

WHAT WE MAKE IT

EARLY YEARS STRATEGY 2026-2031





Acknowledgement of Country

The City of Karratha acknowledges the Traditional Owners throughout this vast land and their continuing connection to the land, waters and community. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging; and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

Acknowledgements

The City of Karratha thanks everyone who contributed to this strategy by joining the What We Make It conversation. We thank you and look forward to working together as we strive to achieve the City's vision.



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Early Years Strategy: MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR



Early childhood
lays the foundation
for lifelong health,
learning and
wellbeing.

I am proud to share the City of Karratha's first Early Years Strategy 2026–2031, shaped by the voices, experiences and aspirations of families, service providers and our community.

This strategy reflects our shared commitment to supporting young children and ensuring every family in Karratha has access to the support they need during the early years.

Early childhood lays the foundation for lifelong health, learning and wellbeing. By investing in the earliest years of life, we help ensure every child in our community has the opportunity to grow, learn and thrive.

This strategy has been shaped through engagement with local children, families, service providers, government agencies and community organisations.

Their insights have helped us develop a shared vision and clear priorities focused on supporting every child in Karratha to thrive from the very beginning.

The Early Years Strategy will guide how we turn that vision into action – prioritising early childhood development, aligning our annual work programs and budgets and strengthening partnerships and advocacy at the local, state and national level.

Daniel Scott
Mayor, City of Karratha

Early Years Strategy: MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

This strategy sets
a clear path to
ensure every child
in Karratha has the
best possible start
in life.



As CEO of the City of Karratha, I am pleased to present our first Early Years Strategy 2026–2031.

This strategy has been designed to guide how we support the health, wellbeing and development of children aged 0–5 years and their families.

This strategy reflects the voices, experiences and aspirations of our community and service providers, and sets a clear path for ensuring every child in the City of Karratha has the best start in life.

Split into five themes with 45 actionable outcomes, the strategy will be implemented over the next five years with regular reporting and reviews to ensure we continue to drive change and achieve the desired outcomes.

As an organisation, we are committed to implementing this strategy with focus and diligence, fostering strong collaboration with families, community organisations, and government partners. It will also guide our pursuit of future funding opportunities and ensure our services continue to evolve in line with state and national reforms in the sector.

Virginia Miltrup
CEO, City of Karratha

INTRODUCTION

This is the City of Karratha's first Early Years Strategy. It has been developed to support the health, wellbeing and development of children aged 0–5 years and their families from 2026-2031. It is an informing strategy for the City of Karratha's Council Plan 2025-2035¹.



Early childhood lays the foundation for lifelong health, learning and wellbeing. That's why we're working closely with local children, their families, service providers, government agencies and other organisations to build a strategy that supports children to have the best possible start in life.

Each child should have a strong start in life and thrive in their early years. They should have the opportunity to reach their full potential, nurtured by empowered and connected families who are supported by strong communities.²

¹ City of Karratha Council Plan 2025-2035 - https://karratha.wa.gov.au/system/files/city_of_karratha_council_plan_2025-2035.pdf

² Australian Government (2024) Early Years Strategy 2024-2034

THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

The City of Karratha upholds the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)³, a key international agreement that every child has the right to thrive and participate in society. This Early Years Strategy prioritises children's best interests, dignity, voice and potential. By valuing their perspectives and individuality, we affirm that children are active participants who deserve respect, protection and opportunities to flourish - laying the groundwork for inclusive, responsive systems that nurture every child.

Definitions

Term/Abbreviation	Definition
Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs)	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) are independent, not-for-profit organisations that are incorporated under relevant legislation, controlled and operated by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, governed by a majority Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander board and connected to the community or communities in which it delivers services.
AEDC (Australian Early Development Census)	A nationwide data collection assessing early childhood development as children commence their first year of full-time school. Conducted every three years; used to identify trends, strengths and vulnerabilities in child development across five key areas known as domains.
Australian Child and Youth Wellbeing Atlas (ACYWA)	An online interactive data map on children and young people aged 0 to 24 in communities across Australia. It enables the visualisation, analysis and monitoring of health and wellbeing metrics for children and young people.
Child Safe Organisation	Child safe organisations create cultures where the safety and wellbeing of children and young people is prioritised and actions are taken to identify risks and protect them from harm, including from sexual abuse ⁴ .
Cultural Safety	Cultural safety is met through actions from the majority position which recognise, respect and nurture the unique cultural identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Only the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person who is recipient of a service or interaction can determine whether it is culturally safe ⁵ .

³ United Nations - <https://www.unicef.org.au/united-nations-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child?srltid=AfmBOooXMMewKqIQgFcY7oyy51u61mrXUWsA55HEmiwUYIM4AM06QpqC>

⁴ WA Government - <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/departments-of-communities/child-safe-organisations>

⁵ Closing the Gap Definitions - <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement/national-agreement-closing-the-gap/12-definitions>

We have heaps
of activities
and it has a
**STRONG COMMUNITY
SPIRIT.**

PARENT, KARRATHA



Term/Abbreviation	Definition
Developmental Vulnerability	Children identified as being below the 10 th percentile (in the lowest 10%) in one or more AEDC domains, indicating higher risk of poor developmental outcomes.
Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)	Services and programs providing education and care to children prior to school entry, for example long day care and family day care
Early Years	The first five years of life. The term Early Childhood may also be used.
Early Years Services	Any services that are provided for children 0-5 years. This may include health, disability and early learning services e.g. allied health, toy libraries, playgroups, etc.
Family	People who have significant care responsibilities for and/or kinship relationships with a child. Family includes not just immediate biological ties, but also extended kin, community and cultural connections, which are fundamental to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's wellbeing and sense of belonging. Families are shaped by nurturing, safety and culture, with children ideally raised within their family, community and cultural environment ^{6,7}
Identity-first Language	Language that refers to identity before the person (e.g., "Aboriginal children, Autistic child"), as per local or group preference. As always, individuals should be consulted on their own preference.

