



Morawa Child and Family Centre

BUSINESS CASE

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Shire of Morawa is a small rural community in Western Australia's Mid West, 390km north of Perth. Morawa is the sub-regional centre for the North Midlands sub region, which includes the shires of Morawa, Carnamah, Coorow, Perenjori, Three Springs and Mingenew. The Shire of Morawa has many families with children who live either in the town of Morawa or on farms in the surrounding district. The Shire also has an Aboriginal population larger than the national average.

For almost a decade the Shire of Morawa and the local community has recognised the shortage of available Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services as a serious challenge for the town. Morawa's only ECEC provider is a family day care service operated by a sole trader in a run-down old building. The service operates from 8am-5pm Monday/Fridays, 9am-5pm Tuesdays/Thursdays and is closed on Wednesdays. It offers up to four children below age five and three school age places per day and does not provide vacation care.

The lack of available childcare places in Morawa and the inconsistent nature of the existing family day care service represents a significant impediment to parents seeking to re-enter the workforce, and also makes it difficult for employers in the town to attract and retain staff, to the detriment of the local economy. An analysis commissioned by the Shire also identified that the Shire's Aboriginal population does not engage with the current family day care service.

Morawa also suffers with poor early childhood development outcomes. The 2021 Australian Early Development Census found the number of children in the Morawa/Perenjori region identified as vulnerable was nearly double the rate of developmentally vulnerable children in Western Australia as a whole. Developmental issues in early childhood can lead to numerous difficulties later in life, including health problems and welfare dependency, however there is substantial evidence that early childhood services have a strong impact on children's learning and development and play a key role in laying the foundations for a successful future.

In addition to the need for more ECEC places, the Morawa community has identified the town also lacks suitable spaces for community meetings, playgroup, child and family-oriented workshops and events, and that child health services such as speech pathology and child psychology are currently provided in the library or other rooms at Morawa District High School, which are inappropriate for this purpose.

Parents in Morawa have also reported that there is no indoor space for children to play during Morawa's hot and dry summers, and no suitable place where isolated parents can bring their children to meet up to socialise, share parenting experiences and support each other.

To address these needs, the Shire of Morawa is seeking funding to construct the Morawa Child and Family Centre - a multipurpose venue that will offer both a formal ECEC service as well as an informal indoor space where children can play, and parents can meet and interact. The Centre will also include meeting rooms, which will provide the necessary space for community groups to meet and run workshops and events, while the wellness room will allow child health and family services to be offered in a safe and private setting.

Aligning with Morawa's demographics and identified needs, the Centre will have a strong Indigenous focus, both in providing culturally appropriate ECEC services for Aboriginal children and space for cultural parenting workshops, storytelling sessions and other traditional practices. It will also create opportunities for employment and training in early childhood education for Aboriginal people.

The total cost of the project is estimated to be \$3,284,775, with the Shire of Morawa contributing \$1,050,000 from existing cash reserves and seeking \$2,234,775 from the Federal Government's Growing Regions Program. Due to the Shire of Morawa's remote location, the Shire is categorised as Group 2, meaning up to 70% of eligible project costs can be funded through the Growing Regions Program.

The Centre will be built on Shire-owned land in close proximity to the Morawa District High School, kindergarten and youth centre, and has already received development approval. The ECEC service will be operated by an approved, not-for-profit provider on a break-even basis (the provider has already been identified), while ongoing maintenance and operational costs will be accounted for in the Shire's Strategic Asset Management Plan and Long Term Financial Plan.

A recent Cost Benefit Analysis found the project had a Net Present Value (NPV) ranging between \$17.10 million at the 4% discount rate and \$11.81 million at the 10% discount rate, which indicates the project is expected to provide a positive economic impact and social return to the community. The analysis also indicated that the project's Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) would be 5.78 at the 4% discount rate, 5.12 at the 7% discount rate, and 4.65 at the 10% discount rate, demonstrating the project presents a very strong return on investment.

The Morawa Child and Family Centre addresses many critical needs for the Morawa community. Not only will it boost workforce participation by alleviating the shortage of childcare places in Morawa, but it will also help to overcome the district's poor childhood development outcomes, create a safe and welcoming environment for the Shire's Aboriginal population, provide fit-for-purpose spaces for child health and family services and be a place where isolated families from across the Shire can meet up and play.



2 PROJECT SCOPE AND EVALUATION

2.1 Project Needs Assessment

2.1.1 Background

The Shire of Morawa is a small rural local government in Western Australia's Mid West region. It is approximately 170 kilometres southeast of the unofficial regional capital Geraldton and 390 kilometres north of the state capital Perth. Spanning 3,538 square kilometres, the land-locked Shire is bordered by Mullewa to the north, Perenjori to the south, Mingenew and Three Springs to the west and Yalgoo to the east.

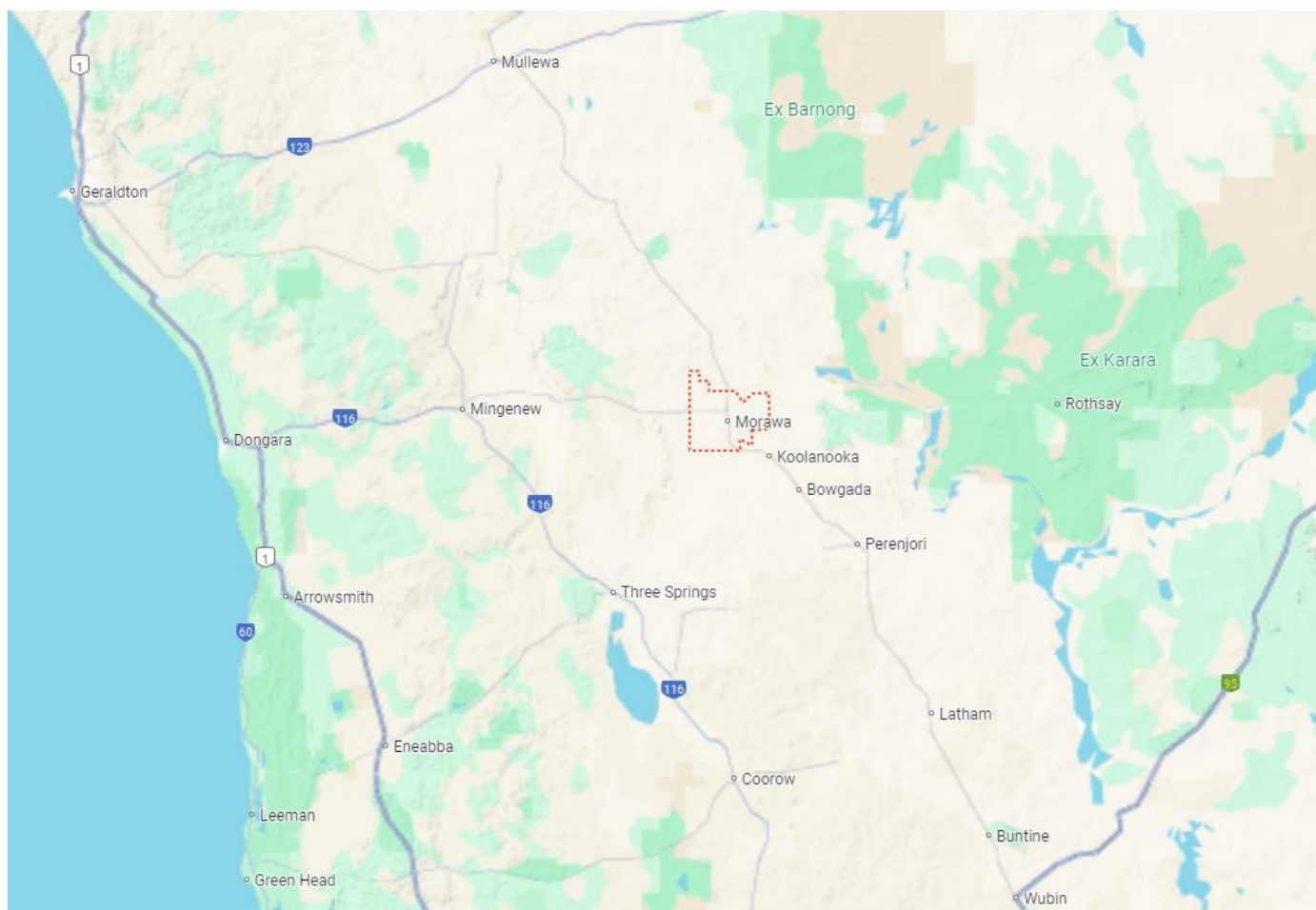


Figure 1 – Mid West Region, with the Shire of Morawa highlighted

The Morawa townsite is the identified sub-regional centre for the North Midlands sub region, which includes the shires of Morawa, Carnamah, Coorow, Perenjori, Three Springs and Mingenew. As such, Morawa is a sub-regional hub offering education and health care services that benefit residents outside of the Morawa district¹. These include a hospital, district high school and residential agricultural college. The town also provides a range of community services including a swimming pool, recreation centre, community gym, community resource centre, police and St John ambulance services, as well as retail and commercial services including a supermarket, pharmacy, post office, newsagency, agricultural suppliers, bakery and café, clothing and hardware stores.

Morawa features a semi-arid climate with hot and dry summers and mild to cool winters. Over the summer months of December to February the average maximum temperature is well over 35°C, while in the coolest month of July the

¹ <https://www.morawa.wa.gov.au/documents/12153/corporate-business-plan-2023-2033>

average maximum temperature is just 18.9°C². The highest temperature ever recorded in Morawa is 47.7°C on 18 February 2024.

The Morawa economy is driven by agricultural and mining activities, supported by medical, retail, and government services. The town and surrounding region are also popular tourist destinations during the wildflower season from late winter through to early October. According to the 2021 Census the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing sector is the largest employer in the Shire, accounting for 105 workers out of the total workforce of 333³. Education and Training is the next largest employer with 66 workers, followed by Health Care and Social Assistance with 35 and Mining with 25. Although agriculture is the largest employer in the Shire, mining has the largest annual economic output, with mining generating annual output of \$85.2 million while agriculture generates \$69 million⁴.

The 2021 Census recorded the Shire of Morawa's population as 660 people, with 50.5% male and 49.5% female⁵. The Shire has 140 families, with an average of two children per family. The number of children in the Shire aged between 0-4 is 43, which represents 6.5% of the Shire's population. This is higher than the Western Australian rate of 6.1%.

The Shire of Morawa has a large Aboriginal population. The 2021 Census recorded that 10.9% of the Shire's population was Aboriginal, which is considerably higher than the Western Australian rate of 3.3%. However, for 18.5% of the Shire's population their Indigenous status was not stated in the 2021 Census. It should be noted the Shire of Morawa, Morawa District High School and other local organisations dispute the 2021 Census figures due to a poor response rate, particularly in the Aboriginal community. Anecdotal evidence related to new residents, school attendance, and other factors suggests the area's Indigenous population is at least double the official statistics. For example, the 2021 Census recorded a total of nine school-aged Aboriginal children (between 5-14 years), however the Morawa District High School has 71 students that identify as Aboriginal, which represents 42% of the school population.

Project Background

The need for a multipurpose Child and Family Centre in Morawa was identified in 2016 in the 'Ten Year Education and Training Plan for the Morawa Shire and the Wider North Midlands Region'. This plan was commissioned by the Morawa Education, Industry and Training Alliance, which was a partnership between the Western Australia College of Agriculture Morawa, the Morawa District High School and the Shire of Morawa. The plan highlighted that Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) was a key issue for Morawa and recommended that a Child and Parent Centre (Family Centre) be built as soon as possible.

