in the Hunter region have a disability²⁷.
- 94.4% (50,788) of the total Maitland population speak English only, and 2.33% (1,255) speaks another language²⁸.

2.3 Local government context

Local government has a role in the provision of community services for its residents. All Council policies and practices are developed to ensure compliance with the NSW *Local Government Act 1993*. This Act prescribes Council's functions as "The manner in which local government bodies are constituted and the nature and extent of their powers, authorities, duties and functions shall be as determined by or in accordance with laws of the Legislature"²⁹. Chapter 8 further states that a Council has a charter to "to promote and to provide and plan for the needs of children"³⁰.

Maitland City Council's long-term vision is for "a safe and healthy sustainable future, a proud and involved community which enhances our community's quality of life." The Maitland Urban Settlement Strategy (MUSS) 2004 provides an overarching framework for Maitland City Council in planning for urban growth while balancing the goals of economic, community and ecological prosperity. This report will provide a planning tool that will assist in achieving this vision for the community of Maitland City.

The estimated current population of the Maitland LGA is 58,100 as at 30 June 2004³¹. During 2003 the population grew by 3.5% and the projection for the next 5 years is population growth at a rate of 2.5% per annum. This equates to a projected population of 60,879 at 2006 and 80,654 in 2026³². ABS Census data reveals that a higher percentage of single parent

²⁴ *Better Futures, Hunter Region Youth Plan 2003-2006*. p. 5.

²⁵ *Better Futures, Hunter Region Youth Plan 2003-2006*. p. 5.

²⁶ *Maitland Community Profile, 2003*. p. 33.

²⁷ Disability is defined by the ABS as "... diseases or events such as birth circumstances, injuries or strokes ... [with] a long term health impairment or health condition. Some people ... may find it difficult to perform everyday tasks, or to take part in ordinary life situations ... If everyday activities are restricted, these people are classed ... as having a disability ... examples ... that may result in activity limitations or restricted participation include loss of hearing, difficulty in learning, incomplete use of limbs, breathing difficulty, chronic or recurring pain, or nervous conditions." See <http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs@.nsf/66f306f503e529a5ca25697e0017661f/0e266f5ed904bc35ca256b5f00804244!OpenDocument>, accessed 28 Feb 2005 for more detail.

²⁸ *Maitland Community Profile, 2003*. p. 47.

²⁹ *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW), Chapter 2 (2).

³⁰ *idib.* Chapter 8 (1).

³¹ Report to ABS September 2004

³² MUSS. p. 14-16.

families reside in the west sector and a greater percentage of nuclear families reside in the east sector.³³ Census data provides a snapshot of future population projections however it should be noted that these projections will be significantly influenced by local development and factors such as migration that are not predictable.

Maitland LGA has an increasing child population (aged 0-11 years) that is greater than the NSW and Hunter region averages. In the period from 1991 to 2001 the Maitland population increased by 6.78%; with the greatest growth occurring in the past 5 years from 1996 to 2001 where the rate was 4.33%³⁴. In contrast the Hunter region over the period 1991 to 2001 experienced only 1.08% population increase, and for NSW the increase was 3.79%. For the five years from 1996 to 2001 the Hunter region had a decrease of child population of 0.65%, and for NSW an increase of 1.99%.

The recent relocations of Department of Mineral Resources and Infringement Processing Bureau will impact on Maitland LGA population. One of the primary concerns for these departments has been the potential loss of employees who do not want to relocate due to the difficulty locating suitable children's services, and finding employment for the second bread winner in a family, if a couple family and both working. This is of particular concern if the second incomes earner is female and the potential impact of higher levels of unemployment in Maitland.

Maitland Urban Settlement Strategy (MUSS) 2004 and related Masterplan documents

Urban consolidation was identified and accepted by Maitland City Council as an approach to planning that will more efficiently use existing resources such as transport and infrastructure while minimizing the urban sprawl into rural and conservation areas. The principal areas of interest were East Maitland, Telarah and Central Maitland and this is likely to result in limited future population growth in these areas.

The MUSS 2004 identified five planning sectors. These are listed below.

1. Western District – suburbs of Telarah, Aberglasslyn and Rutherford.
2. Southern District – Gillieston Heights and surrounding area.
3. Northern District – areas around the towns of Bolwarra and Largs.
4. South Eastern District – area to the south of the Maitland rail corridor and East Maitland, including the new residential areas of Metford, Ashtonfield and Rathluba.
5. Eastern District – area north of the Maitland rail corridor, Thornton and surrounding areas, including the new large residential release area of Somerset Park.

Planning within these Districts is detailed in the MUSS. The tables below provide a summary of current and future growth for the five Districts that will impact upon future developments in the provision of child care services.

³³ The East, Central and West sectors are those areas defined in Maitland Section 94 Planning sectors.

³⁴ ABS Census of Housing and Population, 2001.

Table: Growth over the 1993-2003 period			
district	area developed	dwelling constructions	estimated population
Western	87.5ha	744	2009
Southern	not stated	22	59
Northern	24.6ha	205 ³⁵	554
South eastern	78.5ha	785	2119
Eastern	69ha	670	1809

Table: Projected growth linked to zoned land			
district	existing land supply	estimated population growth	estimated supply period
Western	1608 lots	4,020	10-11 years
Southern	1200 lots ³⁶	3240	5-10 years
Northern	368 lots ³⁷	920	7-9 years
South eastern	252 lots	630	1.5 years
Eastern	98 lots	245	< 1 year

A large investigation area at Lochinvar located in the Western District will be included in the next review of the MUSS. Any residential land releases that result from these investigations will further impact upon projected population growth in this District.

Underpinning the MUSS are the principles that:

- new rural residential development should have reasonable proximity to one of the local government area's primary or secondary service centres; and
- rural residential development should be located within reasonable proximity to primary and high schools, with links to the public transport network and opportunities for students to walk or cycle wherever possible.

In addition, NSW Department of Education and Training state school provision thresholds are that a Primary School should be provided for each 1500-2000 new homes where³⁸:

- homes are outside the 2km catchment area of surrounding primary schools; and
- current schools are at or near capacity.

The Thornton North Masterplan suggests that future development may result in the need for:

- approximately 200 child care places, provision of a pre-school for Thornton³⁹; and

³⁵ Lot sizes in this area are significantly larger than other districts with larger houses on the lots. There are a low proportion of dual occupancy and multi-unit type residential development in this area.

³⁶ Gillieston East Masterplan.

³⁷ Lot sizes in this area are significantly larger than other districts with larger houses on the lots.

³⁸ Thornton North Masterplan, p68

³⁹ Thornton North Masterplan, p73

- up to 36 new primary school classes.

Furthermore, community consultation documented in the Thornton Masterplan suggests that existing schools and child care are currently operating at capacity.⁴⁰

Section 94 projections based on the MUSS that was revised by Council in 2004 indicate that child population numbers are likely to decrease slightly over the next 12 years for all children aged 0-12 years in all areas of Maitland LGA. The table below shows these population projections.

Table: Child population projections for Maitland LGA

	central		east		west		total	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
total current population	9454	16.3	34104	58.8	14442	24.9	58000	100
0-4 years	714		2577		1091		4383	7.5
5-12 years	1063		3834		1624		6521	11.2
total current 0-12 years	1777		6412		2715		10904	
total projected population 2016	13500	18	41500	55.3	20000	26.6	75000	100
0-4 years	950		2919		1407		5276	7
5-12 years	1469		4517		2177		8162	10.8
total projected 0-12 years	2417		7429		3580		13425	

Data source: Maitland City Council s94 projections based on revised MUSS, 2004.

This could indicate that there may be greater demand for services targeted to young people as the child population ages. This is supported by findings from the Better Futures⁴¹ research with youth issues were an increasing consideration for the Hunter region.

⁴⁰ Thornton North Masterplan, p73

⁴¹ *Better Futures, Hunter Region Youth Plan 2003-2006.*

3 Current supply and demand for children's services in the Maitland LGA

3.1 Services for children aged 0-5 years

Currently in the Maitland LGA there are:

- thirteen long day care centres, with an additional three proposed or at varying stages of development. Eight of those operating are private services, and 5 non-profit. Proposed are two private, and one non-profit;
- one Family Day Care scheme, non-profit;
- eight preschools, two private, and six non-profit; and
- mobiles operating from six locations through Maitland LGA, all community-based, non-profit.

It is interesting to note that in 1995 there were thirteen children's services spread throughout Maitland LGA and the majority of these were non-profit established with Federal and Council funding. These services comprised 4 long day care centres (160 places), 8 preschools (313 places) and 1 Family Day Care scheme (160 places) – a total of 633 places⁴².

In the past ten years the number of long day care centres has doubled, while preschool and Family Day Care numbers have remained stable. No mobiles were reported in 1995. Current services provide as least 1,848 places (not all services responded to the survey or were able to be contacted).

There is no Child Care Benefit limit applied by the Commonwealth Government to long day care, resulting in no Commonwealth control over growth aside from compliance with any government requirements – Commonwealth, State and local.

These 1,848 places comprise at least:

- 0-2 years olds – 94 places;
- 2 year olds – 145 places; and
- 3-5 year olds – 780 places.
- Family Day Care – 292 places, available to children aged 0-12 years.

Average fees were:

- long day care - 0-2 year olds - \$48.16 per day;
- long day care – 2 year olds - \$46.88 per day;

⁴² Maitland City Council Section 94 Contributions Plan, 1995. p. Schedule 1, 1.1 Children's Services: Existing Demand for Children's Services.

- long day care – 3-6 year olds - \$46.19 per day;
- preschool – 3-6 year olds - \$23.50 per day; and
- Family Day Care – 0-12 year olds - \$35.55 (assumes a 9-hour day) per day.

Several stakeholders commented on affordability as one of the key drivers to families accessing some type of formal early learning opportunity, although families wanted to access formal opportunities.

Family Day Care offers flexibility and lower cost care.

Formal care is preferred for preschool age children, not home-based care.