⁶ Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC)

⁷ Early Childhood Australia – Code of Ethics



Term/Abbreviation	Definition
KASEYN (Karratha and Surrounds Early Years Network)	A local collective of service providers, organisations and community members working to improve outcomes for young children and families in the City of Karratha and surrounding towns.
NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme)	Australia's national scheme providing funding and support for people with disability, including Early Childhood Intervention for children with developmental delay or diagnosed disability under 9 years of age.
Person-first Language	Language that refers to individuals before their condition or disability (e.g., "children with disability"), reflecting a social model of disability.
Relative Disadvantage / SEIFA (Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas)	A suite of indexes developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics to summarise the socio-economic characteristics of regions. Lower SEIFA scores indicate greater disadvantage.
Service Mapping	The process of systematically identifying and analysing all services and supports available to children aged 0–5 and their families in a given area.
UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child)	An international agreement recognising every child's right to survive, thrive and participate fully in society and forming a foundational principle for the strategy.
Vulnerability	Refers to children or families at increased risk of poor developmental, health, or wellbeing outcomes due to factors such as disability, poverty, remoteness, or cultural background.
WPC4C (West Pilbara Communities for Children)	An initiative funding local programs to create child-friendly communities and support families in the West Pilbara, including the City of Karratha.

COMMUNITY VISION

The City of Karratha's 10 Year Council Plan 2025-2035 highlights our collective vision for the City of Karratha:



Our vision for the City of Karratha

Australia's
most liveable
regional city.

THE PLACE WE ARE
PROUD TO CALL HOME.

The City of Karratha's overarching Council Plan recognises the importance of supporting residents across all life stages, including the early years, as part of its vision for a thriving, inclusive community that residents are proud to call home.

Council Plan 2025-2035: Goal 3: Everyone is included

Objective 3.2: *Provide, directly and through others, for the needs of young families and enabling the best start in life in the early years.*

Success Measure:	Target:
Delivery of Early Years Strategy	100%

This Early Years Strategy responds to this community vision by providing a roadmap to address the needs of children aged 0-5 and their families. As an informing strategy to the Council Plan, it aims to enhance early childhood development by identifying service strengths and gaps, understanding the needs of families and implementing targeted initiatives that promote health, wellbeing, learning and development.

ABOUT US

The City of Karratha is the heart of civic, cultural and economic life in the North-West of Western Australia.



The towns of Dampier, Roebourne (Ieramugadu), Point Samson (Mulhagurla), Wickham and Karratha sit within the traditional lands of the Ngarluma people, with a history reaching back more than 30,000 years.

The area now known as the City of Karratha also includes traditional lands of the Yindjibarndi, Mardudhunera, Yaburara and Wong-Goo-Tt-Oo peoples.

People

The population of the City of Karratha is 24,237¹. All figures below are from 2021 Census. The population is forecast to increase to 27,106 over the term of this plan², an increase of 2,869. Key: City of Karratha (CoK), Western Australia (WA)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples³ <div>12% CoK</div> <div>3.3% WA</div>	Male:Female ratio <div>54:46 CoK</div> <div>50:50 WA</div>	People with disability (core need for assistance) <div>2% CoK</div> <div>4.6% WA</div>	Median age <div>32 CoK</div> <div>38 WA</div>	Children and young teens (0-14) <div>25% CoK</div> <div>19% WA</div>
Working age (15-64) <div>71% CoK</div> <div>65% WA</div>	Seniors (65+) <div>3% CoK</div> <div>16% WA</div>	Born overseas <div>19% CoK</div> <div>38% WA</div>	Volunteering <div>16% CoK</div> <div>16% WA</div>	Unemployment rate <div>3% CoK</div> <div>5% WA</div>
Workforce participation rate <div>69% CoK</div> <div>64% WA</div>	Median household weekly income <div>\$3,158 CoK</div> <div>\$1,815 WA</div>	Completed Yr 12+ <div>60% CoK</div> <div>66% WA</div>	<div>WHAT WE MAKE IT™</div>	

¹ 2023 ABS Estimated Resident Population.
² REMPLAN, City of Karratha, 2025.
³ Census data is likely to under-represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

- 4,826 families in the City of Karratha who have an average of 2 children per family⁸.
- The City of Karratha population on average is younger than the rest of WA and Australia with 8.4% of the population between 0-4 years (6.1% for the rest of WA and 5.8% for Australia)².
- There were 145 active National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants aged 0-8 years (Dec 2024)⁹,
- In semester 2, 2024 there were 820 children enrolled in Kindergarten and Pre Primary across all City schools ^{10,11}.