In May 2022, following requests from community members to further investigate the development of an early childhood education and day care centre, the Shire instigated a Needs Analysis report. Completed in October 2022, the report's findings included:

- Morawa families used a mix of informal childcare provided by grandparents, other relatives and friends and formal early childhood education and care provided by the existing family day care service.
- The Morawa family day care premises were not 'perfect' and would be unlikely to meet the standard required for centre-based care.
- The family day care service was a critical resource in the Morawa community, particularly for parents employed at the hospital, school and Shire who did not have extended family members able to provide informal care.
- The family day care service was generally not accessed by Aboriginal families who are among the most disadvantaged and most developmentally vulnerable members of the community.
- Availability of a contemporary ECEC centre was increasingly important for attracting and retaining staff for essential services such as education, health and police; and for encouraging people to relocate to regional areas.

² www.bom.gov.au/climate/averages/tables/cw_008296_All.shtml

³ abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/community-profiles/2021/LGA55670

⁴ app.remplan.com.au/midwestregion/economy/industries/outputY

⁵ abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA55670

- The establishment of a ECEC centre in Morawa could have a critical role in reducing the level of developmental vulnerability of children, including Aboriginal children, as well as providing a centre-based service for current and future workers in essential services as well as community, business and professional services.

The report recommended the Shire of Morawa support the establishment of a purpose-built Early Childhood Education and Care Centre in Morawa to address the needs of developmentally vulnerable children and unmet needs of essential workers for access to a quality service for their children.

In April 2023, Morawa Shire Council resolved to direct the Shire's CEO to scope and cost an early childhood education facility in Morawa and review funding opportunities, while also acknowledging the continued importance of the current family day care provider.

A working group (Project Working Group) consisting of representatives from the Morawa District High School, Morawa District High School Parents and Citizens Association, Mid West Employment and Economic Development Aboriginal Corporation (MEEDAC), Morawa Play Group and the Shire of Morawa was established in May 2023. This group, based on discussions with the community, highlighted the need for a family centre, in addition to ECEC services. Preliminary schematic designs for the Centre were completed by Eastman Poletti Sherwood Architects in October 2023, with detailed designs completed in August 2024.

2.1.2 Needs Analysis

The need for this project has been well established through consultation and needs assessments over many years, as summarised above.

The need for this project is centred around:

- Lack of ECEC facilities in Morawa
- Poor early childhood development outcomes in Morawa
- Lack of suitable indoor play spaces for children
- Limited support and social interaction for parents
- Lack of a permanent home for Morawa Playgroup
- Lack of a suitable space for child health services, such as speech pathology and child psychology.
- Lack of culturally appropriate child and family services in Morawa

Lack of ECEC facilities in Morawa

The only Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) approved Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) centre in Morawa is a Family Day Care educator providing an in-venue service at 27 Dregghorn Street, Morawa. This building was built in 1956-57 as an Infant Health Centre and does meet the quality standard that would be expected for a centre-based long day care service.

Morawa Family Day Care Services is operated by sole-trader Theresa English. Ms English started the family day care service in 2022 due to needing childcare for her own young child in order to return to the workforce, but the previous educator was leaving town so there was no available childcare in Morawa.

The service operates from 8am-5pm Monday/Fridays, 9am-5pm Tuesdays/Thursdays and is closed on Wednesdays. It offers up to four children below age five and three school age places per day. The service does not provide vacation care, which (in addition to its very small capacity) limits its ability to meet the full range of ECEC needs in the community.

It is noted that the current family day care building is nearing end of life and would require considerable funds to bring it up to code to meet increasingly strict FDC compliance standards. In addition, Ms English's child no longer requires childcare and, as such, Ms English has indicated she may not be able to continue with the only existing childcare in Morawa after January 2025. Ms English has indicated to the Shire that she is keen to cease operating but is 'holding on' until the community has another childcare option.

Morawa's youth centre⁶ provides a safe space for youth aged between 8 and 18 years with an after school program each week during the school term and a school holiday program for set days during each school holiday period. There

⁶ www.morawa.wa.gov.au/services/ratepayers-residents/morawa-youth-centre.aspx

is no ACECQA approved before and after school care or vacation care for younger children of primary school age. The Morawa District High School Principal has indicated there is a high need for before and after school care.

Findings in a Victoria University report in 2022 ‘Deserts and Oases: How accessible is childcare in Australia?’⁷ include:

- childcare places were concentrated in the wealthiest areas and close to major job centres, with a correlation between areas with higher childcare fees and childcare availability,
- greater numbers of women with a child under five were in the workforce in locations where more childcare places were available,
- for many regional towns, Australia’s policy approach to early learning results in a complete absence of provision, especially for towns with a population of less than 1500 people where it is not viable for (many) providers to offer childcare,
- parents in regional Australia have the most developmentally vulnerable children but the poorest access to childcare,
- children from disadvantaged backgrounds benefit the most, but research showed these children are the ones most likely to live in an area with a shortage of childcare places,
- a third of Australian families live in regions classified as a “childcare desert”, where more than three children aged four and under are vying for each childcare spot within a 20-minute drive,
- 77.9% of children in the Mid West Region of Western Australia live in a ‘childcare desert.’

Mapping in the report showed that Morawa has 0.225 places per child aged 0-4 years, however since the study was undertaken the number of places has reduced further following a change of Approved Provider and FDC Educator.

The lack of ECEC facilities in Morawa is a significant impediment for parents seeking to re-enter the workforce. To access the nearest available ECEC places in the neighbouring town of Perenjori, parents must travel 41km each way, a total of 164km per working day. This is not practical or financially sustainable for most parents, even if Perenjori were to have sufficient childcare places to cover both local government areas, which it does not.

Local employers, including the Shire, school and hospital, have reported the limited childcare facilities in Morawa makes it difficult to retain existing staff and attract new staff to fill vacancies. This not only impacts on the delivery of vital community services in Morawa but is also restricting growth in the local economy by hindering workforce participation.

Poor early childhood development outcomes

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) measures the development of children in Australia in their first year of full-time school. The AEDC provides important information for communities, governments and schools to support their planning and service provision. In 2021, the most recent data available, 40% of Morawa/Perenjori children were identified as vulnerable in one or more domain and 20% were vulnerable in two or more domains⁸. This is nearly double the rate of developmentally vulnerable children in Western Australia as a whole. AEDC data also showed that nationally, the percentage of developmentally vulnerable children was higher in communities with small populations compared with children in communities with larger populations.

Geography	Physical 1	Social 1	Emotional 1	Language 1	Communication 1	Vuln 1 1	Vuln 2 1
Australia	9.8	9.6	8.5	7.3	8.4	22.0	11.4
Western Australia	9.4	7.6	7.8	7.2	8.0	20.3	10.2
Morawa/Perenjori	20.0	20.0	20.0	33.3	13.3	40.0	20.0

Figure 2 - Percentage of children developmentally vulnerable in AEDC 2021

⁷ www.vu.edu.au/mitchell-institute/early-learning/childcare-deserts-oases-how-accessible-is-childcare-in-australia

⁸ www.aedc.gov.au/data-explorer/?id=181774

Developmental issues in early childhood can lead to numerous difficulties later in life, such as health problems (including alcoholism, stress, depression heart disease and diabetes) and welfare dependency. If nothing is done to address disadvantage in the early years, it becomes further entrenched by the education system, creating intergenerational cycles of disadvantage⁹.

Research has demonstrated that the skills and abilities acquired in early childhood are fundamental to a person's success and well-being in later life. A positive early childhood provides personal and economic benefits to the individual and then to the society as a whole.¹⁰

There is substantial evidence that early childhood services (including ECEC, parenting classes and support services) have a strong impact on children's learning and development and that children who participate in these services do better on measures of educational performance when they attend primary school. This is particularly true for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. It is clear therefore that there is a correlation between the lack of early childhood services available in Morawa and the high percentage of developmentally vulnerable children in the area.

Lack of indoor play spaces for children

As noted in *Section 2.1.1 Background*, Morawa has a semi-arid climate and experiences extremely hot temperatures for much of the year. While the town does have a number of small outdoor parks and playgrounds for children, it is often too hot to use them.

Babies and young children can become unwell in the heat more easily than others¹¹. This is because they can overheat and dehydrate quickly and are less able to make choices to stop themselves overheating. A child's body normally keeps itself cool by sweating and moving more blood towards the skin. In extreme heat, or if a child is physically active in hot weather, their body's natural cooling system can begin to fail. Their body temperature can increase to dangerous levels, leading to severe heat-related illness including heat stroke and heat exhaustion.

However, there is no indoor, air-conditioned place for children and babies in Morawa to play and interact, despite temperatures being so high for much of the year.

An informal indoor play space as proposed in this project would provide a place for families to meet and a safe environment for children to play in when it's too hot to play outside. The proposed Child and Family Centre would also be available as a hireable indoor space that could be used for children's birthday parties and other social events, furthering the opportunity for social interaction amongst young families.

Limited support and social interaction for parents

As noted in *Section 2.1.1 Background*, Morawa is predominantly a rural community, with agriculture being the Shire's largest employer. As a result, a large number of families live on farms, away from extended family and friends and with long distances between themselves and their nearest neighbours. Many people who live on farms come into town infrequently and only for a specific purpose such as shopping or medical appointments. This can be isolating, especially for new parents with young children.

Research undertaken in Australia and internationally suggests that around 15-22% of women experience depression during pregnancy and/or following the birth of their baby¹². Current research about perinatal anxiety suggests one in five women report anxiety symptoms during pregnancy, and between 4-20% of women experience symptoms of an anxiety disorder after giving birth. Between 4.2-9.3% of women will experience both anxiety and depression. Therefore, up to one in every five women may experience symptoms of anxiety, depression, or both during pregnancy and/or following birth. Though there is far less research available on paternal perinatal mental health, the last decade of research suggests up to 10%, or one in 10 expecting or new fathers will experience depression and/or anxiety during the perinatal period. A recent review estimates that the prevalence of anxiety in men in the perinatal period is 3.4%-25%. Similar to research findings about maternal mental health, often men experience both anxiety and depression during the perinatal period. Talking to other parents about their experiences, reaching out for help or seeking treatment or advice from a health professional are important ways for new parents to manage anxiety and depression.

⁹ www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/educational-opportunity-in-australia-2020.pdf

¹⁰ National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2004b) *Children's emotional development is built into the architecture of their brains*. Working Paper No. 2.

¹¹ www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/factsheets/Pages/beat-the-heat-children.aspx

¹² panda.org.au/articles/how-common-are-mental-health-issues-in-the-perinatal-period/

Many parents with young children in Morawa have reported that, having concluded their business, there is no reason to stay in town and no place to meet up with friends and other parents. The Child and Family Centre proposed in this project would provide an informal place where families can come together, children can play in a safe environment and parents can interact, share their experiences and support each other. It will also provide the opportunity for parents to access information and advice from parenting support services like Ngala in an informal, less intimidating setting.

No permanent home for playgroup

Across Western Australia there are hundreds of playgroups¹³ - groups of parents, caregivers and extended family who come together with their babies and young children to learn together through play. Playgroups provide a supportive environment for children and their family or carer. There is a sense of belonging to the community, opportunities to form friendships and share ideas and information.

While at playgroup, children have the opportunity to learn through play and develop social, emotional, physical and cognitive skills in a safe and stimulating environment. They are also a lot of fun for children as they learn through play and interact with other children and adults. Importantly, playgroup also provides the opportunity for parents and children to play together, which is critical to children's healthy development. By creating a space where parents and caregivers have the opportunity to spend time with their children, playgroups can enhance relationships through play.