There seems to be ongoing demand for places for children aged less than 2 years; many stakeholders commented that there seemed to be an oversupply in of places in the west Maitland area.

The Children's Services Adviser (CSA) from DoCS commented that several new long day care centres had recently opened in Maitland, mostly on the western side of town. Two recent centres that opened in Rutherford had initial utilisation of 20 children out of 76 possible places, and 3 children out of 75 possible places. Anecdotal information suggests that neither of these centres widely promoted they were opening, contact details were not widely available and initially there was no signage. The centres opened late in 2004, when many families would have current child care arrangements. Families are unlikely to change their arrangements if they are happy with their current one.

3.2 Services for children of primary school age

Currently there are sixteen out of school hours care providers providing before and after school care, and vacation care. There are:

- before school care – 4 services;
- after school care – 9 services;
- vacation care – 3 services; and
- Family Day Care - 292 places, available to children aged 0-12 years.

All of these services are provided by non-profit organisations, mostly by the Maitland Baptist Church as sponsor.

An increase in the number of out of school hours places (OOSH) (before, after, vacation and Family Day Care) is limited as the Commonwealth Government has set a cap in the number of Child Care Benefit places available in any LGA. While access to Child Care Benefit does not stop a provider opening a new OOSH service, the ability of parents to pay for the cost of care does. One stakeholder commented that Council has in the past attempted to run vacation care programs to address the shortage of these services. Council could not access Child Care Benefit resulting in parents paying the full cost of care. The service is no longer running due to the prohibitive cost of care to families.

Stakeholders commented that the bulk of children who attend OOSH programs are aged 8 or 9 and below. No programs currently provide leisure activities specifically targeted to children aged 9 to 12 years.

3.3 Services for young people

There were a range of services for young people identified, predominantly by stakeholders participating in this report. These included PCYC, youth drop in centre, Mindaribba Land Council vacation care, specific youth workers, and activities associated with churches and sports clubs. Many of these were informal relying on the interest of potential participants to attend.

Maitland Family Day Care has in the past provided places to young people aged over 12 years. Lower Hunter Temporary Respite Care provides respite care for young people with a disability aged 13 to 17 years. They also provide vacation care and a Saturday Fun Club (\$4 per session).

Ability to travel to and from the venue for these activities impacted on attendance. Several stakeholders commented that lack of public transport was an issue.

The Section 94 Contributions Plan (1995) comments that there were very limited youth services available, but did not specify what these services were. It does state that most were office based and had to access existing community halls and similar. These arrangements were considered to be unsuitable as the existing facilities did not have capacity to accommodate youth activities over an extended period to time and there were some limits imposed on the types of activities available. It also refers back to a 1998 Community Survey that highlighted the "lack of facilities and services for Maitland's youth population"⁴³. It is interesting to note that this concern is still valid for this report.

3.4 Children's Services Regulation 2004

The *Children's Services Regulation 2004* replaced the *Centre Based and Mobile Child Care Services Regulation (No 2) 1996* and the *Family Day Care and Home Based Child Care Regulations 1996* on 30 September 2004. Existing services have 15 months to comply with the new regulations (1 January 2006), except for the new requirement for separate sleeping areas for children aged less than 2 years. This comes into force from 1 January 2008.

The major changes with the new Regulation are listed below.

- Applying for a license - services cannot operate past the expiry date of their license, even if an application's process is underway.
- An authorised supervisor can supervise two services if each service has another qualified staff member on the premises. If the authorised supervisor is the only qualified person they cannot supervise any other service aside from their own.
- There is now a definition of a Relief Family Day Care Carer. This enables checking of the relief carer.

⁴³ Maitland City Council Section 94 Contributions Plan, 1995. p. Scheduled 1, 1.2 Youth Facilities: Basis of Nexus.

- Family Day Care services, while not having a specific requirement for soft fall must ensure that equipment does not create a safety hazard for children.
- Safety glass is required (including Family Day Care homes) if the Building Code of Australia specifies this or the glass is below 750mm. If this is not possible then child barriers must be placed in front of the glass.
- The group size for children aged 3-5 years, has been reduced from 25 to 20 children. A group is defined as:

One or more children supervised by one or more primary contact staff members in: (a) an individual room or well-defined space within a room, (b) a part of a room that is recognisably a space for a group, (c) a well-defined outdoor area that is recognisably a space for a group.⁴⁴

The change in group sizes may affect some long day care centres. Group sizes are determined by the Regulation⁴⁵, and this impacts on how children are arranged and supervised in any child care centre. The group sizes are:

- children aged 0-2 years – in groups of not more than 10 children;
- children aged 2-3 years – in groups of not more than 16; and
- children aged over 3 years – in groups of not more than 20 children.

The Regulations further state that where a group of children, who are not all in the same age bracket are in the same room, the child:staff ratio and group size must be that specified for the youngest child in the group⁴⁶ (Clause 53.3). This means that it is possible to have a group of 2 to 5 year olds in one room, but the children aged 2-3 years must have 1 adult for every 8 children, and not be in a group of more than 16 children.

- Mobile children's services are required to submit a venue management plan where risks and hazards for children are identified and managed.
- Care for school aged children in a child care centre – children in Kindergarten and Year 1 can comprise up to 20% of the licensed child numbers, Children above Year 1 can comprise 10% of the licensed child numbers.
- Two primary contact staff must check that no children are left on the premises at the end of the day. Previously, staff other than primary contact staff could do this task.
- All staff working (paid or voluntary) with children, including non-primary contact staff are required to have a probity check.
- Authorised supervisors must have successfully completed a child protection course.

⁴⁴ http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/documents/childcare_reg2004_factsheet.pdf, accessed 21 December 2004.

⁴⁵ *Children's Services Regulation 2004*. p.50.

⁴⁶ *Children's Services Regulation 2004*. p.45

- No remote viewing of children while in care over the Internet (eg, web cam).
- Transporting children – seat belts are not required.
- Licensees cannot hinder the access of DoCS staff entering and inspecting child care premises.

The greatest possible impact for existing children's services in the Maitland LGA will relate to separate sleeping are for 0-2 year olds and possibly group size.

A few long day care centres in Maitland will be adversely affected by the change in children's services regulations. The new requirement that children aged under 2 years must have a separate sleeping area will result in two services reducing the number of children in the 0-2 year olds age group. The current cot rooms cannot accommodate all current licensed 0-2 year olds places.

This regulation change means that a usual practice, of moving toddlers who may no longer be sleeping in cots into the older children's playroom at rest time to go on to a stretcher cannot occur, unless a separate sleeping area can be created for these toddlers.

3.5 Department of Family and Community Services supply estimates

Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) prepare comparative supply data for children's services by local government area. This comparison examines current child population, child target population⁴⁷ numbers by children's service type in each LGA. This provides the number of places per 100 target population. FaCS use this data when they allocate additional Child Care Benefit places to an LGA, this is currently relevant to outside school hours and Family Day Care places.

As of May 2004, Maitland LGA had:

- 0-4 year old population of 4,156 children;
- 0-4 year old target population of 1,912 children – that is parents in the workforce;
- 5-12 year old population of 6,981 children;
- 5-12 year old target population of 4,456 children – parents in the workforce;
- Family Day Care places – 293;
- long day care places – 585;
- before school care places – 175;
- after school care places – 450;
- vacation care places – 265; and

Maitland LGA has a total of 890 out of school hours places, and a total of 1,786 0-12 year old places available.

⁴⁷ Target population is defined as children aged 0-12 years whose parent/s (both parents in couple families or lone parent) are working/training/studying. This data is provided by ABS from 2001 Census.

- 28 places available per 100 0-12 year old children in the target population, 46 places available per 100 0-4 year old children in the target population.

Currently this ranks Maitland 101 out of 175 NSW LGAs. That is there are 100 LGAs with less child care than Maitland.

It should be noted that FaCS data does not factor in projected future growth and uses the most recent ABS Census data – 2001 population figures.

Contact was made with the DoCS CSA. She commented that she was processing many new child care centre applications. Many of these applications were to build child care centres in the eastern side of Maitland. The east currently has an perceived undersupply of child care, but if all the current applications translate into centres then the CSA is concerned that there will be an oversupply in six to twelve months time.

4 Gaps in service provision

4.1 Children's service provision

The DoCS CSA commented that the primary gap from her perspective was care for children aged less than 2 years. While several new long day care centres have opened recently to the west of Maitland, and others are going through DA and DoCS approval to the east of Maitland, place for babies are not being maximised as part of the new and proposed child care centres. This, in part, is due to the high cost of providing care for children aged less than 2 years. It may be that the fees required to cover the cost of provision are more than the market can carry.

The DoCS CSA also commented that the perceived under supply of child care places for preschool age children reflects the current supply, particularly to the east of Maitland. There are several proposed child care centres that should come on line within six to twelve months. This may result in demand being met or even over supply.

In other areas of Maitland, such as Woodberry, there is less demand for care for children aged less than 2 years, as there is lower workforce participation. The need is for preschool services that work with families to assist preparation and ease of transition to school. The Woodberry community has recently received funds to support the construction of an Aboriginal preschool to facilitate this transition.

Survey respondents and stakeholders commented that there were difficulties in accessing care for children aged less than 2 years. Although the recent opening of two new long day care centres in west Maitland may lessen the difficulty. Stakeholders also commented that all places for children under 2 years were full in Aberglasslyn and Metford, however, there were places for children aged 3 or more years. This would seem to indicate that new child care developments have focused on provision for older children, not babies and toddlers.

Around one third of survey respondents indicated that they would prefer to use centre-based care than other children's services, and around the same proportion were planning to have more children.

Access to good quality child care for children aged under 2 years is important to support mothers who want or need to re-enter the workforce after maternity leave. Without access to care it may not be possible to return to work after leave.

Recommendation

4.1.1 That Council consider the feasibility of providing a children's services targeted to 0-2 year olds. Consideration would need to be given to affordability, location, ongoing sustainability and possible co-location with an existing service catering for children aged over 2 years.