Kindergarten (start at 3-4 years old, non-compulsory, part-time school)	384
Pre Primary (start at 4-5 years old, compulsory, full-time school)	436
TOTAL	820

- The latest data¹² (2023) on local births reports 356 in total, Karratha Health Campus and Roebourne District Hospital. This number has been declining since 2013. This data does not account for babies for whom the City of Karratha is home but were born outside of the City of Karratha. It should be noted high risk pregnancies and births require transfer of mothers to hospitals outside the City of Karratha area, either to Hedland Health Campus or Perth metropolitan hospitals.
- The Cumulative Impact Model¹³ forecasts industrial expansion in the City of Karratha and assesses its impact on population, housing, infrastructure and essential services. This modelling predicts even greater population growth, with a peak of over 32,000 by 2026. This is expected to have impact on housing supply, health and emergency services and education.

Projected new primary schools needed by 2030: 1	Projected early childhood education and care centres needed by 2030: 2
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⁸ ABS 2021 Census - <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA54310>

^{*} The ABS defines family as: "two or more persons, one of whom is at least 15 years of age, who are related by blood, marriage (registered or de facto), adoption, step or fostering and who are usually resident in the same household". "Family includes at least one child under the age of 18 years living in the household."

⁹ NDIS Explore Data - <https://dataresearch.ndis.gov.au/explore-data>

¹⁰ Department of Education Western Australia - <https://www.det.wa.edu.au/schoolsonline/home.do>

¹¹ St Paul's Primary School (personal communication, 2025)

¹² The University of Western Australia. Australian Child and Youth Wellbeing Atlas (online). Available at: <https://australianchildatlas.com>.

¹³ Cumulative Impact Model - https://karratha.wa.gov.au/system/files/city_of_karratha_cim_summary.pdf

WHAT IS AN EARLY YEARS STRATEGY?

The City of Karratha has developed its first Early Years Strategy to support the health, wellbeing and development of children aged 0–5 and their families. Developed with community input this strategy uses data and insights from the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) to guide planning for the future.

**Rhyme Time
is fabulous.**

*WE DRIVE TO MULTIPLE
LIBRARIES JUST FOR IT.*

PARENT, KARRATHA



Our Shared Vision for the Early Years

For all children in the City of Karratha to have the best start in life so they can thrive.

How will this strategy be used?

This strategy will be used to:

- put our vision and priorities into practice
- prioritise early childhood development
- align our annual work programs and budgets
- monitor and adjust to state and national reforms in the sector
- support our partnerships, advocacy efforts locally, state and nationally
- support future funding and grants

How was this Strategy developed?

This strategy was developed through listening to the community, understanding the local services and community organisations, researching best practice and benchmarking against state and national priorities. This information can be found in the Mapping and Engagement Report¹⁴.

¹⁴ City of Karratha; Early Years Strategy 2025-2030 - Mapping and Engagement Report

An Informing Strategy

This strategy is an outcome of the Council Plan and details how the City of Karratha will action these key themes and objectives. The Early Years Strategy also informs other goals of the Council Plan and can be reflected across almost all goals.

Table 2. Early Years Strategy 2026-2031 alignment with the Council Plan 2025-2035

Strategic Community Plan Goals

1 We respect Aboriginal peoples' Cultural Authority and connection to Ngurra (Country)	2 Our community is welcoming, connected, vibrant, healthy and safe	3 Everyone is included	4 Our places and spaces are functional, attractive and reflect our unique identity	5 We respect and care for the natural environment	6 The local economy is diverse and thriving, with opportunities for all	7 Our civic leaders are innovative, listening and balanced in meeting community needs
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1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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Early Years Strategy Goals

Our community has a variety of activities, programs and events that support family wellbeing and child development in the early years (0-5 years)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Places and spaces in our community support child development and play, are inclusive, accessible and safe so families can use them all year round	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
All families have access to the essentials for health, wellbeing, learning and development	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Families are welcomed, included, informed and connected	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
The City of Karratha champions early childhood development as a community priority, ensuring children aged 0-5 and their families are supported to thrive	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓

HOW TO READ THIS STRATEGY

Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles will be upheld as this strategy is implemented:

- It is responsive to the needs of young children and families
- Places parents and primary caregivers as the experts of their child
- Considers the knowledge and experience of service providers
- Is informed by data, evidence and best practice in child development and wellbeing, such as the AEDC
- Aligns with national and state early years frameworks and guiding documents, and
- Reflects of the role of local government.



Themes and Goals

This strategy's themes and goals guide the direction and five-year priorities to achieve our shared vision for children and families in the City of Karratha.

By explicitly drawing on the AEDC, themes, goals and objectives align our strategy with recognised measures of early childhood development, making clear links between local priorities and the evidence government uses to guide decisions.