Playgroups meet in a variety of venues depending on the needs of the group and the availability of suitable premises. Often, they will be in, or close to, other community services like community centres, schools, healthcare centres and libraries. While it is true children can play anywhere, playgroup has an added benefit of providing opportunities for playing with other children and practising important social skills.

The Morawa Playgroup currently meets every Monday from 9-11am in the same building used by the Morawa Kindergarten. This building, at 28 Prater Street, was previously used by Morawa District High School for pre-primary, but when enrolments became too large for the building, pre-primary was relocated and the kindergarten moved in. During the COVID-19 pandemic the playgroup was unable to use the building as the school required more space to accommodate social distancing requirements. While the school is currently supportive of the playgroup using the building, if kindergarten enrolments continue to increase, the school will have to open up more kindergarten days. This would require the playgroup to find another venue, however no suitable alternative venues currently exist in Morawa. The Child and Family Centre proposed in this project would provide a permanent home for the Morawa playgroup.

In addition, Playgroup WA is funded by the National Indigenous Australians Agency to facilitate Aboriginal Playgroups to provide culturally appropriate playgroups in locations across WA. With the construction of a dedicated Child and Family Centre suitable for playgroups, there would be the potential for an Aboriginal playgroup to commence in Morawa, given the high indigenous population in the area.

Lack of space for child health services

The Morawa Perenjori Health Service, located in the Morawa District Hospital, provides 24-hour acute and emergency care, allied health services, community health and palliative care. Morawa also has a community doctor based at the Morawa Medical Centre. However, some child health services, such as the visiting speech pathologist and child psychologist, operate from the library or rooms at Morawa District High School as there is no other suitable venue. This is not ideal as the school rooms were not designed for this purpose and lack privacy.

Additionally, the lack of suitable rooms is a deterrent to other visiting specialists establishing child health services in Morawa.

The proposed Child and Family Centre includes a wellness room in which speech pathology, child psychology and other similar services can be offered in a safe and private environment.

¹³ www.playgroupwa.com.au/

Lack of culturally appropriate child and family services

As noted in *Section 2.1.1 Background*, Morawa has a large Indigenous population with almost 11% of respondents in the 2021 Census identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and the likely actual percentage being much higher. However, the Needs Analysis undertaken in 2022 identified the existing family day care service in Morawa was generally not accessed by Aboriginal families, who are among the most disadvantaged and most developmentally vulnerable members of the community.

The Child and Family Centre proposed in this project would offer a culturally appropriate space for Aboriginal children to participate in early learning, which will lay a strong foundation for their future academic and personal development.

The inclusion of wellness and meeting rooms within the family centre will provide spaces for cultural parenting workshops and traditional practices. These programs are critical for preserving and passing on cultural knowledge and ensuring Aboriginal heritage continues to thrive. Furthermore, these facilities will create an environment that nurtures social and emotional connections, allowing families to share experiences and receive mutual support. The Centre will also provide opportunities for storytelling sessions with Elders, which are an essential aspect of cultural education. These sessions will help young children connect with and appreciate their cultural roots, while fostering meaningful intergenerational relationships.

2.2 Project Description

The Morawa Child and Family Centre will be located on Shire-owned land at 26 Prater Street. The site is well located adjacent to the local Kindergarten and Youth Centre and across the road from the District High School.



Figure 3 - Aerial view with 26 Prater Street highlighted

The Centre will be a single storey building featuring an indoor play area, quiet area/reading nook, kitchen, laundry, toilets and change facilities, meeting rooms, wellness room, staff offices and storage. It will also have covered outdoor areas and outdoor play areas, including lawns, a nature playground, play equipment, cycle path and sand pit (see Attachment A – Detailed Design Drawings).



Figure 4 - Morawa Child and Family Centre concept drawing

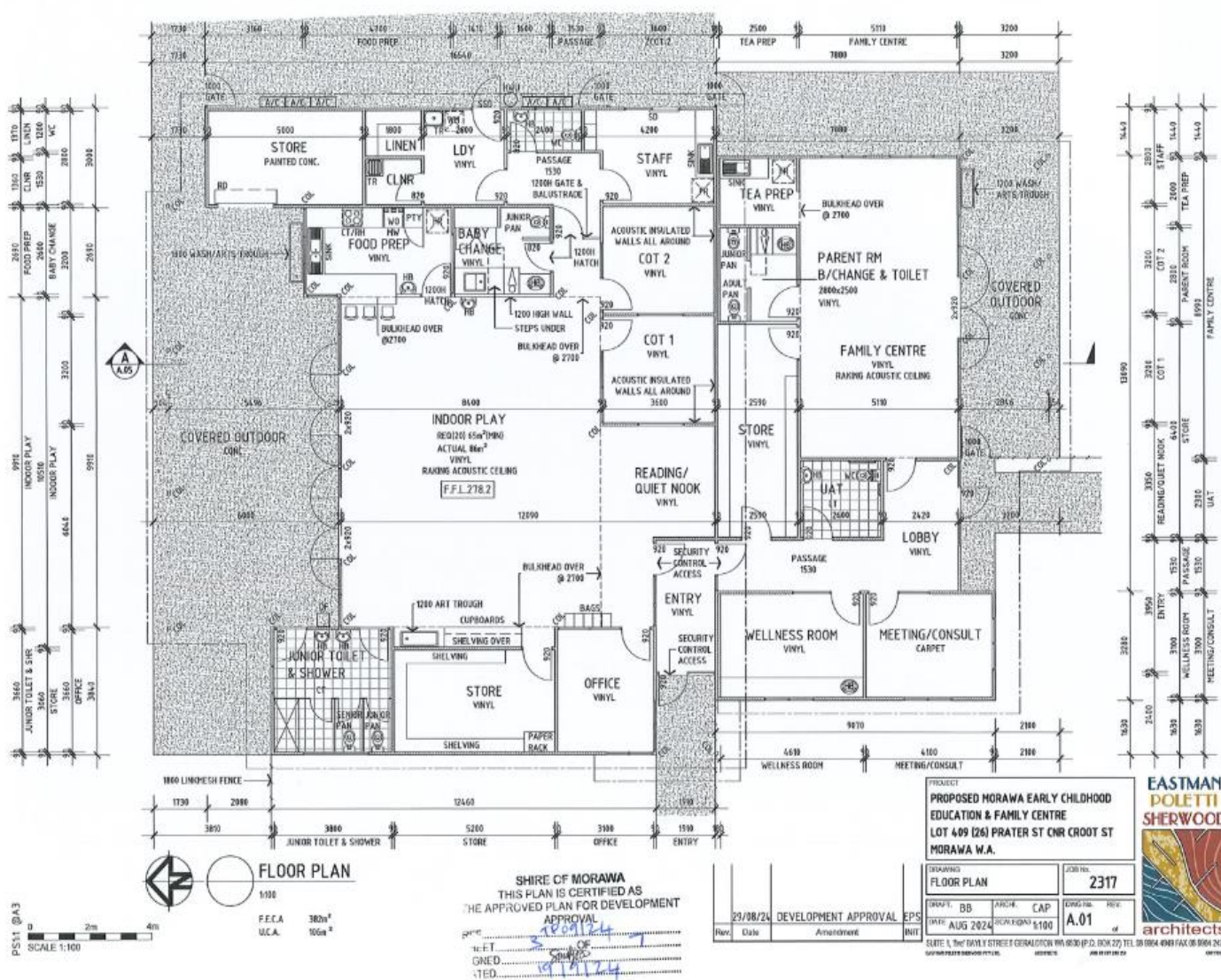


Figure 5 - Morawa Child and Family Centre Floor Plan

The Centre will be a multipurpose venue with two main components. The first component is a formal Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) service providing long day care for up to 19 children aged 0-6 with after school care for children older than six. The second is a family centre with an informal indoor play space where families can drop in, children can play, and parents can meet and socialise. In addition, the wellness room and meeting rooms will provide fit-for-purpose spaces for children's and family services such as speech pathology, occupational therapy and child psychology, space for parenting groups and programs, family focused activities and a hub for a range of other community interest groups. The Centre will also provide the opportunity for family support services such as Ngala to engage with parents in a casual, less-intimidating setting where they feel safe and comfortable. Other opportunities to be considered include professional development, education and training of Early Childhood professionals and establishment of a hub for First Nations people undertaking training in preparation for employment.

The formal ECEC service will be provided by Regional Early Education and Development Inc. (REED). REED is a not-for-profit organisation established in 2018 with the aim of building a sustainable early childhood education and care system in regional WA. After initially receiving funding from the WA Government's Department of Communities and Lotterywest, REED now operates 23 ECEC services in the Mid West and Wheatbelt. Its services include long day care in centres leased from local governments, family day care provided in an educator's home or community venue, and outside school hours care either in schools, at a childcare centre or family day care. REED also works in partnership with local Indigenous organisations to increase participation of Aboriginal children in early childhood education and care.

The Board of REED has endorsed the establishment of the Morawa Child and Family Centre and agreed to manage the service as an ACECQA Approved Provider. The Shire of Morawa and REED signed a partnership agreement in December 2023 which outlines a mutually beneficial arrangement between the two parties with the view of providing quality early childhood education and care services within an appropriately accredited ECEC centre. The agreement commits the Shire and REED to working together on the design of the facility, identifying funding opportunities and delivering the project.

Once the Centre is complete, REED has agreed to provide a five days a week ECEC service with an after school care component, active integration with Morawa District High School and a commitment to working with Midwest Aboriginal Employment and Economic Development Inc. (MEEDAC) and the local Indigenous community to maximise the development outcomes for young Indigenous community members. The Shire has agreed to a peppercorn lease of \$1 per term for REED to lease the facility, the provision of basic weekly garden maintenance, rubbish collection and sewerage services at no cost, and to provide a house at below market rent for REED staff working at the Centre.

This project will provide a critical piece of community infrastructure to enable the provision of early childhood education and care services, parenting and family support programs and aligned health and wellbeing services. This will improve child development outcomes, economic and social opportunities for parents, and provide access to support services for families, each of which will contribute to the enhanced liveability and sustainability of the Morawa community.

2.2.1 Project Benefits

The Morawa Child and Family Centre will be a multi-use venue that provides a number of economic and social benefits to a broad section of the community. In particular, the project will:

- Increase workforce participation by parents by improving access to early childhood education and care.
- Create new employment opportunities in early childhood education.
- Increase local wages through closing the gender-based pay gap.
- Deliver economic growth by enabling local businesses to attract staff, thereby increasing turnover for local businesses and therefore Gross Regional Product (GRP).
- Improve child development outcomes through improved access to early childhood education, particularly for Aboriginal children.
- Increase social inclusion by providing an informal meeting place for parents and children.
- Enhance livability and amenity by providing a safe and comfortable indoor play space.
- Increase access to community services including childcare, playgroup and child health services.
- Support Indigenous heritage and culture by providing spaces for cultural parenting workshops and traditional practices.

2.3 Policy and Strategic Framework

The project has been considered with respect to local, regional, state, and national plans, priorities, and strategies, with several areas of alignment identified.

2.3.1 Alignment with Federal Government Policies and Organisations

National Agreement on Closing the Gap

This agreement between all Australian Governments and the Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Bodies seeks to overcome entrenched inequality so that life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are equal to all Australians’.

The agreement outlines 5 outcomes:

1. Shared decision-making
2. Building the community-controlled sector
3. Improving mainstream institutions
4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led data
5. Socio-economic outcomes (including 17 targets)

The proposed Centre supports the achievement of the outcomes via incorporating leadership from First Nations people and organisations in the Mid West in the co-design and planned future usage of the facility. As a result of First Nations people involvement, the concept and designs for the Centre have considered First Nations’ needs to create culturally safe spaces that are responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people.