4.2 Children aged 9 to 12 and 15 years

OOSH services provided a good range of leisure activities for children of primary school age. When programming activities for children aged 6 to 12 years, there is a broad range of interest and ability differences, with older children wanting to be engaged in activities that require less adult supervision and more personal responsibility. Stakeholders commented on children aged 9 or 10 not wanting to attend formal programs and the challenges in delivery,

content of programs and suitability of the current models provided. Stakeholders have noticed attendance dropping in the older primary school age.

Mindaribba Land Council had started trying to address this issue through the provision of a variety of activities depending on age group and interest. The support of a Youth Worker, access to PCYC, and the use of informal leisure activities have contributed to the success of this approach.

Maitland Baptist OOSH programs have targeted employing young men as a way to engage older primary school age children with more energetic and challenging activities. This provider commented that male employees provide a good role model for children, and the types of employees running the activities are critical to the success or not of a program.

For younger secondary school students, aged 12 to 15 years there are no formal activities. PCYC and similar provide some after school leisure activities but young people need to make their own way to the program; this can be difficult with limited public transport in Maitland.

Better Futures has identified the provision of social and recreational activities for children and young people aged 9 to 11, 12 to 15 and 16 to 18 years as a priority.

4.2.1 Recommendation

4.2.1 Council as one of the community partners identified in the Better Futures Hunter Region Youth Plan commence working with other partners (PCYC, DET, Department of Sport and Recreation, and local youth development officers) to provide vacation care for children and young people aged 9 or 11 to 16 years. This is to be a priority activity. (See Field of Activity 1.9⁴⁸.)

Several stakeholders commented that children and young people aged 9/10 to 15 years seem to be forgotten; they were not as visible in the community as youth aged 16 plus. An example was provided where a local refuge service for homeless young people cannot take anyone less than 15 years; past experience of this stakeholder indicated that they had had to attempt to find accommodation for 12 to 15 year olds and nothing was available.

Part of this problem is compounded by young people themselves not always being aware of services that are available in the local area. Maitland Council does provide a community services directory that lists all services in the Maitland LGA. The provision of a more local, youth-friendly version may be beneficial for young people. This could be made available at local high schools, through youth workers and related programs and other community locations. One suggestion was to provide this as a Z-card. One stakeholder commented that

11 to 18 year olds and their families can't or don't access services – may be they don't know about them

Recommendation

4.2.2 That Council promotes its community directory information relating to young people through a Z-card specifically targeted to young people. This is to be printed and made available through high schools, youth workers, providers of youth activities and similar.

4.3 Children and young people with disabilities

At all stakeholder forums participants commented on the shortage of places for children and young people with functional disabilities. Issues relating to children and young people with functional disabilities include:

- there is one respite care service that has an extensive waiting list;
- Baptist OOSH programs take some children with disabilities but this is constrained by a 10% place limit imposed by FaCS and physical space and resources to adequately support the child;
- long day care centres have access to SUPS and SNSS⁴⁹ programs but these are limited by funding and resources. All children need to have a formal assessment to be able to participate in either scheme. There are extensive waiting lists for assessment in the Maitland LGA; and
- the ability and experience of children's service staff to effectively provide for a child with a functional disability.

Some stakeholders identified that there seemed to be adequate resources for children with intellectual disabilities but limited for physical disabilities. Some services were not aware of the range of agencies that support families and children in the Maitland LGA and this has been commented on previously.

Council does not provide direct care, but does have a role in facilitating the development of services for children and families.

Recommendation

4.3.1 That Council as part of its community development role advocate in all forums for assistance for children and young people with disabilities and vulnerable families

⁴⁸ *Better Futures Hunter Region Youth Plan 2003-2006*. p. 16.

⁴⁹ SUPS (Supplementary Services Program) – for approved children's services to build skills and resources to assist with inclusion of children with special needs. SNSS (Special Needs Subsidy Scheme) - assists approved children's services care for individual children with ongoing high support needs.

5 Barriers preventing access to care

5.1 Vulnerable families

Families living in the Maitland LGA come from broad socio-economic backgrounds. This includes many vulnerable families who as one stakeholder commented have issues that are compounded by generational poverty.

Maitland has been one of the first areas to receive new DoCS funds for its early intervention program. This is targeted to families who are level 3 and level 4 reports (lower level reports that could relate to neglect, but not abuse or immediate danger) to work with the families to ensure that the risk exposure does not escalate. This program will enhance service delivery within DoCS to families with access to early intervention workers working from DoCS Community Service Centres.

Maitland has also been one of the first areas to have a plan under the Better Futures program approved. The aim of the plan is to "reflect the identified needs of youth in the Hunter, the major issues affecting the servicing of these needs and to prepare an integrated plan to improve opportunities for young people to lead to rewarding and positive lives⁵⁰".

Children's services and family services often work in isolation from each other. Not from any deliberate consideration but due to a focus on the day to day work of each individual service and agency.

Both child and family services and agencies have individual interagencies. Children's services are invited to meet quarterly and these meetings are convened by the DoCS CSA. Family agencies meet monthly to network and share issues and ideas. Neither group formally meets with the other. One family support agency believed that any work done with vulnerable families would be enhanced with greater systemic support for all services who may involved with that family, this included children's services. It was critical to identify and get to families and children before they are at risk.

There is currently no nexus between children's services and family services unless arranged on an individual service level. Stakeholders commented that greater awareness of each service type would be beneficial, along with the ability to network and share ideas.

The goal for all service providers would be to focus on early learning opportunities and enhancing parenting skills to develop positive outcomes for children; a holistic approach. Ideally, all child and family services should work together as required to support children, young people and their families in a systemic manner. Formal networking for child, youth and family services and agency employees would provide opportunities for participants to share and network about their services creating better outcomes for families and children

Recommendation

5.1.1 That Council in its role as facilitator arrange and host a dinner for all child, youth and family services as part of family celebration for Child Protection Week (September every

⁵⁰ *Better Futures Hunter Region Youth Plan 2003-2006*. p. 3.

year). This dinner could be used to share information about services, network and provide a guest speaker on themes relating to child, youth and families.

5.1.2 That Council continue to facilitate and host annual or six monthly meetings/forums for any services that relate to child, youth and families throughout Maitland LGA. Council to convene and host meetings including invites, venues and speaker. Any speaker is to add value to all invitees, for example, transition from child care to school and transition from primary to secondary school.

5.2 Out of school hours services – visibility and support

OOSH services are an important element in the continuity of care and education for children. There are currently three providers of OOSH service in Maitland. These are:

- Hunter Valley Grammar Early After school Care;
- Maitland Baptist Out of School Hours Care; and
- Nillo Out of School Hours Care.

Maitland Baptist is the largest provider with thirteen of the sixteen services.

Maitland Baptist provides leisure activities for primary school age children, including those with disabilities. It is dependent on having good working relationships with the local schools it runs programs from. The venues are an important consideration as this allows service staff to forward plan activities for the children attending and ensure they have resources available to support children with disabilities. For example, if a child needed assistance with toileting a hoist to lift the child may be required, along with a private space for the toileting procedure.

There have been instances where an OOSH provider has arrived at its regular after school care venue in the afternoon to be informed that they are required to change venues the same afternoon due to competing activities. An alternate venue may limit and change significantly the range of activities provided, and whether the service can accommodate a child with a disability.

The perception from OOSH providers is that there seems to be limited awareness at a school of the impact this short term change could have on the ability to deliver a good quality service. It may be useful to look at ways to increase awareness of the positive impact OOSH services can have on a school through enrolments, but more importantly supporting families and children.

Recommendation

5.2.1 That Council holds an annual meeting with school principals to discuss OOSH needs and support, population projections and potential impact on schools and related services. The goal of this type of meeting would be to increase support and visibility for OOSH services.

5.3 Data on young people and their needs

A major consideration for the report was to identify the types of services that young people may use and want provided in the Maitland LGA. Despite extensive literature searches there is very limited data available, compared with children aged under 12 years, that tracks the

types of services currently used by young people, the considerations in service provision and what other services or supports may be attractive to this group.

Young people aged 9 to 18 years comprise around 16% of the total Maitland LGA population. It is disappointing that more data was not available to assist in developing some recommendations and ways forward for this group. Some reference has been made to Better Futures, a NSW strategy aimed at building resilience in young people aged 9 to 18 years, however, the scope of Better Futures is much broader than this report, and much of Better Futures work includes strategies not analysis of service provision issues happening now.

Recommendation

5.3.1 That Council identify what data it would like to collect on young people to assist in its planning and commence processes to collect this data.

Part of this data collection could relate to both quantitative and qualitative data. In relation to qualitative data, Council has attempted to talk to youth groups about specific projects to ensure their input into activities that impact on them. Maitland Youth Forum holds an annual forum for young people in Youth Week.

The Commission for Children and Young People, a statutory body established by the NSW Government to oversight issues relating to children and young people has successfully established a youth forum. The Commission uses this forum to develop policies and publications for young people. It may be helpful to talk to the Commission about its youth forum strategy and the elements that contribute to its success. This may assist Council to further engage with Maitland young people in an effective way in relation to their participation in how they want their community to look, and the most effective ways to consult with them.

One stakeholder thought it maybe possible to develop youth consultation as a partnership with a local high school, and this could form a project for particular curriculum areas.

Any of the above strategies would be helpful in gathering qualitative data on young people in the Maitland LGA.

Recommendation

5.3.2 That Council identifies ways to engage with young people in the community, and commences work on this area as a priority.

5.4 Access to information to support service delivery

Stakeholder forum participants commented on the increasing compliance requirements demanded of them. Most were caught up in the day to day business of providing their services. Many had little down time to review new developments, update service delivery methods and research new ideas. One stakeholder commented that they had recently amended a practice relating to nappy changing and hygiene, and while there was no problem changing the practice they had not been able to find supporting data to talk to parents about why the change had occurred.

The ability to seek additional information was considered important to support families accessing services and to ensure best practice implementation.