THEME	GOAL	RELEVANCE TO THE AEDC
ACTIVITIES, PROGRAMS AND EVENTS	Our community has a variety of activities, programs and events that support family wellbeing and child development in the early years (0-5 years)	Community programs and events that support family wellbeing and early learning can significantly reduce developmental vulnerability and improve outcomes for children aged 0-5 years ¹⁵
PLACES AND SPACES	Places and spaces in our community support child development and play, are inclusive, accessible and safe so families can use them all year round	Thoughtful design fosters positive child health behaviours, physical activity and developmental outcomes ¹⁶
ACCESS TO SERVICES	All families have access to the essentials for health, wellbeing, learning and development	When families have access to essential services for health, wellbeing, learning and development, children are more likely to start school developmentally on track and experience positive outcomes across physical, social, emotional and cognitive domains ¹⁷
CONNECTED COMMUNITY	Families are welcomed, included, informed and connected	Welcoming, inclusive and well-connected communities support families and foster positive developmental outcomes for children ¹⁸
STRATEGIC ADVOCACY	The City of Karratha champions early childhood development as a community priority, ensuring children aged 0-5 and their families are supported to thrive	Promoting early childhood as a priority encourages collaborative action, integrated approaches and long-term improvements for children and families, particularly for those who experience vulnerability ¹⁹

¹⁵ AEDC Community Story - [sa-community-story---mid-murray-family-connections-2020.pdf](https://www.aedc.gov.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/fact-sheet_-using-your-school's-aedc-data.pdf?sfvrsn=6b31156e_1)

¹⁶ AEDC Research Snapshot - https://www.aedc.gov.au/docs/default-source/resources/can-the-neighbourhood-built-environment-make-a-difference-to-child-development.pdf?sfvrsn=10fd781a_1

¹⁷ AEDC - https://www.aedc.gov.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/fact-sheet_-using-your-school's-aedc-data.pdf?sfvrsn=6b31156e_1

¹⁸ AEDC Community Story - [community-story_connecting-community-for-kids.pdf](https://www.aedc.gov.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/aedc-data-story_issue-4_equity_da8.pdf?sfvrsn=7a55daed_1)

¹⁹ AEDC Data Story - https://www.aedc.gov.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/aedc-data-story_issue-4_equity_da8.pdf?sfvrsn=7a55daed_1

Objectives

Each theme is supported by objectives that break down priorities into focused action areas.

By explicitly drawing on the AEDC, the objectives align this strategy with recognised measures of early childhood development, making clear links between local priorities and the evidence government uses to guide decisions.

Outcomes

Each objective will have an outcome. These are the change, benefit, or impact of this strategy. It describes the difference made for children in their early years, their families and the wider community.

Roles

Describes the City of Karratha's responsibilities as a local government and how it collaborates with residents, businesses, organisations and other levels of government to achieve shared outcomes.

Our Roles



Deliver

Play a lead role in delivering services, programs, facilities and infrastructure to respond to community aspirations and meet their needs.



Regulate

Provision of statutory services including development and review of local laws; planning and building approvals; strategic town planning; and public health services (e.g. food premises approvals) as well as Ranger and Emergency Management activities to ensure compliance and maintain community standards.



Empower

Facilitate and support others to deliver services and programs to the community.



Partner

Collaborate and build partnerships with others to achieve shared goals and deliver community outcomes.



Advocate

Advocate on behalf of the community to influence decisions and secure resources to meet the needs of the community.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

An implementation plan has been developed to drive this Strategy and progress the vision, goals and objectives. This plan provides a structured roadmap and will further define the key performance indicators, targets, responsibilities, timelines, budgets and resourcing required to achieve the strategic outcomes. It is managed by the City administration teams.

Key Performance Indicators and Targets

Each objective in this strategy is supported by Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and targets. These assess progress and measure success over time. This approach enables transparent, meaningful measurement and reporting, ensuring that the strategy remains accountable and responsive to the needs of children and families in the City of Karratha.

Monitoring, Reporting and Review

Once adopted by Council, progress of this Early Years Strategy 2026-2031 will include an annual review and reporting over the five years. This reporting will be to Council with highlights communicated to the community. The key performance indicators and measures will be monitored and tracked to continue to drive change and implement projects and initiatives outlined.



THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EARLY YEARS

The early years, defined in Australia’s Early Years Strategy²⁰ as spanning from the antenatal period to age five, represents a crucial window for children’s development, laying the foundation for lifelong health, learning and wellbeing.

For families, this period is marked by significant transitions—taking on new parenting roles, acquiring skills to care for young children, accessing services and supports and navigating complex systems like health and early education. Families also face financial and employment changes and must build new community connections and relationships.

Recognising and supporting families through these changes is vital, as children’s early development is deeply influenced by their relationships with family and community. Families can take many forms, reflecting diverse cultural, community and social structures and may be defined not only by legal or biological ties, but also by relationships of responsibility, belonging and commitment.

²⁰ Commonwealth of Australia (2024). Early Years Strategy 2024-2034. <https://www.dss.gov.au/early-years-strategy/resource/early-years-strategy-2024-2034>

²¹ ACEQUA (2022). Early Years Learning Framework

Children’s earliest learning, development and wellbeing takes place through these relationships, particularly within families, who are children’s first and most influential educators²¹.



Early Childhood Development – Why it Matters

From birth to age five, children’s brains develop rapidly, with nurturing relationships, safe environments, quality health and nutrition and access to early learning all playing vital roles in positive development. When children have equitable access to these opportunities, they are more likely to thrive and reach their full potential.

Measuring Child Development: The AEDC

A vital tool for understanding how children are faring in communities.

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) is a national survey conducted every three years that measures children’s development as they start their first year of full-time school. The AEDC provides a snapshot of how children are progressing across five key developmental domains, highlighting strengths, vulnerabilities and trends.