Of the 17 socio-economic outcomes, the Centre will provide particular support for:

- *Closing the life expectancy gap by 2031* – This is served through the Centre’s focus on early engagement and skill development in an inclusive and supportive environment. A range of permanent/ongoing, short-term, and visiting programs and services that will be available at the Centre, including early childhood programs, parenting programs, health and wellbeing activities, and allied health services.
- *Increasing the number of Aboriginal people with a tertiary qualification to 70% by 2031* – the Centre will enable alternative education, literacy and numeracy programs, education completion mentoring, and create lifelong learning spaces. The availability of child care at the Centre will assist in making re-engagement with education possible for families that have primary care responsibilities for children and no other support options.
- *Increasing the proportion of Aboriginal youth in employment, education or training to 67% by 2031* – The Centre will provide a space for the delivery of alternative education and re-engagement programs. It will have an intentional focus on early engagement and offer tailored programs and services that ease the transition into and through education, training and employment. The location in proximity to the school precinct enhances the Centre’s capacity to engage with young people and improve youth outcomes.
- *Reducing the rate of Aboriginal young people (10-17 years) in detention by at least 30% by 2031* – The Centre will provide a space for targeted diversion programs, inter-agency collaboration, coordinated holistic case management, family programs and services, and access to support services.
- *Increasing social and emotional wellbeing and significantly reducing death by suicide among Aboriginal people* – this will be achieved with the aid of the services already mentioned, as well as the Centre being used for peer support networks and access to mentors and role models.
- *Increasing the number and strength of Aboriginal languages being spoken* – this will be facilitated by the planned use of the Centre by MEEDAC for the delivery of cultural parenting workshops, traditional practices, storytelling sessions with Elders and promoting cultural awareness (refer to Attachment B – Letters of Support).

The Australian Government's Regional Investment Framework

The Regional Investment Framework is a new approach to how the Australian Government delivers regional investment – valuing local voices and priorities, being informed by and building the evidence, operating with flexibility, integrity and transparency, and coordinating across governments to make investments work better for regions. It provides an integrated and coordinated framework for regional development regardless of a region's economic circumstances.

This project aligns with two of the Framework's guiding principles being:

- Realising the Government's ambition of "no one held back and no one left behind" requires specific regional investment across all portfolios.
- Place-based decision making that draws on the experience of local government alongside regional bodies must guide investment in our regions.

It also supports achievement of three of the four priority focus areas being:

- Investing in People - Putting people at the forefront of growth, with local voices influencing decision making.
 - Listening to local voices and partnering with communities.
 - Targeted investment in skills, education, training and local leadership capacity.
- Investing in Places - Targeted and place-based investment that enables communities to thrive.
 - Supporting adaptive, accessible, sustainable and liveable regions.
 - Delivering infrastructure where and when it is needed.
- Investing in Services - Investment in regional services with a focus on improving quality and accessibility.
 - Enhancing connectivity, accessibility and equity of services.

National Preventive Health Strategy 2021-2030

This strategy presents an opportunity for addressing the increasing burden of disease, reducing health inequity and increasing preparedness for emerging health threats.

Two of the priority populations requiring support to increase their health outcomes that are addressed in the strategy and also served by the proposed Centre in Morawa are:

- rural, regional and remote people
- Aboriginal people.

The preventive health strategy is based on 6 principles, and of particular note are the strong ties between the project and the principles of:

- Multi-sector collaboration - Integrated and coordinated action by different sectors at all levels, within and outside of health.
- Community participation - Place-based and codesigned approaches are led by communities.
- The equity lens - Preventive health action considers the inequities that exist across Australia and promotes equitable access to health care that is culturally safe and tailored to diverse community needs.

One of the 3 elements of the strategy is to boost action in certain focus areas. The proposed project directly contributes to action in 5 of the 7 focus areas identified being:

- Reducing tobacco use and nicotine addiction
- Improving access to and the consumption of a healthy diet
- Increasing physical activity
- Reducing alcohol and other drug harm
- Promoting and protecting mental health.

The programs, services, facilities, opportunities for collaboration, and access to information and referrals provided by the Centre form a key means of achieving the national preventive health strategy in Morawa.

Regional Development Australia (Mid West and Gascoyne) Mid West Regional Blueprint

Regional Development Australia works to strengthen regional economies, promote economic opportunity and build capacity. The Mid West Blueprint provides a '2050 growth and development strategy for an intergenerational, global, innovative and dynamic Mid West region that attracts and retains talent and investment'.

Two of the five key pillars for realising the 2050 vision are directly addressed by the proposed Centre. The project will assist in achieving:

- Highly Desirable Communities
- Knowledge and Learning

The Centre will contribute to creating a vibrant and inclusive community through the provision of infrastructure and services that support the social fabric and wellbeing of the Morawa community. Through early intervention and the delivery and promotion of a diverse range of education and training opportunities, the Centre will support the vision of a community that is well-educated, trained and skilled which are key drivers of economic growth, a higher standard of living, and social cohesion.

The National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032 - The First Action Plan (2023 - 2027)

The action plan outlines how all parts of society must work together to end gender-based violence, via 4 domains: prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing.

It includes several actions that the Centre and its integrated services, education programs, mentoring and community spaces will support:

- Action 3: Increasing the delivery of quality services, activities and programs across the four domains.
- Action 4: Building the capacity of services to better support victim-survivors for long-term recovery, health and wellbeing (this includes children and youth).
- Action 7: Working with Aboriginal people to ensure policies and services meet their needs.
- Action 8: Providing age-appropriate programs across all four domains, informed by children and young people, that are culturally safe, to intervene early to address violence supportive behaviours and support recovery and healing from trauma.

Playgroup Australia Strategic Plan 2023-2025

Playgroups have a vital role in providing play-based learning and social-emotional development for children, social support for parents and carers, and connections that build communities.

Playgroup Australia has a vision for every child and family in Australia to have access to a quality playgroup. Projects such as the Morawa Centre are critical to realising this vision.

2.3.2 Alignment with State Government Policies and Organisations

WA 2050, People Place and Prosperity

WA 2050 aims to create a shared understanding of emerging issues affecting Western Australia's future. The issues fall under the themes of people, place and prosperity.

The emerging issues of particular relevance for both the Mid West Region and Morawa, WA are:

1. Decolonising Indigenous health: How and why WA can take the lead.
2. Preparing WA's social Infrastructure for the next 20 years.
3. Shaping the untapped career potentials of WA underprivileged.

This project seeks to address these issues through:

- Providing formal and informal education, training and life skills programs starting from early childhood, to help inspire and support the next generation of the workforce
- Better service integration and collaboration
- Intergenerational and cross-cultural learning
- Co-designing the facility with Aboriginal communities.

Mid West Development Commission Strategic Focus

The Mid West Development Commission has five key areas of strategic focus which respond to regional need and align with Government priorities and the legislative framework. The Centre will contribute to the achievement of two of these strategic priorities, being:

- Regional Liveability - Making our region a good place to live is critical for the wellbeing of regional residents and underpins labour market and community resilience.
- Aboriginal Empowerment and Prosperity - Partnerships and engagement with Aboriginal people, strong accountability and culturally responsive working will enable our region to realise a 'future in which all Aboriginal people, families and communities are empowered to live good lives and choose their own futures from a secure foundation.'

Department of Communities Strategic Direction Statement 2022-2025

The statement outlines the department's purpose as: "Working together to provide responsive services that build safe, inclusive and empowered communities."

Of the 5 strategic directions designed to fulfill this purpose, the 2 most clearly aligned with this project are:

- Integrate supports for children, individuals, families and communities.
- Tackle problems early for the best return on investment. Earlier intervention and prevention improves long-term outcomes for the individuals, children and families we serve, often at a lower cost.

The intentional design of the Centre to create opportunities for collaboration in a space that is inclusive, culturally appropriate, and welcoming goes a long way towards achieving these strategic directions.

WA At Risk Youth Strategy, 2022–2027

When youth face multiple and complex problems in their daily lives they are at greater risk of not being able to transition positively into adulthood.

This strategy seeks to improve long-term outcomes for at risk young people across 4 focus areas, and the proposed project has direct alignment with all 4:

1. At risk youth are identified and responded to through an integrated, collaborative cross-agency approach.
2. At risk young people can access early, timely and targeted interventions to improve long-term outcomes (including targeted initiatives to address health, mental health and education needs and training and employment pathways.)
3. Strengthen the services system, including reducing barriers to seeking help or staying engaged with support services.
4. Aboriginal at-risk young people have access to culturally responsive, place-based supports that are culturally safe and secure.

The design, services and programs of the Centre are closely aligned with these focus areas, and its focus on engaging and supporting the entire family (not just parents and young children) will provide an environment where opportunities to help improve outcomes for youth are maximised.

WA Health Promotion Strategic Framework 2022-2026

The strategic framework seeks to achieve equitable and sustainable improvements in health behaviours, and environments so that Western Australians lead healthier lives.

The design of the Centre has strong alignment with all of the 4 guiding principles:

- Comprehensive, whole-of-population approach
- Intervening early and throughout life
- Promoting equity and inclusivity
- Collaborative partnerships and strategic coordination.

Through the provision of integrated services and programs, early childhood programs, early intervention programs, life skills education and access to information, the Centre will be vital to ensuring many of the priority areas can be addressed in Morawa. These actions include:

- Increase the knowledge and skills necessary to choose healthy food and drinks
- Encourage and support active living across the lifespan
- Increase availability and accessibility of quality, affordable and nutritious food for all
- Promote environments that support healthy eating and active living
- Increase community awareness of alcohol-related health risks and harms
- Prevent and delay uptake of alcohol by children and young people
- Develop supportive environments to reduce demand for alcohol
- Reduce tobacco use in WA, particularly among populations at higher risk of harm due to tobacco use.

This project acts as a key conduit for the realisation of health promotion principles in Morawa.

Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy for WA 2012-2029

The strategy directs the WA government's efforts to ensure that Aboriginal people, families and communities are empowered to live good lives and choose their own futures from a secure foundation.

Of the 10 key elements of the strategy, the 4 that this project most closely supports are:

- Investing in building strengths, prevention, and earlier intervention
- Supporting and promoting culture
- Reshaping Government services and systems to work with culture
- Partnerships, shared decision-making, and engagement.

This project will provide integrated, culturally safe services, including early-intervention, intentionally designed with input and leadership from Aboriginal communities to ensure they directly align with the strategy.

Playgroup WA Strategic Plan

Construction of the Centre will support Playgroup WA's planned increase in access to playgroups for all families - including Aboriginal, and regional and remote families.

This goal is based on the principles that:

- the first 1,000 days are the most critical development window for children
- playgroup provides a great opportunity to enhance community life.

2.3.3 Alignment with Regional and Local Policies

Shire of Morawa Strategic Community Plan 2022- 2033

In August 2022, the Shire of Morawa formally adopted the Shire of Morawa Strategic Community Plan 2022- 2033. The Plan's vision is for Morawa to be a welcoming and inclusive community that embraces what makes it unique, offering liveability, variety, and opportunity for all.

The key deliverables in the Plan that this project will directly contribute towards achieving are:

- Champion Inclusion and Engagement
- Invest in Socialisation and Belonging
- Enhance Partnerships and Alliances
- Enhance Health Service Provisions
- Foster Passion and Belief in Younger Residents

Ten Year Education and Training Plan for Morawa Shire and wider North Midlands Region

In 2016, the Shire of Morawa with other partners developed a Ten-Year Education and Training Plan for Morawa Shire and wider North Midlands Region. The key issues identified were early childhood education, student welfare, aboriginal education, and infrastructure, with a major recommendation being the development of a Child, Parent and Family Centre in Morawa.

