



# MALLACOOTA KINDERGARTEN

## Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

**APRIL 2021**

### Key project information

- Up to \$2.5 million to deliver the project — this includes the building, outdoor education, play space and car parking
- New kindergarten will be delivered using modular construction
- Victorian School Building Authority will deliver the project
- New kindergarten will be built to a minimum Bushfire Attack Level rating of 40
- Consultation with the wider community revealed mixed views

The Victorian Government has committed up to \$2.5 million to build a kindergarten for Mallacoota and, since March 2020, we have consulted with the community and stakeholders to inform the approach to this new facility.

We have held stakeholder meetings, community forums and surveys and have responded to many requests for further information about the project.

Our consultation included an online community forum on 29 August 2020. This gave residents an opportunity to discuss the views gathered from earlier community consultations. You can read a summary of the forum discussion [here](#).

Another community forum was held on 22 March 2021. Community members were provided with the outcomes of the cultural heritage investigations and the next steps in the project.

This project has been of high interest and each engagement with the community and key stakeholders has received many questions. This document addresses all of these questions.

## Project information

### **Q. What are the site options for the location of the new Mallacoota kindergarten?**

A. Since March 2020, this project has explored two potential sites — the existing Greer Street site and the Lees Road side of the oval at Mallacoota P–12 College. We have provided indicative site plans in the Mallacoota Kindergarten project information document, which can be accessed [here](#).

We worked with key stakeholder groups to identify the benefit of each site. Initial work was based around delivering the project in time for the 2021 kindergarten year and identified that a larger facility would be possible at the Mallacoota P–12 site but that cultural heritage considerations created limitations at the Greer Street site. Consultation and community feedback received throughout this project revealed strong and mixed views on the preferred approach to the project and a desire for more detail on what was possible at each site. The Department investigated the options at both sites, including via further cultural heritage investigations during late 2020 and early 2021.

## Site decision-making

### **Q. Who makes the final decision?**

A. The Minister for Early Childhood and the Minister for Education will make the final decision on the location of the new Mallacoota kindergarten, and this decision will be informed by advice and recommendations from the Department of Education and Training.

### **Q. What will the Department recommend to the Ministers?**

A. The Department will recommend that the Ministers deliver the new Mallacoota kindergarten on the Mallacoota P–12 school site. This recommendation has been informed by stakeholder feedback, listening to the views of the community, and the outcome of cultural heritage site investigations.

The findings of the cultural heritage investigations have been compelling and definitive and can be found [here](#).

The Department has been advised that no artefacts of sensitivity for Aboriginal cultural heritage were found at the Mallacoota P–12 location. Further, the Traditional Owners we consulted during the site works were satisfied that the proposed Mallacoota P–12 College kindergarten location would not impact on Aboriginal

cultural heritage. By comparison, investigation at the Greer Street location found that the site was dense with Aboriginal artefacts and that there are significant Aboriginal sites nearby. The report strongly recommended to the Department that, 'no future ground disturbing impacts occur at this location'.

In response to the findings of the cultural heritage investigations, and our commitment to the purpose and principles of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006, which is state legislation and intended to protect cultural heritage from harm, the Department will be recommending Mallacoota P-12 College as the location of the new Mallacoota Kindergarten. The Minister for Early Childhood and the Minister for Education will make the final decision.

**Q. How can the community continue to be involved in this project?**

A. We will invite the community to tell us what they would love to see in their new kindergarten. We will give your feedback to the architects to help shape its interior and landscape design.

This is a unique opportunity to provide your thoughts and help us plan for a much-loved and vital part of the community.

The Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) rating has been assessed as a BAL-29 (the third highest rating). However, the new kindergarten will be built to a BAL 40 rating (the second highest rating) for indoor and outdoor education spaces. This means there will be restrictions on what is possible in design to support these high safety standards.

Key local stakeholder groups will be represented on a Project Control Group (PCG) to help oversee the project.

**Q. What is the timeline for the Mallacoota kindergarten project?**

A. We are aiming to open the new kindergarten at the start of 2022. This is subject to further early works investigations and approval from the Minister for Early Childhood and the Minister for Education to proceed with the Mallacoota P-12 College site option.