Two ways to facilitate this process were identified. First an email list where participants could ask questions and share ideas. It was felt that Council could develop and maintain this list and use it as a way to support services through the identification of new grants funds that may be available, share new LGA information, and best practice ideas.

Recommendation

5.4.1 That Council initiate and facilitate a child, youth and family services contact list. This would be an email list that current and future service providers are invited to join. Council and email list participants could use this to provide information on government grants, new LGA information that may be relevant such as a new program or service offering. Council would be the manager of the list and conduit for relevant information.

Secondly, that Council could investigate and provide web links to relevant child and youth sites for service providers and interested members of the public. Sites could include:

- NSW Health <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/topics/index.html> with A-Z of Health Topics; or
- <http://www.yapa.org.au/policy/governmentyouthpolicies.pdf> - lists govt policies and resources pertaining to young people

Recommendation

5.4.2 That Council adds web links to related child and young people sites to assist services and community to access relevant information.

5.5 Families not in the paid workforce

Census data indicates that in 2001 the LGA had a higher rate of employment when compared to all NSW; 9.4% compared with 7.2% for NSW. IN Maitland unemployment for women aged 15 to 34 years is 9.4%, and for males of the same age is 10.1%⁵¹. For women, these are the years most often associated with child bearing and for both genders child rearing.

Stakeholders commented that they were aware of several children's services that had limited vacancies in most age groups. There were also comments regarding the difficulties that families who were not in the paid workforce had in regular access to children's services. Survey respondents reiterated this view, although from differing perspectives.

There needs to be separate Day Care Centres for parents that are employed & unemployed so that the employed parents don't always get their children in sooner. Costs for unemployed need to be lessened.

Prioritising care places based on family circumstances, both my partner and myself work full-time and feel that a place given to a child of a parent that doesn't work, study or train is a little unjust.

⁵¹ *Maitland Community Profile, 2003*. p.34.

Any children's service that receives Commonwealth Child Care Benefit must comply with FaCS priority of access guidelines. These are described below⁵².

- Priority 1 – a child at serious risk of abuse or neglect;
- Priority 2 – a child of a single parent who satisfies, or of parents who both satisfy, the work/training/study test under section 14 of the Family Assistance Act; and
- Priority 3 – any other child.

Within each of these groups priority should also be given to:

- children in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families;
- children in families which include a disabled person;
- children in families on lower incomes;
- children in families with a non-English speaking background;
- children in socially isolated families; and
- children of single parents.

Most children's services are aware of the three primary tests for eligibility, but do not always consider the sub-groups, which provide opportunities for children with parents who are not in the paid workforce to access children's services.

Families who are not in the paid workforce are eligible for up to 20 hours of Child Care Benefit per child per week. If these parents commence work-related study or training they are eligible for up to 50 hours of Child Care Benefit per child per week.

Children's services can provide more than 20 hours of Child Care Benefit per child per week if they consider the child to be "at risk of neglect or abuse and [the service] consider the risk would be reduced if CCB was available for more than 20 hours"⁵³. To do this a service would complete an application form outlining the child's circumstances and why the child is considered at risk. The child's parents do not have to support the claim. This application enables the family to access more than 20 hours of Child Care Benefit for up to 13 weeks at a time.

There are limited opportunities to facilitate the inclusion of children from families not in the paid workforce in children's services.

There is little that Council can do to influence who access children's services, aside from raising awareness of some of the other eligibility criteria and opportunities to access 20 hours,

⁵² Department of Family and Community Services (2004). *Child Care Service Handbook 2004-2005, For all approved child care services*. p. 73.

⁵³ Department of Family and Community Services (2004). *Child Care Service Handbook 2004-2005, For all approved child care services*. p. 128.

and in some circumstances, more than 20 hours per child per week of Child Care Benefit. Council should also keep a watching brief and monitor access to services by residents

Recommendation

5.5.1 That Council raises awareness of the breadth of the Child Care Benefit eligibility criteria and how these may assist families who are not in the paid workforce access children's services.

5.6 Affordability

Affordability is a critical issue for Maitland residents, particularly with high levels of unemployment.

Families using long day care and Family Day Care may be eligible for Child Care Benefit, this is a means tested subsidy paid by the Commonwealth Government to help families better afford child care. Priority of access in long day care and Family Day Care is for children at risk, followed by those with parents participating in the workforce or studying to enter the workforce; these parents can claim up to 50 hours of Child Care Benefit per week. Children with parents at home are the lowest priority and can only claim up to 20 hours of Child Care Benefit per week.

Respondents to the child care survey placed affordability as the fourth most critical determinant when choosing or accessing child care, preschools and related services (very important – 23, or important - 18).

There is little that Council can do to impact on affordability, aside from keeping a watching brief and monitoring access to services by residents.

5.7 Community Services Directory

Stakeholder forums revealed that many service providers were not aware of the range of child and family agencies in the Maitland LGA. Several children's services providers were surprised that Council had an extensive community services directory and felt that this would be a useful resource to receive when first investigating child care provision in the area.

Others commenced that this type of resource was important if they were to provide an effective and comprehensive service to families using their child care centres. This could include direct referral to other agencies for the family, or the children's services director contacting the agency to gather new or additional information as part of working with the child at the centre.

Forum participants were not aware of how they could be included in the directory and the best way to provide this information.

Several recommendations have been developed to enhance the visibility of the Community Services Directory. These are listed below.

Recommendations

5.7.1 That Council, to increase awareness of its Community Services Directory, actively promotes the Directory through its Customer Services areas.

5.7.2 That Council, to facilitate inclusion and accuracy of information in the Directory provide a fax back form to all services for annual update of entry.

5.7.3 That Council launches the annual updated directory at annual family networking dinner.

5.7.4 That Council continues to provide the Directory as hard and soft copies.

5.7.5 That Council provides hard copy or web link of the current Directory to new children's services developers as part of the development package. This package should also include a blank fax back form to be completed and faxed back once the service is operational.

6 Improvements to child care provision in the Maitland City Council area

6.1 Child care centre planning and approvals

The development approval process works well and the involvement by Council of the DoCS CSA ensures that many potential design problems are eliminated prior to DA and DOCS approvals. The current child care centre approval process is as follows.

- Child care centre design is developed by owner, developer.
- DoCS CSA meets with the developer to review the plan in a pre-assessment meeting. At this time any issues are identified and documented by the CSA. These are provided in writing to the developer.
- The developer must redress the issues, then they can present the plan for DA. A copy of the letter from the DoCS CSA must accompany the DA to demonstrate the developer has met with DoCS, and the plans in line with DOCS requirements.
- If the developer has not met with DoCS CSA then they are referred back to the CSA without the DA process continuing.
- After the DA has been approved the developer then submits the plans to DoCS for formal approval.

The DoCS CSA commented that the pre-assessment meetings have been beneficial in reducing the design issues that need to be managed, but thought that the inclusion of Council at this time as well may also be useful in reducing the approval processes.

Recommendation

6.1.1 That Council planners and community services representatives provide opportunities for a pre-DA lodgement meeting for new children's services developers. This meeting could be combined with the current DoCS CSA pre-assessment meeting to facilitate effective and consistent communication.

Design problems that are still evident when new children's services developers meet with the DoCS CSA are listed below⁵⁴.

- Poor visual supervision
 - shape of outdoor play space
 - entry to centre not visually supervisable by staff (intruders)
 - design/location of nappy change area
 - children's toilets not immediately adjacent to outdoor play space, as well as indoor play space

⁵⁴ email from Michele Patten, DoCS CSA, dated 17 December 2004, 4:15pm.

- Trying to achieve maximum number of children in minimum space –
 - large car park and very small outdoor play area for children
 - backup facilities too small – kitchen, staffroom, storage (indoor and outdoor) – no minimum size required in Regulation
 - inadequate space for sleeping rooms for babies – inadequate space between cots (cross-infection, access, egress)
- Egress – regulation requires gates at top and bottom of any stairs; recommend no approval of playrooms other than on ground floor, or require ramps rather than stairs for egress (better for disability access as well)
- Rendering areas inaccessible to children without compromising egress requirements, eg kitchen, laundry, staffroom, exit to carpark/road.
- Inadequate provision of shade in outdoor play area.
- No natural vegetation in outdoor play area (artificial turf and soft fall surface only) – landscaping required at front of centre, but none for children.
- One sleeping room with too many cots – recommend more sleeping rooms with maximum of 5 cots in each (disturbance, cross infection)
- Doorways in sleeping rooms need to be wide enough for a mobile cot to egress in emergency evacuation.
- Inappropriate child bathing facilities – need infant bath for 0-2 years (not laundry tub - safety) and shower bath for 2-6 years (not just shower over bathroom floor waste - hygiene).
- Laundry should be adjacent to playroom/nappy change facilities for 0-2 years (if remote, compromises supervision – takes staff member away from children)
- Thoroughfare/access - should not have to go through children's playroom to access kitchen (deliveries, etc); children should have direct access to their outdoor play area from their playroom (disruptive, thoroughfare takes up play space); parents should be able to access child's playroom directly, not through another playroom (disruptive, thoroughfare takes up play space)
- Should be designated space in kitchen to store food trolleys.
- Bottle preparation facilities, nappy change facilities and craft preparation facilities should be separate from each other – preferably in separate rooms.
- Nappy change facilities need to be inaccessible to children – if in children's toilet area, then child steps to the nappy change bench need to be retractable into cupboard.
- Adult hand washing facility in 0-2 nappy change area needs to be in nappy change bench, immediately adjacent to nappy change mat, so that staff can wash hands whilst ensuring that baby does not fall from bench.

- Need to provide commercial not domestic facilities in kitchen – stove, dishwasher, mechanical exhaust.
- Fire extinguishers need to be located/installed so as not to pose a hazard to children
- Natural ventilation should be available throughout the centre – opening windows for cross ventilation.
- Mechanical ventilation needs to be provided in areas such as nappy change, toilets.
- Power points need to be inaccessible to children (1500mm above floor).