With continued communication and consultation, the need for a broader focus than education and a greater emphasis on early intervention and collaboration between diverse program and service providers became clear. This project aligns directly with the report's recommendations by delivering a multi-use Child and Family Centre that will facilitate community connectedness and social cohesion through the delivery of a range of locally relevant programs and services including education and training.

Mid West Regional Children's Services Plan

The Mid West Children's Services Plan proposes a way towards a sustainable Education and Care Sector, focusing on community managed services, through ways that support the viability of all education and care and early childhood services in the region.

This project assists in achieving the objectives of the Plan in the following ways:

- Collaboration - Strengthen ECEC and early years' services working together for collective solutions and impact.
- Sustainable ECEC Sector - Support ECEC services' capacity through sustainable governance, leadership and operational models.
- Access to Services - Enhance access to responsive children's services for families and children in all communities.

Regional Australia Institute – Liveability in Australian Mid-Sized Towns

Research undertaken by the Regional Australia Institute in 2019 and 2020 found that people in mid-sized regional towns associate the concept of liveability with good public services, a wide variety of community activities, and easy access to nature.

This project broadly aligns to five of the six of the key identifiers of regional liveability being:

- Easy access to an array of health services – this project creates space in a community facility for the provision of allied health services that would otherwise not be readily available
- Education services – the Centre will provide critical pathways for engagement and inclusion that will support a seamless transition from early childhood through primary and secondary school, and open up opportunities and possibilities for alternate education pathways including for mature aged students.

- **Amenity** – the Centre will facilitate the cultural aspect of amenity through strong connections with First Nations people and the offering of a range of cultural activities including storytelling sessions with local/regional Elders.
- **Connection to Community** – the Centre will facilitate social inclusion and community connection in a friendly and welcoming environment.
- **Lifestyle and Opportunity** – the Centre will provide opportunities to reassess personal values so as to focus on “the important things” that help bring about a better quality of life.

2.4 Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation

The Shire of Morawa has undertaken extensive stakeholder consultation as part of the planning for this project. The Needs Analysis undertaken in 2022 included a survey of parents of children attending Morawa District High School from kindergarten to Year 6, a site visit to the existing family day care service in Morawa, identification and consultation with all childcare providers within a one-hour drive of Morawa and targeted consultation with key stakeholders including the school, Shire, hospital, Ngala and REED.

The Child and Family Centre working group established in 2023 included representatives from the Morawa District High School, Morawa District High School Parents and Citizens Association, Mid West Employment and Economic Development Aboriginal Corporation (MEEDAC), Morawa Play Group and the Shire of Morawa.

Numerous letters of support have been provided in support of the project, including from Regional Development Australia (RDA) Mid West-Gascoyne, Mid West Development Commission, Morawa District High School, MEEDAC, Morawa District High School P&C, Morawa Playgroup, REED and the current family day care provider (see Attachment B – Letters of Support).

The operator of Morawa Family Daycare Services, Theresa English, wholeheartedly supports this project and believes it will significantly enhance the quality of care provided to the children and families in the community. Ms English has observed considerable unmet demand for childcare in the community and states that, as the town's sole provider, it is incredibly challenging to meet this demand. She says she regularly has parents approach her for places, but she is forced to turn them away because she is at full capacity. Ms English also highlights the challenges of operating a family day care service in her existing premises, including outdoor toilets, a leaking roof and general wear and tear on the building.

Morawa District High School Principal Tonia Carslake explains the school currently has a 42% Aboriginal population, who are at risk of not thriving at school due to lack of school readiness programs. Ms Carslake states early childhood assessments conducted in kindergarten and pre-primary demonstrate that up to 35% of students in the area are developmentally at risk. She says Morawa District High School continues to focus on developing a strong early intervention program for students coming into school who are not school ready, however the community would greatly benefit from more support services targeting the 0-4 age group to further support their development. Ms Carslake confirms the school would prefer the Centre to be located near the Morawa District High School site as this would ensure vulnerable families in the school community have access to specialist parenting programs and aligned health services, as well as quality early childhood and after school care.

The General Manager of MEEDAC, Mary Ripper, expressed her strong endorsement of the project, stating the initiative marked an important advancement in addressing the specific needs of the Indigenous community by offering a variety of services that will greatly benefit families and children in the Morawa area. Ms Ripper says the programs to be offered at the Centre are critical for preserving and passing on cultural knowledge and ensuring that Indigenous heritage continues to thrive. She believes that by introducing children to early learning environments, the Centre will lay a strong foundation for their future academic and personal development, and that offering culturally relevant workshops and activities will not only enrich the educational experiences of families but also reduce the stigma often associated with childcare and early education.

Morawa District High School P&C Acting President Aimee North says the Centre is very much needed to support the families of the school community and will also be a major attraction when families consider moving to Morawa. Ms North states the Centre will allow more parents to engage in local employment and also allow parents of school age children to work longer hours if required, knowing their children will be in safe care before or after school. She says the additional meeting rooms and communal spaces in the Centre would be a welcome addition as they can be used for services that would usually utilise rooms at the school, such as the child health nurse or visiting speech pathologist,

while the meeting room could also be used for P&C meetings with the additional play space to occupy children during meetings.

Morawa Playgroup President Nadine Payne explains the only form of childcare currently available in town is a family day care, located in a run-down property, and with limited capacity. She states that with such limited childcare spaces available this stops many local mothers from returning to work until their children are in kindergarten, which in turn places strain on local businesses who find it difficult to attract employees. Ms Payne confirms the Playgroup will support the Centre if it is constructed, in addition to the Centre being used as a centralised social space for community members as an alternative to playgrounds during the hot and dry summers.

RDA Mid West-Gascoyne Director of Regional Development Mark Holdsworth explains the prohibitive distances to major regional centres in the Mid West means small shires such as Morawa must establish their own community facilities, which are an important part of ongoing sustainability and the retention and attraction of residents. Mr Holdsworth says the Centre will help to minimise barriers to workforce participation and recognises that available and flexible quality early childhood education is a crucial enabler to broad based workforce participation.

The Mid West Development Commission's Chief Executive Officer Nils Hay confirms the project aligns with the Commission's Strategic Plan, namely section 1.3.3 'Facilitate workforce development for regional economic growth' and section 1.3.6 'Raising regional quality of life'.

2.5 Project Deliverables

This project will deliver the outputs and outcomes as detailed in the tables below.

	Outputs	Performance Measure	Performance Measure method
1	A new Morawa Child and Family Centre as per <i>Section 2.2 Project Description</i>	Completed in accordance with timeframes, budget, scope, building codes and regulations.	- Photographs - Builder's practical completion certificate - Inspection by Project Manager to certify works comply with tender documents

Table 1 - Outputs

	Outcomes	Performance Measure	Performance Measure method
1	Multi-use infrastructure that benefits the community by improving access, equity and social inclusion.	The completed Centre provides additional ECEC places; rooms for community events; Indigenous cultural workshops and family services; and informal play and kitchen spaces to promote social interaction for parents and children.	- ECEC enrolment numbers - Facility bookings and visitation data - User surveys
2	Enhanced amenity and liveability in the Shire	The completed Centre provides a safe and comfortable indoor play space for children and social space for parents.	- Facility bookings and visitation data - User surveys
3	Increased workforce participation	More Morawa parents are engaged in the workforce.	- ABS employment data - Job vacancy data - ECEC enrolment data and user surveys

4	Improved child development outcomes	More children are 'school-ready' and less are considered developmentally vulnerable.	• Australian Early Development Census data • ECEC enrolment numbers • Facility bookings and visitation data
5	Enhanced support for Indigenous culture and heritage	The Centre is used for Indigenous cultural workshops, storytelling and culturally appropriate early learning and child and family services.	• Facility bookings and visitation data • User surveys
6	Increased Indigenous employment	The Centre employs Indigenous employees and trainees.	• Centre employment records
7	Improved access to child health and family services	The Centre is used to provide child health and family services.	• Meeting room bookings • User surveys

Table 2 - Outcomes

2.6 Cost Benefit Analysis

Considerable research is available that proves the importance of early intervention in preventing or reducing socio-economic and health risks that often present as a child starts school and increase in prevalence as a child reaches adolescence. As noted earlier in this document, results from the 2021 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) demonstrate that 40% of Morawa/Perenjori children are vulnerable in one or more domain and 20% are vulnerable in two or more domains. This is nearly double the rate of developmentally vulnerable children in Western Australia as a whole.

Developmental issues in early life are a reliable indicator of poor health and socio-economic outcomes during adolescence and later in life, including vulnerability related to mental health, misuse of alcohol and other drugs, homelessness, and risk-taking behaviours among young people. Whilst not diminishing the impacts on the life of the individual person, there is also a significant economic impact when a child misses out on early intervention, fails to thrive, and becomes increasingly disengaged and disenfranchised. This presents in a reduced capacity to enter the workforce, a reliance on income support, a need for housing assistance, above average usage of healthcare and hospital interventions that may otherwise have been preventable, and a need for other complex and tertiary services that are publicly funded.

The Centre will provide an appropriate space to address the existing vulnerability and disadvantage being faced by children and their families in Morawa. It will provide a space for early intervention where people and families of all ages and stages can engage in programs, services and supports, free of stigma, that will equip them with the tools and support they need to be active participants in improving their quality of life. By growing the capacity and resilience of the community, and by creating a safe and inclusive pathway from the first years of life, into early childhood education and care programs, followed by a supported and seamless entry into school, the Centre will make a direct contribution to improving economic outcomes within the Shire.

The social, and therefore by default economic benefits of community hubs, such as the Morawa Child and Family Centre, were arguably best summarised by a report published by Community Hubs Australia (CHA) in 2023. CHA engaged Deloitte Access Economics to complete a social return on investment evaluation of the Australian Community Hubs program. What the evaluation found was that a much higher than anticipated \$65.7 million of social benefits were derived in 2023 alone through people engaging with community hubs. This was calculated as being a return of \$3.50 on every \$1.00 invested. The report noted that while community hub participation was of high value for all people within the community, the capacity of community hubs to include and engage people from diverse backgrounds, and to reduce their levels of isolation and vulnerability was of note. This is of particular importance to the Morawa Centre given the previously noted high percentage of First Nations people in the Shire and the extent of social isolation experienced by many people living within the Shire. The table below provides a concise snapshot of the social benefits identified by Deloitte in the development of the report.