Children are classified as developmentally on track, at risk, or vulnerable based on their scores. This data helps governments and service providers target resources and support where they are most needed. Research, using the AEDC, has demonstrated strong links with later mental health, wellbeing, and educational outcomes. The 2024 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) was not available at the time this strategy was prepared. Therefore, the strategy is informed by the 2021 AEDC data.

The next census to be conducted are 2027 and 2030 during the life of this Early Years Strategy.



PHYSICAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Children’s physical readiness for the school day, physical independence and gross and fine motor skills.



SOCIAL COMPETENCE

Children’s overall social competence, responsibility and respect, approach to learning and readiness to explore new things.



EMOTIONAL MATURITY

Children’s pro-social and helping behaviours and absence of anxious and fearful behaviour, aggressive behaviour and hyperactivity and inattention.



LANGUAGE AND COGNITIVE SKILLS (SCHOOL-BASED)

Children’s basic literacy, interest in literacy, numeracy and memory, advanced literacy and basic numeracy.



COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

Children’s communication skills and general knowledge based on broad developmental competencies and skills measured in the school context.

Figure 1. Australian Early Development Census Developmental Domains

The five key AEDC domains have been shown to predict later mental health, wellbeing and educational achievement.²²

²² Gregory, T., Dal Grande, E., Brushe, M., Engelhardt, D., Luddy, S., Guhn, M., Gadermann, A., Schonert-Reichl, K. A. & Brinkman, S. (2020). Associations between school readiness and student wellbeing: A six-year follow up study. Child Indicators Research

AEDC Results for the City of Karratha

The AEDC (2021)²³ data shows more than half of the 407 children assessed in the City of Karratha were developmentally on track across all five domains (58.1%). This is higher than both state and national averages. This has significantly increased since 2009 (Table 1).

Figure 2. Key Statistics: AEDC 2021 for the City of Karratha

407 Children measured	23% Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Children	17% Children identified by teachers as requiring further assessment
93% Participated in Preschool or Kindy	54% Participated in Playgroup	9.6% Children with English as an additional language
41% Of children attended centre-based childcare	14.9% Increase in children developmentally on track in the language and cognitive domain since 2009. Proportion of children developmentally at risk and developmentally vulnerable has reduced since 2009	18% Children who were developmentally vulnerable on 1 or more domains, 9% on 2 or more domains

²³ AEDC Explorer - <https://www.aedc.gov.au/community-data-explorer/>



In 2021, the percentage of children who were developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains was lower in Karratha (18.3%) compared to Western Australia (20.3%) and Australia (22.0%).

Due to a small sample size, AEDC data for Roebourne is included within the City of Karratha results and is not published separately, in line with the AEDC privacy and confidentiality requirements. Developmental assumptions can be made, using other indicators of developmental vulnerability, such as relative disadvantage (as measured using SEIFA data²⁴) and wider developmental data and targets for Aboriginal children (e.g. using Closing the Gap targets²⁵). Based on available data and community context, treating children in Roebourne as potentially developmentally vulnerable allows for proactive support and reduces the chance that children requiring assistance will be overlooked.

Table 1 shows the number of children who are developmentally on track across the five AEDC domains in the City of Karratha in 2021. The percentage of children is shown in brackets. For example, 321 (81.5%) of the 407 children screened were developmentally on track in the Physical domain. This is higher than all the children in WA assessed (80.2%) and Australia (78.5%).

Table 1. Number and percentage of children developmentally on track in the City of Karratha compared with WA and Australia (AEDC 2021)²⁶

Number and percentage of children on track in 2021

	Australia	Western Australia	Karratha
Physical	226,006 (78.5)	27,225 (80.5)	321 (81.5)
Social	218,679 (75.9)	26,767 (79.2)	312 (79.2)
Emotional	221,057 (77.0)	26,273 (77.9)	310 (78.9)
Language	237,499 (82.6)	27,779 (82.3)	318 (80.7)
Communication	222,056 (77.1)	26,822 (79.3)	337 (85.5)
OT5	157,436 (54.8)	19,424 (57.5)	229 (58.1)

²⁴ REMPLAN - <https://app.remplan.com.au/karratha/community/wellbeing/seifa-relative-disadvantage>

²⁵ National agreement on closing the gap - <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement>