Increased familiarity with these common design issues would enhance the DA process. It may be possible to raise awareness of these items within Council, particularly in the planning and community services areas as they are the most likely to have contact with current and potential future developers. These items could also form part of a checklist developed and provided by Council as assistance to developers.

Recommendation

6.1.2 That Council planning and community services personnel meet with the DoCS CSA annually to review design considerations and any emerging issues in relation to children's services. This could take the form of a half day seminar where each party briefs the other and then works on forward planning considerations.

Not all of these items are specifically identified in the Regulations, but their consideration would enhance the functioning of the service, providing better outcomes for children and families.

6.2 Information provided by Council to new children's services developers

The DoCS CSA and several stakeholders commented that they were concerned about the extensive development of children's services in the Maitland LGA. This seemed to be resulting in areas of over supply in west Maitland but potential undersupply in other areas. Some survey respondents identified waiting lists for long day care as an issue for them – they had not been successful in accessing care when they needed it.

Several stakeholders commented

Council and DoCS give the OK to the development of long day care, but do nothing to stop child care being built in areas of over supply – there may eventually be enough families to support the new services, but what would be the longer term impact of if an ABC came in and undercut everyone

concern that child care provider will get burnt as increased oversupply, but their centre may already be in development/under construction

too many long day care services in west Maitland – 2 services opened recently and has 3 children on the first day and 20 in the other, both over 70 places each, new centres didn't advertise they were opening

Council has no control over where new children's services may be located, aside from compliance with planning requirements. It may be possible to provide information to potential new developers to assist them in making a considered market choice regarding location and

age and numbers of children. This may assist in evening distribution and work towards long term sustainability of existing and new services that open in the area.

Recommendations

6.2.1 That Council provides a checklist of information for potential new developers outlining issues and questions to consider for a new development. This checklist should include existing supply and demand of similar services, population projection data availability, key contacts for information and assistance, broad outline of DA process and relationship with DoCS and similar. The checklist to be available in hard copy and on-line.

6.2.2 That Council provides a checklist of information for new developers outlining child care centre design considerations. This checklist could include items that have been identified by DoCS as common design problems that should be addressed prior to pre-assessment and pre-DA meetings with DoCS and Council respectively.

6.3 Maitland City Council building requirements

Maitland City Council approved all DAs for centre construction. This approval includes appropriate land use, car parking, green areas and land scaping. Council requires a landscaping design for the car parking area only. One stakeholder commented that a child care centre located in Maitland will attractive landscaping for its car park, but no natural outdoor play area for the children attending the centre. The outdoor area is all artificial soft fall.

Council's approval processes reflect a requirement for an attractive streetscape, but does not consider the important needs of a centre's primary occupants – that is the children. DoCS regulations preclude any enforced compliance with landscaping aside from pre-determined space per child, shade and soft fall. Council could take a more active role in landscaping requirements for the entire outdoor area as this is currently part of its approval processes.

6.4 Vacancy management

Child and family service providers, as part of enhancing their awareness of each others services, thought it might be useful to consider how families could be better informed of services, particularly vacancies as they changed from week to week. As a wish list option some stakeholders discussed an on-line children's services vacancy manager, similar to 'What if' and other short term accommodation arrangements. Local children's services providers could update this list weekly; families and other agencies could access and reserve places as required.

Council would be the logical place to manage such as site, but it would need to be determined if Council's IT platform could support this type of program. If it was possible then it would be helpful to identify if this type of facility was being provided by anyone else. This type of interactive program development would be costly. External funding to support Council's development of the program would be required for start up and ongoing operations.

Recommendation

6.4.1 That Council identify whether its current IT platform could support a weekly updated children's services vacancy and reservation list, and if so review any existing models, and look for opportunities for external sources funding for the project and ongoing operations.

7 Benchmarks for children's service provision

7.1 Maitland Local Environment Plan (LEP) 1993

There are no specific provisions in the LEP with regard to child care services in the Maitland area. The relevant sections of the LEP that have a relationship to child care in the Maitland area are extracted below.

Part 7 Recreation Land

Zone 6(a) Public Recreation and Zone 6(c) Proposed Recreation.

The 6(a) Public Recreation zone contains open space used for both active and passive recreation. Land in this zone is either owned by the Council, or under the care, control and management of Council or is in private or public authority ownership and is yet to be acquired by Council or dedicated to Council for open space.

The 6(c) Proposed Recreation zone contains land which the Council seeks to acquire for the purpose of providing additional recreational facilities for local residents.

Child care is one of the purposes in the category of development allowed with development consent.

The Council may consent to the development of land within Zone 6(a) or 6(c) only if the Council has considered:

- a) the need for the development;
- b) the impact of the proposed development on the existing or the likely future use of the land; and
- c) the need to retain the land for its existing or likely future use.

Part 11 Special Provisions

Council may grant development consent to the community use of the facilities and sites of schools, colleges and other educational establishments and to the commercial operation of those facilities and sites.

Development Control Plans

DCP NO. 6 Raworth Residential Subdivision

33 Community Facilities

The future population of the Raworth area will generate the need for a community facility. Developers shall liaise with Council regarding the location of a site (approximately 1500m²) for a Community Facility.

Currently Council does not have any benchmarks for planning child care centres other than to respond to community needs through consultation. This results in Council always feeling as though it is in a catch up mode as there are no tools for future planning. Council is currently examining what mechanisms have been used to substantiate the need in the past to provide some clarity⁵⁵.

⁵⁵ email from Samantha Ellis, Community Lifestyle Planner, Maitland Council, dated 26 November 2004.

7.2 Generic formulas to determine child care places

The use of formulas provides very general child numbers only. Each LGA and its suburb populations within an LGA vary, in some cases quite markedly. Most data available focuses on children aged less than 12 years, and child care use for work related reasons. Additionally there are not consistent data source that can be used as a basis for all calculations.

7.3 Formula to determine estimated OOSH places

Following is a basic summary of the formula used to determine OOSH numbers. It is recommended that when applying the formula, this report be read in conjunction with calculations as it provides a working example of the methodological approach.

A. Provision of current OOSH places

- determine current numbers of OOSH places by type in specified area– before, after and vacation care
- determine proportion of total places for each OOSH type
- discuss with services providers their perceptions of current supply – is it adequate or not and are more places needed
- contact local schools to discuss their perceptions of current and future school enrolments and capacity to meet need

B. Workforce population of specified suburb – reference most recent ABS population data

Use of children's services is most often related to workforce participation. The main reason for this is the linking of Child Care Benefit (CCB) eligibility with workforce participation. CCB is a payment from the Commonwealth Government to assist parents with the cost of children's services.

FAW's experience in use and demand for OOSH services is that child attendance is predicated on mothers' workforce participation. While some children with mothers not in the paid workforce may attend OOSH services these will be in the minority and will not greatly impact on potential child numbers. The inability to easily access CCB would be a further deterrent to OOSH use.

The most recent *Census of Child Care Services*⁵⁶ indicates that nationally 97% of OOSH (Department of Family and Community Services defines OOSH as only before and/or after school care) and 94% of vacation care use is work related. In NSW⁵⁷ these figures are 98% for OOSH and 92% for vacation care.

- total population of the area
- total female population of the area aged 20-64 years as a proportion of total area population

⁵⁶ Department of Family and Community Services (2003). *2002 Census of Child Care Services*.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

- total females aged 25-44 years as a proportion of all females aged 20-64 years in the area
- proportion of all females aged 25-44 years in the area who participate in the paid workforce (include working full and part-time)
- proportion of all females aged 25-44 years in the area who work full-time and work part-time
- total male population of the area aged 20-64 years as a proportion of total population
- total males aged 25-44 years in the area as a proportion of all females aged 20-64 years
- proportion of all males aged 25-44 years in the area who participate in the paid workforce (include working full and part-time)
- proportion of all males aged 25-44 years in the area who work full-time and work part-time

C. Workforce population of NSW – reference most recent ABS population data

- total female population in NSW aged 20-64 years
- total females aged 25-44 years as a proportion of all females aged 20-64 years
- proportion of all females aged 25-44 years who participate in the paid workforce (include working full and part-time)
- proportion of all females aged 25-44 years who work full-time and work part-time
- total male population in NSW aged 20-64 years
- total males aged 25-44 years as a proportion of all females aged 20-64 years
- proportion of all males aged 25-44 years who participate in the paid workforce (include working full and part-time)
- proportion of all males aged 25-44 years who work full-time and work part-time

The following shows the current NSW workforce population data as described above.

ABS⁵⁸ data for females and males in NSW of the same age range shows that:

- females aged 20-64 years: 2,554,989
 - 37.2% (927,423) of females aged 20-64 years are aged 25-44 years, the years associated with child bearing and child rearing
 - 64.3% (613,262) of females aged 25-44 years participate in the paid workforce

⁵⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics: *Census Data 2001*

- 34.9% (333,442) of all women aged 25-44 years work full-time
- 27.8% (265,470) of all women aged 25-44 years work part-time
- males aged 20-64 years: 2,442,822
 - 37.9% (927,423) of males aged 20-64 years are aged 25-44 years, the years associated with child rearing
 - 80.2% (744,055) of males aged 25-44 years participate in the paid workforce
 - 66% (613,085) of all males aged 25-44 years work full-time
 - 11.7% (108,824) of all males aged 25-44 years work part-time

Compare statements between the specified suburb and NSW populations. Does the specified suburb have more, same or less proportion of working females and males. If significant differences then this may need to be reflected in children's services child number calculations.

D. Child population

- total number of children aged 0-12 years in specified suburb
- number and proportion of children aged 6-10 years
- number and proportion of children aged 5 years, divide by half as not all these children will attend school – apply the 50% figure
- number and proportion of children aged 11-12 years
- tally up total children aged 5-12 years with 5 year olds reduced by 50%

E. Ratio of current OOSH places to children aged 5-12 years (5 year olds reduced by 50%)

- divide total children aged 5-12 years by total OOSH places available to determine ratio of total children to total OOSH places available
- divide total children aged 5-12 years by available before school care places available to determine ratio of total children to before school care places available
- divide total children aged 5-12 years by available after school care places available to determine ratio of total children to after school care places available
- divide total children aged 5-12 years by available vacation care places available to determine ratio of total children to vacation care places available

Discuss and compare perception of current service providers supply and demand with places available per child.