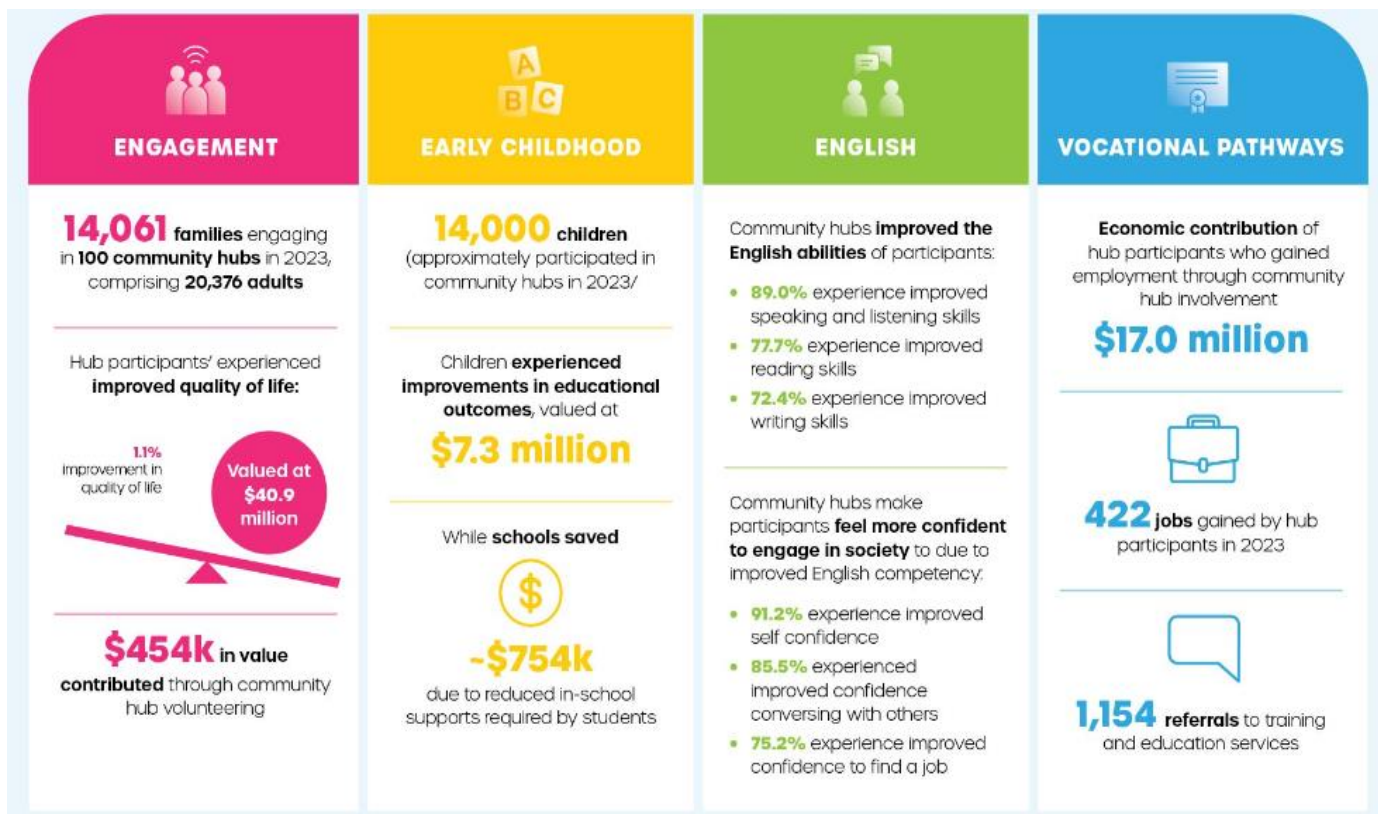


Figure 6 - Community Hub Social Return on Investment Summary

In September 2024 the Shire commissioned a Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) for the Centre project (see Attachment C – Cost Benefit Analysis). The CBA found that the project is expected to generate a range of economic benefits, including:

- Increased workforce participation.
- Increased local wages through closing of the gender-based pay gap.
- Creation of new employment opportunities.
- Ability to attract and retain residents.
- Increased turnover for local businesses and increased Gross Regional Product (GRP).
- Reduction in long-term social costs, including costs associated with education, medical expenses, child protection and crime.
- Increase in property values.
- Residual value of the building.

It also found that the Centre is anticipated to contribute to several positive social outcomes:

- Improved long-term educational and employment outcomes, particularly for Aboriginal and disadvantaged children, improving their long-term prospects.
- Benefits from social inclusion and cohesion within a safe and supportive environment.
- Stronger community ties, cultural education and appreciation of Indigenous traditions.
- Further improved health outcomes in the long term.

The CBA found that the project had a Net Present Value (NPV) ranging between \$17.10 million at the 4% discount rate and \$11.81 million at the 10% discount rate. Any value greater than \$0 indicates that a project will generate more benefits than costs, and with a positive NPV at all discount rates, this project is expected to provide a positive economic impact and social return to the community.

Analysis also indicated that the project's Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) would be 5.78 at the 4% discount rate, 5.12 at the 7% discount rate, and 4.65 at the 10% discount rate. Any ratio above 1 means that the project's benefits exceed the costs with a ratio above 2 indicating that a project is particularly robust. This project achieved a BCR above 4 at all three discount rates, achieving above 5 at the 4% discount rate. This demonstrates that the project presents a very strong return on investment.

Economic impact on the Gross Regional Product (GRP) arising from the project was considered significant. It was estimated that the initial investment of \$3.61 million could be expected to multiply by a factor of 1.14 leading to an overall economic impact output for the Shire of \$4.12 million. The project is also expected to add \$1.51 million to the Shire's GRP through increased business activities and capital works.

The employment impact of a project is also a key indicator of its social and economic benefit. The CBA found that this project would be expected to generate 7 new jobs in the Shire of Morawa during the construction stage with a further 2 ongoing jobs being created to assist in the ongoing management of, and delivery of programs and service at, the Centre.

2.7 Assessment of Options

Option 1 – Do Nothing

By doing nothing, none of the benefits of this project will be realised. Morawa will continue to have a lack of ECEC places which will prevent parents from returning to the workforce and make it difficult for employers to attract and retain new staff. Early childhood development outcomes will continue to be poor, and Aboriginal families will not have access to culturally appropriate early learning and child and family services. Isolated parents and children will not have a safe and comfortable indoor play space where they can come together for social interaction and support.

Option 2 – Early Childhood Education and Care Centre only

Consultation undertaken to assess the need for this project identified that while there is a critical need for more formal early childhood education and care places in Morawa, there is also a need for an informal space where parents and children can drop in to socialise and interact. There is also a lack of suitable spaces in Morawa to cater for community meetings, Indigenous cultural workshops and child health and family services. While a standalone early childhood education and care centre would meet the need for more ECEC places in Morawa, it would not provide the community with these additional and much-needed benefits.

Option 3 – Child and Family Centre at 26 Prater Street

This is the preferred option for the reasons outlined in this business case.

Option 4 – Child and Family Centre at alternative location

The Project Working Group was consulted about the preferred location and design of a future Child and Family Centre in Morawa. A few options were considered, including redeveloping the existing site, subdividing part of the school land, and using an old shire hall that is state heritage listed.

After considering factors such as connectivity through proximity to the kindergarten and Morawa District High School, the potential for the best level of integration and future flexibility, cost and the potential for speed and ease of development, the Working Group unanimously recommended the Shire-owned vacant block at 26 Prater Street Morawa as the preferred site.

2.8 Funding Strategy

The total project cost is estimated to be \$3,284,775 (excl. GST). The project is intended to be funded through contributions from the Shire of Morawa's existing cash reserves and the Federal Government's Growing Regions Program. As the Shire of Morawa is a 'remote' location the Growing Regions Program guidelines categorise the Shire as Group 2, meaning up to 70% of eligible project costs can be funded through the program.

Funding contributions are hoped to consist of:

Source of Funds	Amount (\$)	Status of Funding Commitment
Shire of Morawa	1,050,000	Secured and received
Growing Regions Program	2,234,775	Subject to funding application
Total	\$3,284,775	

Table 3 – Source of Funds

Evidence of the secured financial commitment from the Shire is provided at Attachment D - Evidence of Financial Contribution.

2.8.1 Project Budget

The total project cost is estimated to be \$3,284,775 (excl. GST). This estimate is based on pre-tender quantity surveyor (QS) estimates obtained in September 2024. A copy of this cost estimate, which details the breakdown of the cost of works, is provided at Attachment E – Project Cost Estimate.

Item of Expenditure	Budget (\$)
Siteworks	363,700
Building construction	1,538,100
External services	181,100
Regional loading	520,725
Design and construction contingencies	195,300
Furniture and play equipment	50,000
Headworks	15,750
Professional fees	312,500
Cost escalation (3.4%)	107,600
Total Budget	\$3,284,775

Table 4 – Project Budget

2.8.2 Sustainability and Ongoing Viability

On completion of construction, the Shire of Morawa will enter into a 10-year peppercorn lease with ACECQA Approved Provider REED for management of the early childhood education and care component of the Centre. REED will manage the ECEC service on a break-even basis with ongoing funding from the Shire for basic maintenance support and provision of staff accommodation. The Shire of Morawa will be responsible for management and operational funding of the Family Centre component and will hire the facility/meeting rooms out to the providers of services.

REED has a proven track record of exemplary governance and effective management of ECEC services in small regional and rural communities with small, variable population of children of preschool age. It is the only Western Australian Approved Provider providing services exclusively in regional areas. REED is currently the ACECQA Approved Provider for the centres in the Mid West towns of Perenjori, Mingenew, Northampton and Kalbarri.

The Shire will collaborate closely with REED, Morawa District High School, health services and MEEDAC to manage shared use of the Family Centre areas for community activities including classes, workshops, counselling, health

services, and other services such as parenting support and education to improve the capabilities and wellness of families across the community.

Confidence in the ongoing viability and sustainability of the Morawa Child and Family Centre is underpinned by:

- successful operation by REED of well managed ECEC centres in Perenjori and Mingenew which have similar socio-economic drivers, similar or smaller populations and fewer sub-regional services and employment opportunities than Morawa.
- the increasing importance of a contemporary ECEC centre and quality service for attracting and retaining staff for essential services such as education, health and police and for attracting migrants and their families to relocate to regional areas.
- evidence of the increasing family preference for centre-based ECEC over family day care.
- REED's demonstrated commitment and success in managing small ECEC services in small communities with fluctuating cohorts of children.
- consultation with existing visiting child health service providers who advise the current rooms at the school are not suitable for their purposes.
- consultation with community groups such as the school P&C, playgroup and MEEDAC with regard to intended use of the facility.
- the Shire's experience in managing similarly sized assets such as the youth centre, provide an understanding of the expected ongoing operational and maintenance costs of the facility.

The expected annual income of the Centre is detailed below:

Income Item	Amount	Comments
Lease to REED	\$4 (\$1 per term)	The ECEC component of the facility would be leased to a not for profit provider for a peppercorn rent. The provider would cover the costs of delivering the ECEC service and receive associated income.
Facility Hire	\$2000	The Shire will look to keep the facility hire fee low or free for certain groups or community members. It is assumed the facility will be hired one or two days a week by paying users offering services, such as allied health service providers.
Total	\$2004	

Table 5 – Expected Income

The ongoing annual management costs of the facility are provided below:

Expense	Amount	Comments
Cleaning (156 hours @ \$40 per hour)	\$ 6,240	Shire staff wages and overheads, assuming the facility is cleaned 2-4 times a week depending on usage.
Utilities	\$ 5,000	Power, water, internet etc. based on facilities of similar size.
Garden Maintenance (80 hours @ \$40 per hour)	\$ 3,200	Shire staff wages and overheads assuming the garden areas will need to be maintained 1-2 times per day
Total	\$14,440	

Table 6 – Expected Costs

The Shire of Morawa acknowledges that the income from the Centre will not be sufficient to fully recover ongoing maintenance and operating costs, as is the case with most local government community facilities. These costs will be funded as part of the Shire's annual budget process and accounted for in the Shire's Strategic Asset Management Plan

and Long Term Financial Plan. For the last 2 years the Shire have budgeted \$50,000 annually towards the project planning and development of the Child and Family Centre project. Once the project is completed, the Shire will allocate these design funds to operation of the centre with no budgetary impact. As such, the Shire is able to fund all ongoing costs.