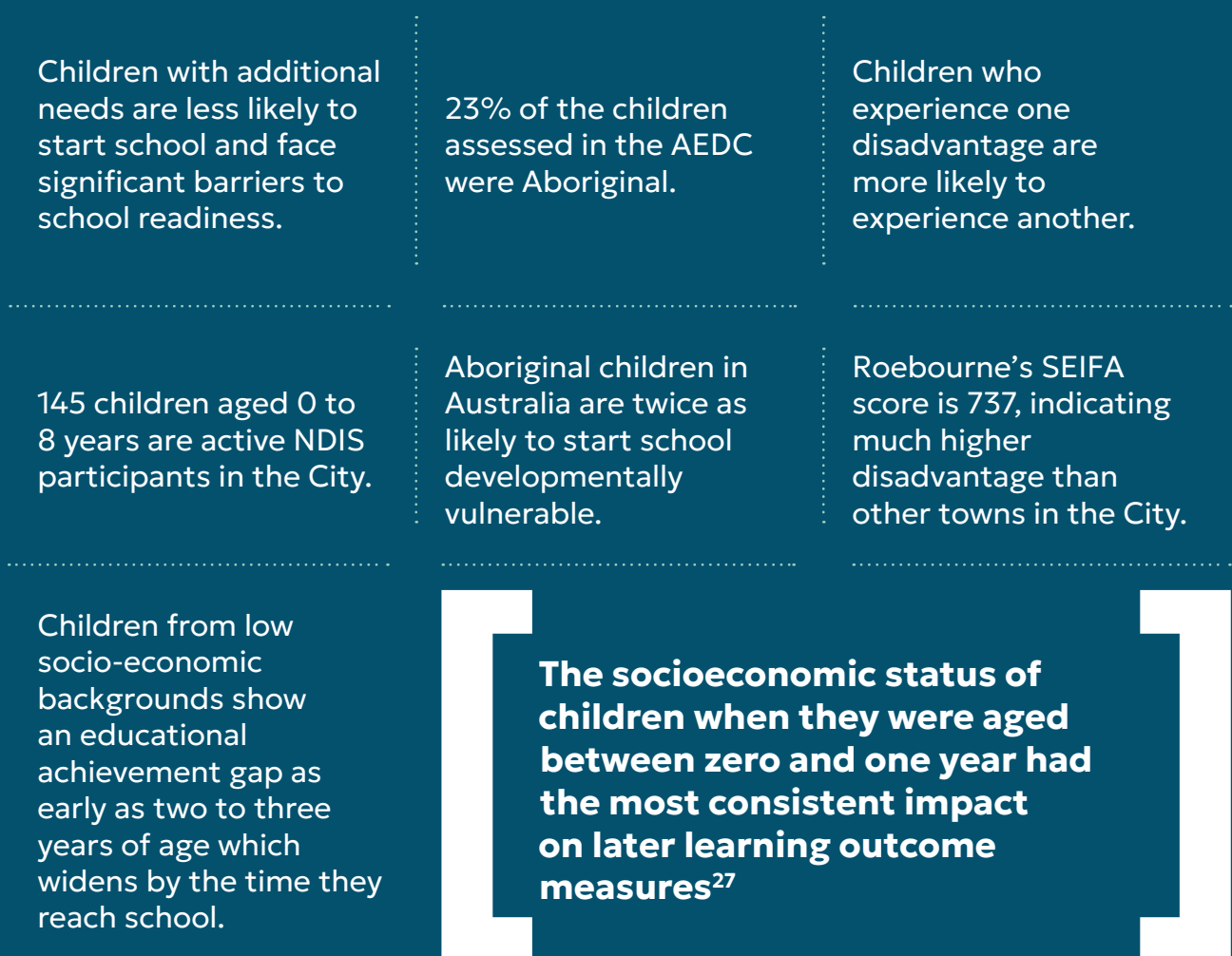
²⁶ AEDC (2021) Karratha Community Profile

The Impact of Unequal Opportunities

Not all children have the same early life experiences. Children with additional needs, those living in remote areas, or from low socio-economic, culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds are more likely to face challenges that can contribute to developmental delays and may begin school behind their peers. Children who experience one disadvantage are more likely to experience another which can increase a child's vulnerability. These early differences can persist and impact longer-term wellbeing, learning and opportunities to participate in society.

Addressing these inequities through early intervention, inclusive services and targeted supports is essential for breaking cycles of disadvantage and ensuring every child has the chance to succeed²⁷.

Figure 3. Disadvantage and developmental vulnerability^{28,29,30,31,23,24,9}



²⁷ The Front Project (2019). A smart investment for a smarter Australia: Economic analysis of universal early childhood education in the year before school in Australia. <https://www.thefrontproject.org.au/impact-foundry/research/economic-analysis>

²⁸ The Mitchell Institute (2025). Unequal from the start: The achievement gap and the early years. <https://content.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/documents/2025-04/unequal-from-the-start-report-march-2025.pdf>

²⁹ Royal Far West (2017). The invisible children. https://ccch.org.au/media/kblhrex/invisible-children_the-state-of-country-childrens-health-development.pdf

³⁰ Productivity Commission: Closing the gap. <https://www.pc.gov.au/closing-the-gap-data/dashboard/se/outcome-area4>

³¹ OECD (2025). Reducing inequalities by investing in early childhood education and care. https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/reducing-inequalities-by-investing-in-early-childhood-education-and-care_b78f8b25-en.html



Closing the Gap Targets

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap (the National Agreement)³² has 19 national socio-economic targets across areas that have an impact on life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The following Closing the Gap targets specifically relate to the early years outcomes in the National Agreement in Closing the Gap. This data does not currently break down to the regional or local government level, only state and national.

Outcome	Target
Outcome 2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children are born healthy and strong	By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies with a health birthweight to 91 per cent.
Outcome 3. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years	By 2025, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in Year Before Fulltime Schooling (YBFS) early childhood education to 95 per cent.
Outcome 4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children thrive in their early years	By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) to 55 per cent.