F. Future demand for OOSH services in specified suburb

- determine current ABS figures for children aged 5-12 years using formal before and after school care, and 5-12 years olds attending vacation care
- apply these proportions to total child population aged 5-12 years (5 year olds reduced by 50%) of specified area for before and after school care, and vacation care
- how do these proportions relate to current provision of places – does it indicate over, under or adequate supply? Discuss.
- if under supply need to determine possible additional places required – assuming that not all these places will be full-time as most children do not attend OOSH services in a full-time capacity
- find most recent data on days of use for relevant service (currently *Child Care Census 2002*)

ABS⁵⁹ data shows that children mostly attend BASC programs less than five days per week.

Table: BASC child attendance by days attended

1 weekday	2 weekdays	3 weekdays	4 weekdays	5 weekdays
30.5% of children	23.9% of children	16.1% of children	16.3% of children	13.1% of children

There is no ABS data available to provide an estimate of equivalent full-time (EFT) vacation care places. The *Child Care Census 2002* has data based on actual child attendance in a specified reference week by number of days and state, and while there are issues comparing different data sources Census data has been used.

There are a number of differences between the ABS data and the *Child Care Census 2002* data and care must be taken when comparing these two different data sources. Some of these differences are listed below.

- Census data reflects a snap shot in time, and should not be used to estimate an average figure over a longer period.
- Census and ABS use different methodologies in relation to who data is collected from and how the data is collected. The Census collects data from children's services on staff, children and parents of attending children. ABS collects information from private dwelling with children under 12 years as a supplement to the monthly Labour Force Survey.
- Census collects information on children attending Commonwealth funded services only, while the ABS collects information on children using formal and informal child care regardless of funding arrangements.

⁵⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2003), *Child Care Australia*, Cat. No. 4402.0. p.18

- Census information is collected from services, and families may attend more than one service – therefore being double counted. ABS data is collected through face-to-face interviews with families, eliminating double counting.

However as no other data source on vacation care is available Census data has been used for this report. Census⁶⁰ data shows that children mostly attended NSW vacation care programs less than five days per week.

Table: Vacation care child attendance by days attended

1 weekday	2 weekdays	3 weekdays	4 weekdays	5 weekdays
22% of children	24% of children	20% of children	14% of children	19% of children

- reduce under supply figure by proportions of days of use
- determine total equivalent full-time child places and contrast to current provision of relevant places – is there an over, under or adequate supply – discuss gaps and possible need for additional service places

7.4 Formula to estimate preschool age services

A similar process can be used to determine need for formal children’s services for children aged less than 5 years. This formula can be allied to long day care and Family Day Care estimated future use.

Projected child population in specified area – 0-5 year olds

Number of children aged 12 years and under: #% (number)

- #% (number) of children are aged less than 1 year. For the purposes of this report it has been assumed that 50% (number) of these children will be at home with the primary care giver on parental leave. This proportion may need to be varied in areas such as Rutherford/Aberglasslyn where workforce participation is lower.
- #% (number) of children are aged 1-4 years. [#% (number) of children are aged 1 year. This calculation is needed when determining ratio of places for 0-2 year olds.]
- #% (number) of children are aged 5 years. Some of these children will be at school. For the purposes of this report it has been assumed that 50% (number) of these children may attend children’s services not associated with school.
- Total children aged 0 to 5 years, with under 1 year of age and 5 year old children reduced by 50%: **[insert total number A]**

Determining ratio of preschool age places to children aged 0-5 years in [area]

Does current supply fit with demand – service feedback, need to understand that families will go on multiple waiting lists for care, particularly for 0-2 year old placements.

⁶⁰ Department of Family and Community Services (2003). *2002 Census of Child Care Services*. p. 159.

Determine current number of places by age group for long day care and Family Day Care (FDC).

Determine calculation of ratios for current long day care and FDC based on 0-2 and 2-5 year olds places – that is number of places per child by number of children. For children aged 0-2 years use 50% figure of children aged less than 1 year plus number of 1 year olds.

Long day care and FDC in [area] – data from ABC Child Care Australia

64.3%⁶¹ (insert number - apply proportion to area child population numbers) of children aged 0-4 (number A – see above) years may use some type of formal and/or informal child care.

22.7%⁶² (insert number - apply proportion to area child population numbers) of these children may use long day care.

6.2%⁶³ (insert number - apply proportion to area child population numbers) of these children may use FDC.

ABS shows utilisation increases of 4.5%⁶⁴ of children aged 0 to 4 years who use either formal care only or a combination of formal and informal care between 1999 and 2002. The potential future demand figures should accommodate some growth capacity; some assumptions need to be made regarding child population growth in the specified area, and potential length of residence in the specified area.

ABS⁶⁵ data shows that children mostly attend long day care and FDC programs less than five days per week.

Table: Projected use of 0-5 year old formal care by days attended

	1 weekday	2 weekdays	3 weekdays	4 weekdays	5 weekdays
long day care	28%	29%	22%	12%	9%
FDC	32%	28%	18%	13%	9%

The following table shows the projected use of long day care and FDC reduced by possible days of attendance.

Table: Projected use of 0-5 year old formal care by possible days of attendance

⁶¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2003). *Child Care Australia*, Cat. No. 4402.0. p. 12.

⁶² *ibid.* p. 12.

⁶³ *ibid.* p. 12.

⁶⁴ *ibid.* p. 11.

⁶⁵ *ibid.* p. 18.

	probable use	1 weekday		2 weekdays		3 weekdays		4 weekdays		full-time		total EFT places
		%	number of children	%	number of children	%	number of children	%	number of children	%	number of children	
long day care	#	28%	#VALUE!	29%	#VALUE!	22%	#VALUE!	12%	#VALUE!	9%	#VALUE!	#####
Family Day Care	#	32%	#VALUE!	28%	#VALUE!	18%	#VALUE!	13%	#VALUE!	9%	#VALUE!	#####

Data analysis suggest that the [specified area] is most likely to need the full-time equivalent of:

- # long day care places; and
- # Family Day Care places.

Recommendation

7.4.1 That Council review child population and service supply and demand annually to ensure that it is aware of provision levels. Depending on the outcomes of these annual reviews Council may need to consider provision of additional services through s94 contributions, and/or private development.

Appendix A: Child care survey frequencies

Section A. Individual family profile

Are you a resident in the Maitland area?

	frequency	percentage
yes	40	74%
no	14	26%
total	54	

If you live in Maitland, what is the closest suburb/locality?

	frequency	percentage
Ashtonfield	2	5%
Bolwarra	3	7%
Central Maitland	3	7%
East Maitland	4	9%
Gillieston Heights	1	2%
Green Hills	1	2%
Largs	2	5%
Lochinvar	3	7%
Lorn	2	5%
Metford	6	14%
Rutherford/Aberglasslyn	6	14%
Telarah	2	5%
Tenambit	2	5%
Thornton	5	12%
Woodberry	1	2%
total	43	

If you live elsewhere, where do you live?

	frequency	percentage
Dungog	1	8%
Lake Macquarie	5	38%
Newcastle	3	23%
Port Stephens	2	15%
other Hunter LGA	1	8%
elsewhere	1	8%
total	13	

Employment

Are you employed?

	frequency	percentage
yes	40	83%
no	8	17%
total	48	

If you work in Maitland, what is the closest suburb/locality to where you work?

	frequency	percentage
Ashtonfield	1	2%
Central Maitland	25	57%
East Maitland	9	20%
Gillieston Heights	1	2%
Green Hills	1	2%
Lorn	3	7%
Metford	1	2%
Rutherford/Aberglasslyn	2	5%
Woodberry	1	2%
total	44	

If you work elsewhere, where do you work?

	frequency	percentage
Cessnock	1	25%
Newcastle	2	50%
Port Stephens	1	25%
total	4	

If you are not employed, is this due to child care, preschool or related needs?

	frequency	percentage
yes	7	58%
no	5	42%
total	12	

How long do you plan to live or work in the Maitland area?

	frequency	percentage
less than 5 years	3	6%
6-10 years	8	15%
10-15 years	4	8%
more than 15 years	28	54%
unsure	9	17%
total	52	

Your family

Do you have children?

	frequency	percentage
yes	47	87%
no	7	13%
total	54	

What are their ages?

	frequency	percentage
less than 1 year	3	5%
1 year old	5	8%
2 years old	10	17%
3 years old	7	12%
4 years old	7	12%
5 years old	4	7%
6 years old	1	2%
7 years old	3	5%
8 years old	4	7%
9 years old		0%
10 years old	2	3%
11 years old	2	3%
12 years old	2	3%
13 years old	1	2%
14 years old		0%
15 years old	1	2%
16 years old	1	2%
older than 16 years	6	10%
total	59	

2 families had 8 children
 2 families had 7 or more children
 2 families had 6 or more children
 3 families had 5 or more children
 4 families had 4 or more children
 6 families had 3 or more children
 16 families had 2 or more children
 25 families had 1 or more children

Child care, preschool and related services in Maitland that you currently use

The age group of children accessing child care, preschool or related services, and types of services used.

	frequency	percentage
age group		
birth to less than 2 years	7	6%
2 years of age	12	11%
3-5 years	19	17%
6-11 years	12	11%
12-16 years	5	4%
services		
centre based long day care (community operated)	7	6%
centre based long day care (privately owned)	10	9%
Family Day care		0%
before school care	2	2%
after school care	9	8%
vacation care	6	5%
preschool/kindergarten	6	5%
mobile		0%
occasional care		0%
private carer, nanny or home help (in-home)	3	3%
private carer, nanny or home help (out-of-home)	1	1%
informal arrangements with family or friends	13	11%
respite care	2	2%
total	114	