**Q. Who are the key project stakeholders?**

A. Key stakeholders include East Gippsland Shire Council, the YMCA (kindergarten service provider), the Mallacoota Pre-school Association & Toy Library Inc and Mallacoota P-12 College. We will also continue to liaise with Bushfire Recovery Victoria.

**Q. What consultation has been undertaken?**

A. Our overriding priority is to get the best possible education outcomes for Mallacoota's children. We have been meeting and working closely with the key stakeholder groups since March 2020.

To seek broader community input, we also surveyed the Mallacoota community online in June 2020 and received 149 responses. Hard copies of the survey were available to the community and respondents also contacted the VSBA phone line.

On Saturday 29 August 2020 the VSBA held an online community forum via Zoom to discuss the project further and hear more about the community's views. This was the most suitable way to facilitate a community discussion under COVID-19 restrictions. We summarised the forum discussion in a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document which includes the views expressed, the opportunities identified, and questions raised. You can read that [here](#).

We have listened to your feedback and, in recognition of the ongoing impact of the bushfires on the community, we have undertaken further planning at both sites, including cultural heritage management plan assessments.

On 22 March 2021, the VSBA held another online forum with the Mallacoota community to outline the outcomes of the cultural heritage investigations and the next steps in the project. These Frequently Asked Questions have been updated in response to questions from the community submitted before and during the forum.

## Cultural heritage investigations and Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMP)

### Q. Were cultural heritage investigations undertaken at both sites?

A. Yes. cultural heritage investigations were undertaken at both sites. The three possibilities looked at were:

1. a new Greer Street kindergarten limited to the size and location of the current building, should the cultural heritage investigation find that a larger building is not possible
2. a larger two-room Greer Street kindergarten should the cultural heritage investigation find that a larger building is possible
3. a two-room kindergarten at Mallacoota P-12 College (on the Lees Road side of the oval)

The findings of these investigations indicated a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) might be required for the Greer Street site.

### Q. What is a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP)?

A. A Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) is a report conducted and prepared by a heritage adviser. The report includes the results of the assessment and the potential impact on Aboriginal cultural heritage of a proposed activity on a site. All measures that need to be taken during the construction process, to manage and protect Aboriginal cultural heritage in the activity area, are also listed in the report.

### Q. When is a CHMP required?

A. A CHMP is required when 'high-impact activity' is planned in an area of 'cultural heritage sensitivity'.

In these circumstances, planning permits, licences and work authorities can't be issued unless a CHMP has been approved for the activity.

Areas of cultural heritage sensitivity include registered Aboriginal cultural heritage places, as well as landforms and land categories that are generally regarded as more likely to be of Aboriginal cultural significance.

### Q. What is required for a CHMP?

A. Prior to a full CHMP being undertaken by a heritage adviser, a Complex Assessment/cultural heritage investigation is undertaken to determine whether

a full CHMP is necessary. Complex Assessments have been undertaken at both Greer Street and Lees Road, with the Greer Street assessment uncovering 210 artefacts within the two test pits which measured 1m x 1m and 50cm x 50cm. Testing at the Mallacoota P-12 site identified no sensitivity for Aboriginal cultural heritage.

### Q. How will the Complex Assessment/cultural heritage investigations influence the final kindergarten location?

A. A Complex Assessment/cultural heritage investigation is carried out to help determine if a full CHMP needs to be undertaken. The investigation provides an initial view of the site and determines if anything of cultural significance is located on the site.

Whilst there were no artefacts found at the Lees Street site, a significant number of artefacts were located in the two test pits at the Greer Street site.

Due to the high number of artefacts found at the Greer Street site, the heritage adviser has recommended that "no future ground disturbing impacts occur at this location and that the CHMP assessment be discontinued". This recommendation is supported up by the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006, section 61 which provides for the "protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage and Aboriginal intangible heritage in Victoria"*.

### Q. Why can't we rebuild in the footprint of the existing building?

A. Rebuilding in the footprint of the current building will require significant foundation works, which will disturb the artefact-bearing layers on the site.

Cultural heritage advice recommended not to proceeding with either a larger two-room development or a new build within the existing footprint of the Greer Street site.