³² National agreement on closing the gap - <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement>

National Disability Insurance Scheme and Early Childhood Approach

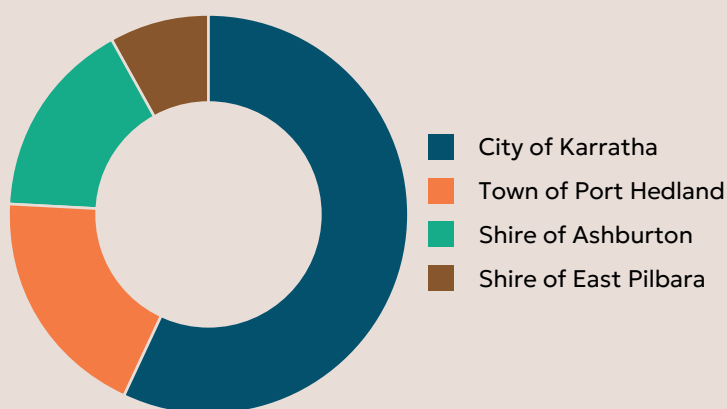
While information is collected for all children in the AEDC, domain results are not calculated for children with additional needs due to their already identified substantial needs. Instead, background information is incorporated to support communities to be responsive for all children. According to the AEDC data for the City of Karratha, in 2021, 2.7% of children were identified as having additional needs, while 16.7% were identified as requiring further assessment. The NDIS offers Early Childhood Intervention (through the Early Childhood Approach) to support children with developmental delay or diagnosed disability so they have the best possible start in life.

NDIS quarterly data for Q2 2024/2025³³ shows 145 babies and children aged 0-8 years in the City of Karratha are registered NDIS participants, representing over half of all active NDIS participants in the Pilbara for this age group. Among them, 73 children have a primary diagnosis of Developmental Delay and 14 have Global Developmental Delay, alongside others with different diagnosed disabilities.

Proposed changes to the NDIS and the introduction of Foundational Supports will see changes to this data over the coming years.

³³ NDIS Data - <https://dataresearch.ndis.gov.au/explore-data>

Active NDIS participants (0-8 years)* (Dec 2024)



***The NDIS ages are captured 0 to 8 years based on the NDIS Early Childhood Intervention model.**








Examples of Activities and Programs for the Early Years and their Potential Impact on AEDC Domains of Development

Child development does not occur in isolation. The AEDC domains are a measure of different areas of a child's growth and learning. The following tables show examples of a range of programs, activities and experiences available in the City of Karratha that support children's development and learning across the five AEDC domains. This is not an exhaustive list.








Examples of Formal Programs and Activities and the Impact on Child Development

					
'Mums & Bubs' / 'Dads & Bubs' Group (0-6 months)	✓		✓		
Parenting Program (all ages)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Playgroup	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
School Readiness Program (3-4 years)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Music program	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Art class	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dance class and Swimming lessons	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Organised Sports / Clubs (3+ years)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



Examples of Informal Activities and Experiences and the Impact on Child Development

					
Playing at the park / playground / oval	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Taking a walk	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Going to the library		✓	✓	✓	✓
Reading together at home		✓	✓	✓	✓
Going to the beach / fishing / etc.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Play dates with friends	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Going to creche	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Swimming in the local public pool	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Going to the Karratha Indoor Play Centre	✓	✓	✓		

SERVICE MAPPING BY LOCATION

The early years sector contains a multitude of organisations and small businesses to meet needs in the health and community sector. Although services are available, there are major barriers in accessing services such as wait times, costs of services and funding access. The service types and availability vary depending on locally available health professionals and NDIS workers.

This table shows an overview of where services are based and which services provide visiting / outreach services to different towns as at May 2025. This is regularly changing.




































































-  Clinic or office base location
-  Outreach services from clinic base
-  Special bus for delivering outreach services



Table 14. Health, Developmental and Disability Service Mapped by Location in the City of Karratha (May 2025)

Health, Developmental and Disability Services	Funding	Point Samson	Wickham	Roebourne	Karratha	Dampier
Hospital including Inpatients, Outpatients & Population Health	State – WA Country Health Service					
Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS)	Federal					
Child Health Nurse (child health and development checks)	State & Federal					
Speech Pathology	WACHS, Private & NDIS					
Occupational Therapy	WACHS, Private & NDIS					
Physiotherapy	WACHS, Private & NDIS		 			
Dietetics	WACHS, Private & NDIS					
Paediatric Mental Health	WACHS, Private & NDIS					
Positive Behaviour Support (NDIS)	National Disability Insurance Agency (Individual Plans)					
Ear Health Checks	WACHS, AMS & Private			 	 	
Audiology	WACHS & Private					
Podiatry	NFP					
Optometry	Private					
Chiropractor	Private					
Sleep Consultant	Private					
Dental	Private					
Pharmacy	Private					
NDIS Remote Community Connector	National Disability Insurance Agency (contract)					
NDIS Support Worker	National Disability Insurance Agency (Individual Plans)					
NDIS Support Coordinator	National Disability Insurance Agency (Individual Plans)					



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR THE CITY OF KARRATHA

The City of Karratha's overall strong early childhood development outcomes reflect the region's investment in services, community assets and family supports. However, pockets of developmental vulnerability remain, particularly in certain areas and among groups facing greater disadvantage.

Roebourne continues to be identified as a community experiencing much higher disadvantage than other towns in the City area. It is important to note that children experiencing developmental vulnerability are not just in Roebourne. They also live in other larger towns even though those towns rate higher on the SEIFA³⁴.