Is this the care you want for your child?

	frequency	percentage
yes	21	91%
no	2	9%
total	23	

Section B: Have you had any problems accessing child care, preschool or related services in Maitland or services not meeting your needs in the last 12 months.

	yes	no	not required
centre-based long day care	13	8	17
birth to less than 2 years	5	52	
2 years of age	8	49	
3-5 years	8	49	
Family Day Care	4	5	17
birth to less than 2 years	3	53	
2 years of age	3	53	
3-5 years	3	54	
6-11 years		57	
12-16 years		57	
out of school hours care	5	6	13
6-11 years	8	48	
12-16 years	2	54	
vacation care	2	5	17
6-11 years	7	49	
12-16 years	4	53	
preschool/kindergarten	3	7	16
2 years of age		56	
3-5 years	4	52	
mobile		2	22
2 years of age	1	55	
3-5 years	3	54	
occasional care	3	3	19
birth to less than 2 years		56	
2 years of age	1	55	
3-5 years	2	55	
6-11 years	3	54	
12-16 years	2	55	
emergency care	1	3	21
birth to less than 2 years	1	55	
2 years of age	1	55	
3-5 years		57	
6-11 years	1	56	
12-16 years		57	
respite care	1	2	22
birth to less than 2 years		56	
2 years of age		56	1
3-5 years	1	56	
6-11 years	1	56	
12-16 years	1	56	

Section C: Planning a family, additional children or becoming a primary carer

Are you or your partner pregnant?

	frequency	percentage
yes	4	8%
if yes, multiple birth	no	
no	46	92%
total	50	

Do you plan to have children, additional children or become a primary carer of children 16 years and younger in the future?

	frequency	percentage
yes	17	35%
no	31	65%
total	48	
if yes, how many children		
1 child	2	
2 children	5	
3 children	2	
unsure how many	9	
timeframe		
unsure/don't know	5	
less than 2 years	12	
less than 5 years		
6-10 years	1	

As a prospective parent/carer please indicate the services you may access

	frequency	percentage
centre based long day care (community operated)	12	18%
centre based long day care (privately owned)	8	12%
Family Day care	6	9%
out of school hours care	6	9%
vacation care	7	11%
preschool/kindergarten	13	20%
occasional care	4	6%
informal arrangements with family or friends	8	12%
private carer, nanny or home help	1	2%
total	65	

Section D: What is important to you when choosing or accessing child care, preschools and related services?

	very important	important	moderately important	not really important	not important
affordability	23	18	3	1	1
I can access reduced fees based on my/family income	19	16	7	3	
operating hours suit other commitments (including work)	34	10	1	1	2
located close to public transport	3	2	17	12	9
located close to home	17	22	6	1	1
located close to work, or on the way to work	17	15	10	3	2
availability	37	6	2	2	
flexible arrangements of days and hours of care	24	10	7	4	1
siblings can be together in same location	32	8	6	1	
supportive and sensitive to my family's cultural background and practices	16	11	11	4	2
child/children are happy to go to child care/preschool and other services	36	8	1	1	
education programs on offer	31	13		1	1
qualified child care professionals	41	5	1	1	
for children with special needs, guaranteed care available by skilled staff	22	11	4	2	1
for children with special needs, there is appropriate physical access	26	8	4	2	3
for children with special needs, policy procedural systems and support is appropriate.	11	6	2	2	2
quality reputation/facilities	34	7	1	1	4

Appendix B: Child care survey comments

The numbers at the front of the comments relate to survey respondent.

Section A. Individual family profile

Is this the type of care you want for your child? If no, why not?

4592: Would have preferred a long day care centre closer to home.

4583: Not always available.

Section B. have you had any problems accessing child care, preschool and related services in Maitland or services not meeting your needs in the last 12 months?

Centre based long day care

4218, 4211, 4205, 4242, 4203, 4570, 4573, 4574, 4576, 4590: Waiting lists.

4242, 4429, 4579: Flexible hours to meet work commitments.

4574: Location.

4568: Quality care.

4574: Cost, opening hours.

4573: Cost, hours of operation, locality, quality (have to take a place where you can get a spot, not what you want).

4205: Unable to obtain care in Local Government Area in which I live.

Family Day Care

4242: Which was hard with twins. Flexibility of hours etc is the main consideration now.

4429, 4568, 4573, 4583: Waiting lists.

4583: Costs.

4573: Cost, hours of operation, locality, quality (have to take a place where you can get a spot, not what you want).

4568: Being told I'd never get a place, and did I still want to bother putting my name down anyway.

Out of school hours care (before or after school care)

4203, 4205, 4425, 4591, 4587, 4556: Waiting lists.

4231: Cost.

4587: More teachers, so more children can attend for working parents.

4204: Location.

Vacation care

4204, 4425, 4591, 4556: Waiting lists.

4231: Cost.

4556: Limited and frozen number of places making demand high.

Preschool/kindergarten

4200, 4593: Waiting lists.

4591: Flexible hours to meet work commitments.

4587: The only problem I have with preschool is I don't think we should have to pay for Public Holidays.

4242: Sometimes what is offered is boring to the kids or not relevant (according to the kids).

4556: East Maitland Public School (one of the largest in the hunter area) cannot take all in area enrolments for Kindergarten in 2004 and 2005. Parents have been told to consider other schools or defer enrolment if child is young.

Mobile (eg, Children's Activity Van)

4336, 4591: Waiting lists.

Occasional Care

4205, 4216: Waiting lists.

4231, 4429: Flexible hours to meet work commitments.

Emergency care (24 hours) (in and out of home)

4583: Guaranteed availability, costs.

Respite care

4216: Availability.

4591: Cost.

Section E. Comments and suggestions

Do you have suggestions or strategies for improving the ability of services to meet your needs?

4590: More Child Care facility need in the Maitland & surrounding areas to lower the waiting time for start time. Also them to have food provided as this is more convenient.

4588: Haven't had a need for the services as yet so I can't comment on availability etc of services.

4587: You need more child care centres the waiting lists are ridiculous, public holidays no one should have to pay it's not fair when they aren't even attending & more teachers for out of school hours care working parents need them.

4586: Access for disabled parents.

4584: Our children are really past the age of needing baby-sitters much, and we often have family members available. I have not worked outside the home while they've been young so as to give them good supervision, company and plenty of love. Children need the love and care of parents primarily -not Day care!

4583: There needs to be separate Day Care Centres for parents that are employed & unemployed so that the employed parents don't always get their children in sooner. Costs for unemployed need to be lessened.

4581: Vacancies available within the centre & wait lists.

4580: During trying to get Child Care for my 6 year old, prior to school care was impossible. My mum became my full-time carer. I started my daughter at school a year earlier than wanted due to lack of other options.

4579: Prioritising care places based on family circumstances, both my partner and myself work full-time and feel that a place given to a child of a parent that doesn't work, study or train is a little unjust.

4573: More childcare centres need to be built and funded. Will need OOSH availability once children are school-age.

4570: As a casual worker I have to rely on my mother to look after my youngest child as the days I work are not predictable. I wish there was a pre-school etc that would take children on an occasional basis that is a high quality provider of child care. My oldest child goes to pre-school which finishes at 3.15 and I have to ensure someone can pick him up if I am working. The time restraints, plus the lack of professional occasional day care really restrict the amount to work I can take.

4568: More centres being approved for business in fast growing areas. Very simple thinking I know, but then maybe I wouldn't have had to put my child down for placement at 10 centres when I was 6 weeks pregnant to get a place!

4567: Review the number of centres, operating or proposed in the Rutherford/Aberglasslyn area. Are there TOO MANY long day care centres considering supply/demand already?????????

4556: More places for Vacation Care. Very limited care available for 12 to 16 year old children.

4225: Working mothers should stay at home to care for their own children and not expect the employer to pay to place their children in childcare when they are out working for their income. There are too many uncontrollable kids out there due to their mothers at work and

not knowing what their darlings are up to. The governments should not be expected to foot the bill for the childcare costs - it is a private matter, not work related.

4206: Encourage employers to have in-house or close by childcare facilities; encourage Council to build childcare centres; get government to subsidise companies to have own in-house childcare centres.

Appendix C: Stakeholder forums

What's happening now in your service or any other models?

- who you know gets the outcomes you want – use of informal networks works to the benefit of services
- Council has made two attempts at running vacation care activities, but it could not attract any subsidies, so parents had to pay the full cost – no longer running due to prohibitive costs
- 2001 Census – 17,000 target population of 0-16 year olds
- 2 year ago serious lack of long day care and preschools – compounded by affordability for both services - 4 to 5 being opened and some still being developed
- heavy reliance on informal care – friends, neighbours
- perception of lower fees in Family Day Care to other service types in Maitland
- waiting lists are not an indicator of need – families go on multiple waiting lists, may not need full-time care, but all head counts are done as full-time requirement, families go on lists as part of a forward plan but may not need care until 2005/2006 this distorts numbers, a centre may have a vacancy but a family no longer needs the care – currently there is no way to encourage people to go off the list when their needs have been met elsewhere
- for children's services to survive longer term need 90% occupancy
- some families expect care to be there without realising that some have waiting lists – particularly if they have had not previous experience of services
- in a crisis often use family members, friends or neighbours
- Baptist OOSH has 3 before school care programs and 7 after school care programs, with a waiting list for all, have a total of 2,500 children on their books
- increase use of part-time care in children's services
- Maitland is cheaper to live in so families with children and young people with disabilities move up here

What's working well now?