### Q. Will a CHMP be undertaken for the Mallacoota P-12 College site?

A. Yes. If the Minister for Early Childhood and the Minister for Education decide that the kindergarten will be rebuilt at Mallacoota P-12 College, a voluntary CHMP will be undertaken. Whilst the cultural heritage investigations did not find any artefacts at the Mallacoota P-12 College site and it is not anticipated that this location will impact on Aboriginal cultural heritage, we want to ensure that works to deliver the kindergarten manage and protect Aboriginal cultural heritage.

## Bushfire safety

### Q. What bushfire safety features will be included in the design?

- A. As part of our approach to bushfire safety management we will:
- build the kindergarten to a BAL 40 rating
  - ensure adherence to the requirements of Bushfire Management Overlay (which would apply to the existing site) as part of applying for a planning permit and seek advice from the East Gippsland Shire Council as required
  - engage a fire engineer consultant during delivery.

### Q. What Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) rating will the modular building be?

A. BAL assessments measure the severity of a building's potential exposure to ember attack, radiant heat, and direct flame contact. We will be building the new Mallecoota Kindergarten to a BAL 40 rating.

### Q. Can the new kindergarten be a designated Neighbourhood Safer Place (NSP)?

A. The new Mallecoota Kindergarten, no matter where it is located, will not be a designated NSP. East Gippsland Shire Council has formally designated the Mallecoota community's NSP as the foreshore between Captains Point and Coull's Point (this is reviewed annually).

The current Mallecoota Kindergarten and Mallecoota P-12 College are both listed on the Bushfire at Risk Register, therefore, regardless of the location of the new kindergarten, it will be closed on days declared Code Red (extreme fire danger).

## Building Design

### MODULAR KINDERGARTEN BUILDINGS

#### Q. Why is modular construction being used to rebuild the Mallecoota kindergarten?

A. Regardless of location, the new Mallecoota Kindergarten will be a purpose-built modular building. Kindergartens delivered using modular construction are architect-designed, and a modern and efficient way to deliver quality buildings in short timeframes. This can cut up to half the time required for a traditional build, giving children faster access to high-quality learning environments while minimising disruption to children, families and staff. A traditional on-site design and construction project usually takes 18 months to two years. However, a modular kindergarten building can be constructed, delivered and readied for use in six to seven months. The funding has been based on this construction approach. You can watch a video showing one of our previous modular kindergartens [here](#).

#### Q. What size will the modular kindergarten building be?

A. The size of the modular kindergarten depends on any site limitations which may be identified during the planning phase and the VSBA finalising a design that meets Mallecoota's specific needs. However, the \$2.5 million committed by the Victorian Government will enable a larger and more functional kindergarten than the existing one-room Greer Street building.

As an indication of what to expect, we have included a template floor plan in the Mallecoota kindergarten project information sheet, which can be found [here](#). It shows an example of a standard two-room, modular kindergarten building.

These buildings are approximately 816 square metres and typically include:

- two 33-licensed place kindergarten rooms, which can also be used for other early learning or community purposes
- a covered deck area
- an office space
- a reading niche
- a lobby space
- art sinks
- storage (including lockers and storerooms)
- accessible ramps
- toilets (including an accessible toilet)
- cleaner's space
- a kitchen.

We have also included in the information sheet, a template with an option to update the standard two-room floor plan. This would increase the flexibility of the space, and could include:

- a flexible consulting room for services such as maternal and child health, or a range of other consulting or meeting opportunities, depending on community needs
- partitioning one room so it could be used as a single space, or as two separate spaces. This might suit a kindergarten group and playgroup running at the same time, long daycare, or other community services and uses.

**Q. What is the average lifespan of a modular building?**

A. Modular kindergarten buildings are generally designed for a lifespan of at least 30 years — a longer lifespan is possible with regular maintenance.

**Q. How can the indoor and outdoor spaces be planned to support the curriculum?**

A. We will seek further input from the community and continue to work closely with stakeholders to refine the design to ensure the new kindergarten facility and its outdoor learning and play spaces meet the needs of kindergarten staff, children, and the wider community.

## SUSTAINABILITY

**Q. How will the modular kindergarten building design incorporate sustainable design?**

A. Sustainability is a core principle in the design of all new education facilities in Victoria. As part of our planning, we will investigate specific sustainable and environmentally friendly features for this design, where possible.