2.9 Risk Analysis

The Shire of Morawa has effective governance in place for the identification and management of risks in projects such as this. The Shire's Risk Management policy mandates the Shire's commitment to risk management and defines the fundamental principles that will be put in place to establish and maintain a robust, integrated, and effective risk management system across all strategic and operational functions and projects. The Shire accepts that not all risks can be eliminated, but they must all be managed to maximise opportunities, whilst minimising potential negative exposures.

The Shire's stance on risk is that it is not the responsibility of a specific area but a shared responsibility that spans the entire organisation. Being risk aware and appropriately managing risk is viewed as a fundamental component of good business practice.

The following seven key risk principles have been adopted to ensure that organisational risk is observed, understood, embraced, and addressed in a continuous organisation wide system of risk management.

1. Statutory Compliance – Compliance with Regulation 17 of the Local Government (Audit) Regulations 1996.
2. Working towards Industry Best Practice - Alignment with the principles and practises as detailed in the Risk Management Standard - AS/NZS ISO 31000:2018 Risk Management - Guidelines.
3. Strategic Integration – Integrating risk management across the Shire's strategic documents including the Corporate Business Plan, Strategic Community Plan, Project and Event Planning, and other Strategic documents as relevant.
4. Decision Making - Identification, analysis, and response to risk must be addressed across all strategic and operational decision-making functions at Council and Executive Level – specifically incorporating risk analysis into Council reports.
5. Understanding - Executive Policies and procedures that clearly articulate employee obligations and business rules when reporting and registering risk. Training provided to employees and Councillors/committee members in risk management.
6. Organisation Culture – Develop a culture of risk identification and analysis in any given situation.
7. Tools and Processes - Tools and processes that are fit for purpose and accessible to all staff to ensure risk is identified, analysed, evaluated, recorded, and mitigated appropriately.

The Shire's Risk Management Framework works through a simple five step process that aligns with best practice principles.

1. Risk Identification – the Council wants to identify and manage as many high-level risks as possible. To achieve this goal the whole organisation must actively work to identify risks across the Shire's broad range of activities.
 - a. Strategic Risk workshops will be conducted at least annually involving the Audit Committee, and the Executive Leadership Team
 - b. The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for developing appropriate Executive Policies and procedures to manage the identification of operational risks
2. Risk Analysis – to appropriately manage risks they must be ranked and prioritised. To measure a risk, the Shire will compare risk consequence against risk likelihood.
3. Risk Evaluation – based on the Risk Analysis the Shire must determine the appropriate response to the Risk based on the Shire's risk appetite, noting that the Shire has a medium risk appetite, generally accepting low level risks with minimal controls but requiring risks deemed High or Extreme to be monitored, evaluated, and mitigated with highly effective controls at the Executive and Audit Committee level.
4. Risk Mitigation – whilst some risks may be inherently low risk and acceptable to the organisation, most risks, even those classified as low impact, can be treated, or controlled. Risk mitigation occurs through the

implementation of controls. Risk mitigation may involve the use of multiple controls from varied categories. Once Risk Mitigation controls have been selected the risk should be re-analysed to ensure controls are sufficient to deem the risk acceptable.

5. Monitor – Risks and their controls should be regularly monitored at intervals set depending on the risk, likelihood, control effectiveness, and other factors to ensure controls and ratings remain relevant, and the organisation remains cognisant of the risks.

The below risk matrix has been used to assess the risks associated with this project and the ongoing use of the new facility.

	CONSEQUENCE				
LIKELIHOOD	Insignificant (1)	Minor (2)	Moderate (3)	Major (4)	Extreme (5)
Rare (1)	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Unlikely (2)	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium
Possible (3)	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium
Likely (4)	Low	Medium	Medium	High	High
Almost certain (5)	Low	Medium	Medium	High	Extreme

Risk	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk Score	Mitigation
All funding not secured	Possible	Extreme	Medium	- Complete project business case to enable other funding applications to be made and sponsorship sought. - Maintain open communication with funding bodies. - Project may need to be re-scoped to reduce costs, thereby reducing benefits.
Cost overruns	Possible	Moderate	Medium	- Contingency allowance is in place - Ensure Tender Contract is comprehensive - Investigate construction cost savings - Seek in-kind contributions

Risk	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk Score	Mitigation
				- Seek additional funding from Shire Council or other sponsorship - Investigate options to reduce scope
Building does not meet required building standards to obtain ACECQA approval for an ECEC service.	Unlikely	Major		- ACECQA/ECEC requirements included in the Architect brief - Building plans reviewed by REED - Construction brief to include ACECQA/ECEC requirements - Project Architect to be responsible for building code and regulatory compliance during the construction phase.
Significant delays due to weather	Possible	Moderate	Medium	- Ensure sufficient contingency in construction schedule - Schedule works taking into account known weather patterns and temperatures - Investigate options to increase staff or rearrange construction schedule to accommodate weather - Ensure all insurances are kept up to date
Contractor/builder bankruptcy	Unlikely	Major	Medium	- Obtain bank guarantees from contractor/builder - Conduct due diligence on financial status of contractor/builder prior to contract award - Ensure all insurances are kept up to date
Quality of work is unacceptable	Unlikely	Moderate	Low	- Ensure Tender Contract is comprehensive and clearly details expectations - Complete reference and due diligence checks prior to contract award - Project Manager regularly completing inspections - Ensure bank guarantees and insurances are in place

Risk	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk Score	Mitigation
Contractors not adhering to safety standards	Unlikely	Major	Medium	• Ensure OSH guidelines are in place • Complete reference and due diligence checks prior to contract award • Project Manager regularly completing inspections • Project Manager to maintain and update Risk Register • Complete site risk assessments/inspect contractors risk assessment records • Ensure contract specifies default notice processes
Unable to source sufficient materials/equipment	Unlikely	Moderate	Low	• Ensure open communication with contractor • Investigate alternate options to source materials/equipment with the contractor • Investigate options to rearrange construction schedule to reduce impact of delay in materials
Natural disaster	Unlikely	Extreme	Medium	• Ensure adequate insurances are in place
Facility User accident or injury	Possible	Moderate	Medium	• Ensure OSH policies and procedures are in place • Ensure OSH training for all facility staff is up to date • Ensure facility use hire agreements include relevant clauses • First Aid equipment and telephone to be accessible to all facility users • All clubs/organisations hiring the facility to have adequate insurance for their activities
Anti-social behaviour, drunkenness etc.	Possible	Minor	Low	• Telephone to be accessible to all facility users • Ensure facility use hire agreements include relevant clauses related to behaviour

Risk	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk Score	Mitigation
Facility fire or other accidental damage	Unlikely	Major	Medium	- Ensure OSH guidelines are in place - Ensure all insurances are kept up to date - Ensure facility use hire agreements include relevant clauses related to use of spaces and any equipment - Telephone to be accessible to all facility users - Emergency Evacuation Plans displayed and processes to be in place
Facility security issues/ Vandalism/Theft	Likely	Minor	Medium	- Ensure facility has sufficient security and lockable areas for valuables, bikes, etc. - Ensure facility use hire agreements include relevant clauses related to securing the facility after use - Limit the amount and number of valuables left in the facility - Adequate lighting for facility - Ensure insurances are kept up to date
General public liability matters	Unlikely	Moderate	Low	- Ensure all insurances are kept up to date - Ensure all staff are inducted/trained in OSH requirements, procedures and policies - Ensure OSH practices are followed - Ensure facility use hire agreements include relevant clauses related to use of the spaces and any equipment - As relevant, ensure appropriate training and instruction is provided to new users in relation to use of spaces and equipment
Facility usage is low	Unlikely	Minor	Low	- Maintain community and key stakeholder engagement and communication to attract and retain users - Liaise with community and key stakeholder groups to determine cause

Risk	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk Score	Mitigation
				Undertake marketing activities
Facility is not culturally appropriate	Unlikely	Major	Medium	- Engagement with First Nations People undertaken during the planning and design stage - Continued engagement during construction to ensure any unanticipated issues are addressed without avoidable delay - First Nations art and other culturally relevant features to be included in the aesthetics and design of the facility
Family Day Care ceases to be delivered prior to building completion or there is a gap in delivery of Family Day Care	Possible	Moderate		- Shire to maintain ongoing engagement with the current provider and offer support to maintain service if required. - Shire to seek assistance from REED to identify suitable alternative temporary options.
Qualified Early Childhood Staff cannot be secured to deliver the ECEC programs and services	Possible	Moderate		- Agreement in place with REED to run the ECEC programs and services including staff recruitment and retention with identification of staff to commence at the commencement of construction - Seek support from MEEDAC to deliver relevant local training during the construction of the Centre
Shire of Morawa and REED are unable to reach agreement on terms for the operation of the ECEC programs and services from the Centre	Rare	Moderate		- An in-principle agreement has already been brokered - Approx 25 successful negotiations have already been completed between REED and regional Shires - General Manager REED to be included on the Project Board to ensure any issues are identified and addressed early
Cost of ECEC at the new Centre is beyond the reach of the community and ECEC income is insufficient	Rare	Moderate		REED is experienced in managing centres with fluctuations in enrolments and adopts a staff:child ratio approach to manage fee affordability

Risk	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk Score	Mitigation
to sustain the programs and services				- Eligible community members will be assisted to register for Child Care Support payments. - Ongoing communication during construction will encourage early enrolments and promote available programs and services
Technology/Data not fit-for-purpose	Unlikely	Moderate	Low	- IT infrastructure and cybersecurity measures to be addressed during construction and fit out - User-group input included in the planning process - Protections for events such as power failures addressed during construction and fit out

Table 7 - Risk Assessment



3 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

3.1 Project Timeframe and Key Milestones

Main Activities / Milestone	Milestone Date
Prebuild activities and siteworks commence	February 2025
Building construction commences	October 2025
Construction complete	July 2026
Fit out and landscaping complete	October 2026
Building occupation	October 2026
Project acquittal	December 2026

Table 8 – Key Milestones

3.2 Communication Plan

In collaboration with REED as the future Approved Provider of the ECEC service, the Shire will adopt a considered approach to ongoing communication about the progress of the project. In the first instance this will include:

- updates to parents via REED and school newsletters (ongoing)
- parent meetings convened by REED staff
- updates to the broader community via the Shire website (ongoing)

Section 2.4 *Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation* details the communications undertaken in the development of the project to date. The communication management approach and the communications requirements for the implementation of this project are detailed in the tables below.

Stakeholder	Level of Interest	Level of Influence	Comments
Shire Council and Management	H	H	Make policy and funding decisions and have the ultimate authority over the project
Project Team	H	H	Responsible for the day-to-day management of the project. Bring expertise in specialist areas. Contact point for all project queries
Project Working Group	H	H	Oversees direction and progress of project
Facility potential user groups	H	M	May have specific project requirements to enable use.
Community	M	M	Need to be informed of the project and its progress
Funding bodies	H	H	Major stakeholder. Specific grant requirements need to be met.

Table 9 - Stakeholders

The key communications types and frequency proposed for each stakeholder is detailed in the table below.

Communications Type	Description	Frequency	Format	Stakeholders	Responsibility
Project Status Report	Report detailing the status of the project	Weekly	Email	Council; Project Working Group	Project Manager
Project Team Meeting	Meeting to discuss project actions, review status report	Weekly	In person	Project Team	Project Manager
Technical Design Review	Review of technical designs	As needed	Email	Project Team and consultants	Project Manager
Social Media updates	Short project updates	Monthly	Social Media platforms	Community; Facility users	Project Manager
Shire newsletter	Short project updates within the broader Shire newsletter	Monthly	Online In-print	Community; Facility users	Project Manager

Table 10 – Communications Plan

3.3 Project Management and Governance

The Shire of Morawa has a proven track record for the successful delivery of capital works projects. Each year capital works projects to the value of approx. \$5 million are delivered on time, on budget and to a high level of quality.