- for young people - PCYC provides some good programs, including programs for young people that are suspended from school, so they have some activities while they cannot attend school, some high schools offer activities and Maitland Refuge Centre
- Mindaribba Land Council offers vacation care for children aged 3 years up to young people aged 25 years. Provide a variety of activities depending on age group and interest. also do some information after school care- have boxer 2 afternoons a week, children's art exhibition, strong links to PCYC who provide activities like touch football, Woodberry and land Council host NAIDOC Day celebrations

- Mindaribba Land Council via its youth worker runs one week camp in last week of school for 12-18 year olds focusing on self motivation, sexual health – it's a structured program with community elders participating and sharing information
- Baptist OOSH is successful as it also employs young men that provide more active and challenging activities, also good role model for children attending – the types of workers impact on the success of a program or not
- Circus program in Woodberry for 5-11 year olds
- Francis Greenaway High School – Better Futures program supported through school, within 5 year plan, 9+ vacation programs to be needed, but unsure about delivery
- Mindaribba Preschool uses a bus to pick up and drop off children whose families do not have access to transport, provide meals, operate 3 days per week, with very low fees, meets needs of indigenous community, and some non-indigenous families use the service, very limited opportunities to expand due to funding constraints
- good range of children's services provided in Maitland – but limited places and resources to meet expanding needs
- seems to be easier access into preschools with increasing children from level 3 and 4 DoCS priority (at risk) using formal care
- Family Day Care offers flexibility and lower cost care
- formal care is preferred for preschool age children, not home-based care
- one long day care services starts at 6.15am, this suited the needs of local shift workers at the time
- local HACC gets \$54,000 per annum to support young people with moderate to severe functional disability, this is used to have a carer accompany the young person to a social activity eg, film, activity provided by PCYC and similar
- vacation care handles lots of children – 90 places in one location

What are the issues in relation to child and youth services for 0-16 year olds?

- in Rutherford there is nothing for young people as they don't play sport, there are not formal programs and PCYC is not accessible due to limited/no public transport
- 11 to 18 year olds and their families can't or don't access services – may be they don't know about them
- interventions in families in low socio-economic areas are critical but don't know services are there or cannot access services, need to get this group before they are at risk
- concern that child care provider will get burnt as increased oversupply, but their centre may already be in development/under construction

- poor or limited public transport – difficult for women with young babies to get on and off trains and buses
- latch key children – 6-11 year olds, OOSH quality is good, but there is not enough if it – the current services seem to be affordable for families
- 12-16 year olds - no formal programs
- 10+ year olds don't like to go to formal programs – need to consider the appropriateness of current models – delivery, content of programs, preference for informal care
- number of juvenile justice issues when children/young people are released and not always welcome home,
- some end up homeless
- gap in services for 12-15 year olds, refuge won't take them as they are too young
- too many long day care services in west Maitland – 2 services opened recently and has 3 children on the first day and 20 in the other, both over 70 places each, new centres didn't advertise they were opening
- over supply of child care in west Maitland
- Aberglasslyn – all 0-2 year olds places are full, but 3+ there are vacancies
- centres in Metford are not full, but last 5 years has extensive waiting lists, mostly 3+ vacancies, ABC have lower fees and are open 51 weeks of the year, 20 year old children's services in Metford open 48 weeks of the year, have long term staff and lots of repeat business from families with younger siblings
- shortage of 0-2 year old care
- shortage of early childhood trained teachers in Maitland. This impacts of ability of early childhood trained teachers being able to take leave and manage emergency replacements
- some centres find it difficult to access most current information on health and hygiene practices for children's services- not enough time and it changes
- Council and DoCS give the OK to the development of long day care, but do nothing to stop child care being built in areas of over supply – there may eventually be enough families to support the new services, but what would be the longer term impact of if an ABC came in and undercut everyone
- in the short term west side of town should not have any more child care centre approvals until things equalise
- west Maitland needs youth services – Baptist Church provides some services and tries to take a flexible approach that reflects community needs, need activities for 10-14/15 year olds as they are not interested in formal programs like before and/or after school care or vacation care

- no or limited services for children with disabilities, in OOSH programs the Federal Govt has put a cap on the number of funded children with disabilities services can take (Baptist OOSH programs), children's needs cannot always be met, eg some may need assistance with toileting and OOSH does not have the physical and/or human resources to manage this and Family Day Care may not be appropriate
- OOSH can turn up at a school to run after school care only to find they have to change venue that impacts on program that may be provided and potentially (depending on the alternate venue) ability to provide activities for children with functional disabilities
- in-home care concern that cost and regulations are too prohibitive
- no places for children with behaviour difficulties, no real place for them, SNSS/SUPS barrier as need to be diagnosed to access and behaviour is not easy to diagnose, also SNSS/SUPS limited places - 10% in OOSH places, this stops some families getting access
- is NSW the only state that is capped by FaCS for SNSS/SUPS funds – these are attached to child but not always easy to transfer to another service
- ADD and ADHD children are not always formally assessed or don't fit the criteria for access to SUPS or SNSS from FaCS, but still high needs children in services and families may require assistance to help manage challenging behaviours
- Woodberry – a broad range of issues, service and needs of Woodberry very extensive
 - isolation!, transport, lowest socio economic area in LGA
 - very difficult to get services to children,
 - Samaritans provide 1.5 hours/week of activities for youth and there are no other activities
 - no vacation care
 - services under resourced, therefore difficult to get them to do more, always applying for grants to help develop and support programs but a time lag from application to success or otherwise, and demand continues to grow
 - 0-8 year olds – limited activities, run a successful Circus program (high level activity), transition to school – 1 day per week health nurse attends local school for mothers with young babies, includes nutrition program
 - 2 long day care centres but pretty booked up, concerns about affordability, more affordable than preschool due to Child Care Benefit subsidy
 - families often have no experience using formal children's services and are not aware of the value of these types of programs
 - new long day care will be designed to attract vulnerable families
- services try to make children/young people come to them – issues about using bus/train to get there and children may not end up at the service but somewhere else with friends

- low income families hardest group to access services – even most preschools are too expensive, use Family Day Care as its cheaper, but in some areas of Maitland there are waiting lists for Family Day Care
- low income families are trapped – can't afford child care, can't work as no child care, there for low income
- Defence families get postings in Oct for Jan the following year, often younger families with children, how do they access child care and other services if needed
- no occasional child care in Maitland – Metford used to do it, but handed funding back as too difficult – is there a need for occasional child care now, it is difficult to staff and inconsistent care for children, although how occasional care is used is changing with more regular part-time use
- adequate community resources for children with intellectual disabilities, but very limited for physical disabilities, sometimes can access Family Day Care but depends on skill and willingness of carer
- concern in local preschools and long day care centres about taking children with severe allergic reactions, need to have systems developed to accommodate these types of children
- some assistance for OOSH services to take children with disabilities, but FaCS impose a 10% limit of number of places available for these children. OOSH could take more if appropriately resourced (and would like to as see an important contribution to the community) but the FaCS limit combined with the physical facilities available often makes this difficult. For example, if a child needs lifting to assist with toileting there is no private space or a hoist to assist with this
- new quality assurance for OOSH may impact on numbers of children who can attend, lack of buildings and do not always have control over which buildings the program may be running from
- severe shortage of services for children who are traumatised in some way, only one service that is free – Lower Hunter Community Health – provides counselling on domestic violence, abuse etc
- family support agencies do not always know what children's services are doing and availability of places at services that may assist vulnerable families with care – short or long term, children's services do not always know what family support agencies are and what they can link into to support vulnerable families
- only one respite care agency with a waiting list of 3 years, can get emergency placement but difficult. Have funding for 64 carers, 20,000 hours per annum and has to cover Maitland, Cessnock and Port Stephens LGAs
- respite houses can take children 7+ years but limited, the primary diagnosis must be intellectual disability
- parents with a child with a disability request work-related child care, but there is very limited care for any children with additional needs, or if wanting short term respite to

assist with workforce participation, end up with a mish mash of arrangements that are often all short term with no long term solution – parent ends up at home all the time

What are the needs & opportunities for children & young people who do not currently access services?

- youth need access to safe structured places for them to go to, that provide some boundaries to support them through problem solving
- green space as part of all development that is not the bit left over but useful land, Council to look at opportunities to ensure this is always provided, for example free range cycle ways sometimes rather than formal bike paths, west Maitland (Adams Ave?) ensure green space remains
- community gardens, organic gardens – green space with designed play areas and incorporating some child and youth facilities – opportunities for young people to enjoy and more structured but still informal activity
- use SMS to stay in touch with young people , eg for those attending a youth program
- children's health clinics (medical, dental, optical) that operated from mobile venues once a week/fortnight – only two local GPs who bulk bill and not easy to access via public transport
- can Section 94 accommodate health facilities as part of community use
- community centre – it's a Council responsibility to develop facilities and/or run programs, could have a centralised program that outreaches to all Maitland
- look at options for care close to work so families do not have to rush to pick up children or if child is sick or has an accident
- develop appropriate flexible buildings in a variety of locations (in local community, not centrally located due to public transport difficulties) that can provide different services as required
 - for local service providers often getting the venue and managing the insurance is the issue
 - these types of buildings could provide supported playgroups, preschools, mothers groups, activities for older people etc
 - for youth operate more as a drop in centre with an informal program
 - could also house training programs and small business outlets eg lawn mowing service etc
 - Council role is to get land and space for multi-purpose facility
 - needs to be not too pretty so that child and youth activities can be run there without concern of messing the building up

- hiring out sporting facilities for child and youth activities – have canteen, playing fields/sports areas, not always used for training every night, afternoon
- don't need to always build new facilities look at what's currently available and maximise these
- there is a community services directory but could be more local, youth friendly version eg Z-card list of services or other specific group
- holiday programs for young people where they can have a say in what the range of activities are, 13-14 year olds may still need to be provided with formal services that they are required to attend but need to be activities that attract them, but consideration of cost impact of such a service
- Council should have some way of informing potential children's services providers of current child care situation – eg more part-time use, where other services are
- children's services are supported to become community hubs providing information and resources to families before they are at risk
- there is limited awareness of Council's community services directory – what it is, how to get information into it and how to access it to support families and children
- Council to facilitate and support local family and children's services interagency that meets 6-monthly or annually to share information, network and raise awareness of developing a systemic approach to working with children and families
- check list of information for new child care providers when they do DA