## OUTDOOR LEARNING SPACE

**Q. Who will be designing and delivering landscaping?**

A. Once a site is determined, there will be an opportunity to consult with the Mallacoota community on the design and layout of the new outdoor learning space and landscaping. It will also be possible to incorporate elements from the existing kindergarten in the new outdoor learning space.

## FIT OUT

**Q. Does the allocated \$2.5 million include the internal fit out?**

A. The \$2.5 million is allocated for planning, design and building construction. It could also be used for internal fit out if there any of the funding remains and will be explored once site conditions are known (and addressed as required).

## Using local suppliers to help support the local economic recovery

**Q. Given that Mallacoota’s local economy has been hard hit by both the bushfire and pandemic, have the economic benefits of using local trades been considered?**

A. Yes, we understand this is an important way to help the community during this project. Our modular kindergarten contract includes a Local Jobs First policy requirement.

## Kindergarten operations

**Q. Who will run the kindergarten?**

A. The YMCA has advised us that they will continue to run Mallacoota Kindergarten.

**Q. Who will be responsible for the operational costs of the new building (power, water, rates)?**

A. The service provider is generally responsible for all ongoing maintenance, staffing, operational and administrative costs, which is the arrangement for Mallacoota Kindergarten. If the new kindergarten is built at Mallacoota P–12 College, the school will not be responsible for any ongoing operations or management of the kindergarten.

**Q. Could this building be a shared facility for other community uses?**

A. Yes, a key theme that emerged from survey responses was that a larger facility offered the opportunity for mixed and additional community uses.

**Q. How will parking and traffic be managed?**

A. We will assess the need for onsite car parking as part of the project planning and consider the need to balance site capacity and school needs (if the Mallacoota P–12 College site is chosen). We will also undertake a traffic management assessment. East Gippsland Shire Council is responsible for traffic management outside school boundaries in Mallacoota and we will work with the Council for the best possible outcome.

## Mallacoota P–12 College site option

**Q. Where would the kindergarten be located if it moved to Mallacoota P–12 College?**

A. If the school site is used, we will build the kindergarten on the Lees Road side of the site. The kindergarten will have its own dedicated entrance and car parking facilities via Lees Road.

**Q. How would the kindergarten, if it is located on the school site, impact the school?**

A. The Department has discussed this with the college and considered the school’s ability to host a kindergarten. The school is confident it can continue to provide the same educational experiences and outcomes while sharing some of their land with the kindergarten. On 20 May 2020, the school council passed a resolution stating that they were open to the school being considered as a potential site for the new kindergarten.

**Q. What are the benefits of co-locating the kindergarten on the school site?**

A. Co-locating kindergartens and other early childhood services on school sites has a range of benefits for children, families, professionals, and communities. It supports children’s transition from early childhood to primary school, by keeping the environment and social network consistent, and presents opportunities for staff at both facilities to collaborate. This contributes to better health and educational outcomes.

**Q. Would the kindergarten be separate to the school?**

A. Yes, the kindergarten would have its own space, be separated from the school buildings and have its own entrance and car parking. Future use of the school facilities would be agreed between the kindergarten and Mallacoota P–12 College. The kindergarten would continue to have its own emergency management procedures, but the school would offer complementary resources and processes, particularly in the event of an incident requiring a community response.

**Q. If the kindergarten is to be built at the school, what will happen to the existing kindergarten building?**

A. The existing kindergarten building is owned by the East Gippsland Shire Council. If the kindergarten was to move to the Mallacoota P–12 College site, the council would determine future use of the Greer Street site.

## Support during construction

### **Q. What impact will building have on kindergarten children, and what strategies have been considered to minimise these impacts?**

A. One of the biggest priorities of this project is the educational needs of the Mallacoota kindergarten children. This means minimising disruption to their learning as much as possible.

If the kindergarten is relocated to Mallacoota P-12 College, the modular building can be constructed relatively quickly. This means the kindergarten children will be able to remain at the existing site during construction throughout 2021. We would develop a plan to minimise disruption with East Gippsland Shire Council, the YMCA, and the Mallacoota Pre-school Association & Toy Library Inc.

### **Q. What support will kindergarten staff have during construction?**

A. The project team will work closely with the East Gippsland Shire Council, YMCA staff and the Mallacoota Pre-school Association & Toy Library Inc to ensure the rebuild project is carefully managed to minimise disruption during all stages and provide support for staff and others impacted by the project.

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