The Shire's approach to asset management results in an annual program of building refurbishment and asset renewal projects being delivered, which in recent years has included upgrades and improvements to the aerodrome, cemetery, recreation centre, and function rooms.

Each year approx. \$2 million is directed towards the Shire's road construction program with the majority of these projects being scoped, managed and delivered by the Shire.

Examples of recent non-routine capital and construction projects that have been successfully planned and delivered by the Shire include:

- Caravan Park Camp Kitchen

All aspects of this project including initial scoping, planning and construction were managed by the Shire. At a total cost of \$200K, the project delivered a brand-new camp kitchen including concrete pad and steel structure, and internal kitchen fit out.

- Renovation of Old Road Board Building

This \$500K multi-year upgrade to a State Heritage listed building included internal and external improvements, the construction of a storage unit in the courtyard to service the facility and the town hall, and the construction of a disability accessible access ramp and bathroom to achieve compliance with building and disability access codes. The Shire's project manager oversaw the work of the renovation contractors and worked with an Architect to meet heritage guidelines.

- Renovation of Golf and Bowling Club

At a total project cost of \$400K, the focus of this project was a holistic upgrade to a 1960s built facility. The project resulted in the renovation of a commercial kitchen and installation of new air conditioning. The Shire managed a range of contractors including painters, electricians, carpenters, plumbers, and air conditioner technicians.

- Construction of Disability Accessible bathrooms at the Caravan Park

For the delivery of this \$250K project, the Shire undertook a tender process to source a suitably qualified contractor to construct 3 new disability accessible bathroom units at the Caravan Park. The Shire acted as superintendent for the project and managed all deliverables to the required level of quality, on time and within budget.

Once funding is secured, a project management framework similar to the PRINCE2 methodology and a Project Board will be established. The Shire CEO will fulfill the function of Project Owner and an inhouse contract administrator will be appointed by the Shire to support the project architect with project management and documentation. The Project Board will oversee the final development and implementation phase of the project. Risk identification and management will be a standing item on their meeting agendas, with the ongoing review and management of risks, issues, or variations a key function of this oversight group.

At a minimum, Project Board members will include:

- Shire of Morawa CEO
- Project Architect
- Regional Early Education and Development Inc (REED), General Manager

The Shire's CEO routinely provides strategic oversight of the Shire's capital works and other complex projects and therefore this is a skill set that Council proactively seeks when recruiting and appointing to this position. The current CEO, Scott Wildgoose, has extensive project oversight and management experience in both metropolitan and regional local government projects including managing community engagement, and a range of other stakeholders to achieve positive outcomes. Scott is a qualified PRINCE2 Practitioner, and has project managed the implementation of the LitterBusters system at the City of Rockingham, which was a finalist in a WA Pinnacles business excellence award category. He also project managed the roll out of the three-bin system at both the City of Rockingham and City of Joondalup, with both projects costing over \$6m and involving a complex logistical plan with materials imported from the Eastern States. His regional experience includes project management and strategic oversight of several facility maintenance and renewal projects at both the Shire of Narembeen and Shire of Morawa, with works ranging from \$500K to \$5m. Whilst Scott will be leaving the role of CEO at Morawa in the coming months, the recruitment process for the new CEO will be targeted towards suitable candidates that can demonstrate the successful delivery of projects of a similar size and scope to the planned Morawa Child and Family Centre.

The General Manager of REED will provide the Project Board with specialist knowledge on the early childhood components of the project. REED is committed to making sure that the best quality early childhood education and care services are provided for regional Western Australian children, families and communities. Whilst they have specific qualifications, skill and knowledge relating to early childhood education and care the philosophy of REED, and what is at the heart of their work, is their belief in the importance of families and communities developing partnerships that are built on respect and integrity, with the underlying understanding that "it takes a village to raise a child". REED has been intentionally selected to be part of the Board for several reasons. They have a proven understanding that each regional community is different, and an ability to be flexible and apply their expertise in ways that meet the unique needs of the community they are working with. They are a Child Safe Organisation and are committed to upholding the principles outlined in the Education and Care National Law WA Act (2012), the Child Care Services Act (2007), the Early Years Learning Framework and the Framework for School Aged Care. This will ensure that the project is informed from the perspective of both the best interests of children and their families and from a safety and compliance perspective. REED also has an exceptional reputation for respectful and inclusive engagement of First Nations children and their families.

The project architect was secured as part of a Request for Quote process at the concept design stage and will provide the Project Board with technical skill, construction expertise and an in depth understanding of each of the core components of the Centre's detailed design. The project architect will have day-to-day interactions with the Shire's project manager, working with the Shire's project manager to ensure progression of the project in accordance with the tender specifications and working collaboratively to inform and update the Board.

Brett Atkinson will be the Shire's dedicated project manager. Brett is currently completing a Professional Certificate in Asset Management Planning and has existing qualifications in plumbing and gasfitting, civil plant operations, budget management, and local government project management. He is known for his excellence in project planning and managing teams and stakeholders. Each year Brett manages the Shire's \$2 million road construction projects with responsibilities including planning projects, liaising with contractors, sourcing materials, managing staff, tracking budgets, maintaining records, adhering to timeframes with delivery of projects and stakeholder engagement.

3.4 Procurement Strategy

The Shire's Purchasing Policy ensures a best practice approach to procurement. The Shire is committed to delivering best practice in the purchasing of goods, services and works that align with the principles of transparency, probity and good governance. Procurement activities are undertaken with the objective of achieving the best value outcome in the most practical manner. Shire employees engaged in purchasing activities are required to display the highest standards of ethics and integrity, always acting in an honest and professional manner.

The Shire has established ten procurement principles to drive purchasing activities.

1. Best Value

Price alone will not drive procurement decisions. Price will be assessed alongside other factors including quality, timeliness of service, experience, and lifetime management costs. Best Value assessments always consider the total cost and benefits of ownership, the technical merits and measurable quality of the goods/services being purchased, the financial viability and capacity to supply of the supplier and ensuring a competitive purchasing environment is promoted and maintained.

2. Uniformity

Suppliers, contractors and persons dealing with the Shire are always treated consistently in a fair and equitable manner.

3. Accountability

A fair and equitable competitive purchasing processes that engage potential suppliers impartially, honestly, and consistently is always applied.

4. Full Disclosure

Probity and integrity, including the avoidance of bias and of perceived and actual conflicts of interest is a fundamental requirement of all purchasing activities. Any actual or perceived conflicts of interest are proactively identified, disclosed and appropriately managed.

5. Confidentiality

Any information provided to the Shire by a supplier is treated as commercial-in-confidence and not released unless authorised by the supplier or relevant legislation.

6. Local Economy

Where possible procurement activities promote and foster local economic development by maximising the participation of local businesses. In alignment with the requirement for open and fair competition, local businesses are provided with every opportunity to bid for work. This is achieved without compromise to the principle of Best Value and being cognisant that not all procurement activities will be well matched with the goods and services offered by local businesses.

7. Organisational Awareness

Adequate training will always be provided to employees undertaking purchasing activities.

8. Method

Where possible an electronic transaction with full accountability such as EFT or credit card is used for purchasing activities. All procurement activities are required to be fully traceable, accountable, auditable, and appropriately authorised in line with the Local Government (Financial Management) Regulations 11, 12 and 13.

9. Record

Purchasing activities are always clearly recorded in accordance with the State Records Act 2000 and the Shire of Morawa's Record Keeping Plan so that the process and decision making can easily be reviewed or audited if required.

10. Corporate Social Responsibility

Council recognises that the Shire represents a large purchaser for the Morawa District and as such where possible, whilst always giving due consideration to principle one (Best Value), the Shire tries to use its resources to promote a sense of Corporate Social Responsibility by preferencing organisations that:

- a) Demonstrate a commitment to minimising their environmental impact – energy efficiency, water efficiency, waste reduction etc.
- b) Invest in the capability of the local community
- c) Are a registered WA Disability Enterprise
- d) Are a registered Indigenous or Aboriginal Business

The Shire has a mandatory process in place to govern the Public Tender process. The tender process for this project will be conducted in accordance with this mandatory process and will include the following requirements:

- Before the tender for the project is publicly invited, the Shire will record the decision to invite Tenders in the Tender Register and will determine in writing the criteria for deciding which tender should be accepted.
- An Evaluation Panel comprising at least three members will be established prior to the advertising of the Tender and include a mix of skills and experience relevant to the project.
- A Tender Notice will be advertised in a State-wide publication such as "The West Australian" newspaper. This will be timed to appear preferably on a Wednesday or Saturday.
- The Tender will remain open for at least 14 days after the date the Tender is advertised.
- The Tender Notice will include:
 - a) a brief description of the project and the scope of works being sought;
 - b) information as to where and how Tenders may be submitted;
 - c) the Shire of Morawa Policy Manual;
 - d) the date and time after which Tenders cannot be submitted; and
 - e) a contact person to supply more detailed information if required.

Other parameters that govern all Public Tender processes undertaken by the Shire, including the one that will be conducted for this project include:

- Tenders must not be made available (counter, mail, internet, referral, or other means) without a robust process to ensure the recording of details of all parties who acquire the documentation. If clarifications, addendums or further communication are required prior to the close of Tenders, all potential Tenderers must have equal access to this information in order for the Shire not to compromise its duty to be fair.
- If, after the Tender has been publicly advertised, any changes, variations or adjustments to the Tender document and/or the Conditions of Tender are required, the Shire may vary the initial information by taking reasonable steps to give each person who has sought copies of the Tender documents notice of the variation.
- A Tender response that is not received in full in the required format by the advertised Tender Deadline must be rejected.
- No tenders are to be removed from the Tender Box or opened (read or evaluated) prior to the Tender Deadline.
- Tenders are to be opened in the presence of the Chief Executive Officer's delegated nominee and preferably at least one other Local Government officer. The details of all Tender responses received and opened must be recorded in the Tenders Register. Tender responses are to be opened in accordance with the advertised time and place. There is no obligation to disclose or record tendered prices at the Tender opening, and price information should be regarded as commercial-in-confidence to the Shire. Members of the public are entitled to be present.

- The Tenderer's offer form, price schedule and other appropriate pages from each Tender shall be date stamped and initialled by at least two (2) Local Government officers or representatives present at the opening of Tender responses.
- Each Tenderer shall be notified of the outcome of the Tender following Council resolution or appropriate delegated authority.

For projects of the size and scope of this project, selection of the successful tender will be based on value for money and an assessment of which tender responses are most advantageous to the Shire.

In order to comply with the requirements of Regulation 18(4) of the Local Government (Functions and General) Regulations 1996, the Tender evaluation process will include a written assessment of the extent that each Tender response satisfies the criteria which was set prior to advertising the Tender. The written assessment of the evaluation process will include qualitative factors such as quality, stock availability, accreditation, time for completion or delivery, warranty conditions, technology, maintenance requirements, organisation's capability, previous relevant experience, environmental and social impacts, corporate social responsibility and any other relevant factors as part of the assessment of the Tender response. This underpins the requirement for due diligence when conducting a public Tender and complies with record keeping and audit requirements.

4 Supporting Documents

The below supporting documents are attached to this business case.

- Attachment A: Detailed Design Drawings
- Attachment B: Letters of Support
- Attachment C: Cost Benefit Analysis
- Attachment D: Evidence of Financial Contribution
- Attachment E: Project Cost Estimate