How These Gaps Can Be Addressed

Addressing these gaps requires ongoing commitment to:

- Inclusive, culturally safe and accessible early years services, programs and spaces
- Targeted support for children and families experiencing developmental vulnerability
- High quality and affordable health, community, early education and care and wellbeing services
- Continued use of data (AEDC, SEIFA) to inform planning and resource allocation
- Collaboration across government, service providers and the community

By focusing on equity, engagement and early intervention through its Early Years Strategy, the City can play its part in ensuring all children—regardless of background or circumstance—have the best possible start in life.

LISTENING TO THE COMMUNITY

As the City of Karratha's first Early Years Strategy, the opportunity was used to engage with the community for fresh ideas and insight into what is important for young children to thrive. The City's 'What We Make It' engagement program used a series of structured and informal conversations. These were offered in every community and online.

These engagement activities were tailored with the recognition that caregivers of infants and young children are typically time poor and need to constantly supervise or attend to their young children.

Engagement Events

The community and service providers were provided with an opportunity to have their say at pop-up stalls set up at specific advertised locations, in person workshops and at pre-arranged pop-in locations. These locations were where caregivers of young children gather, such as playgroups, playgrounds, pool and libraries.

Who We Heard From

- 285 total contributions to engagement for the Early Years Strategy
- 30 Parent / Caregiver Surveys were completed online (75%) and 10 completed in person (25%)
- 5 contributors identified as fathers
- 3 contributors identified as intergenerational carers (grandmothers)
- 22 contributors identified as Aboriginal carers (mothers, nanas, fathers)
- Average age of the 36 Child's Voice survey responses was 3 years 9 months.

October 2024

Karratha Teddy Bears Picnic survey (29)

March – June 2025

Service Provider Survey & Network Conversations (51)

April – May 2025

Launch Parent/caregiver survey (40)
Launch 'Child's Voice' survey (36)

May 2025

Caregiver & Providers Workshops (4)
Engagement Pop Up stalls (4)
Pop In locations visited (16)

Total Parent/Caregivers Engaged across pop up stalls, pop in locations & workshops: 129

TOTAL 285 CONTRIBUTORS



WHAT CHILDREN TOLD US

Children 3-5 years old could have a say using the 'Child's Voice' survey worksheet. The 36 surveys submitted were 3-4 years old from Karratha, Dampier and Wickham.

The children were asked these questions to draw and talk about:

1. "If you had a friend visiting, where would you take them and why?" and
2. "What makes you healthy and strong?"

Major Themes from the Child's Voice Survey

Young children identified activities and places that are **distinctly reflective of where we live** as important to them, such as beaches, parks, pools, playgrounds and community landmarks.

These choices were often **free**, encouraged **physical activity** and centred on **play and fun with friends and family**, highlighting the value of **social connection and belonging**.

Outdoor play is increasingly recognised as a foundation for children's healthy development. Children are hard-wired to need nature and to play in their natural environments. Research shows that unstructured play that takes place outdoors is vital to children's social, emotional, cognitive and physical development.

MARIANI BRUSSONI - DIRECTOR, HUMAN EARLY LEARNING PARTNERSHIP



To the beach,
I like it there.

*I WILL GO
ON A BOAT.*

3 YEAR OLD, KARRATHA

There were consistent themes from the children about what matters most to them.

Theme	What Children Told Us
Outdoor and Nature-Based Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The <i>beach</i> was the most frequently mentioned destination for swimming, playing and spending time with friends or family. <i>Parks</i> and <i>playgrounds</i> were highly valued, with children describing enjoyment in running, playing on swings and using climbing equipment. <i>Pools</i> and water-based activities (swimming, fishing, being near rivers or the ocean) were popular.
Social Connections and Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many children would take friends or family members to their favourite places, highlighting the importance of relationships and shared experiences. Family activities, such as movie nights or camping, are enjoyable and important to them.
Healthy Living and Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When asked what makes them healthy and strong, children overwhelmingly mentioned vegetables (carrots, broccoli, lettuce), fruit and food in general. Physical activity as shown by their choice of destinations, such as swimming, running and playing at the park or skate park.
Community and Familiar Landmarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local icons like the Red Dog statue and community venues (shops, markets, library, movies) were noted as places children enjoy and want to share with others. Home and garden spaces were also referenced, suggesting a sense of comfort and security in familiar environments.



WHAT THE COMMUNITY TOLD US

Families overwhelming told us they love to live in the City of Karratha, a theme consistent in each town. Great outdoor spaces and playgrounds, wonderful programs and beautiful, modern amenities makes the City not only liveable, but a place they want to bring up their kids.

Major Themes from the Community

These themes reflect the community's desire for a supportive, inclusive and accessible environment for young children and their families in the City of Karratha

Theme	What the Community Told Us
Impact of Heat	The extreme heat shapes choices about activities, socialisation and even residency. Families seek shaded or indoor spaces and worry about safety for infants and toddlers in hot conditions.
Pride in Local Amenities	Families love living in the City of Karratha, value the parks, playgrounds, events and community programs and are willing to travel between towns for quality amenities.
Year-Round Activities for 0-5 Year Olds	Parents struggle to find activities for 0-5 year olds during school holidays, especially over the hot summer, as many programs stop and outdoor play is not viable.
Family Friendly and Affordable Events and Programs	Parents value the wide range of family events available in the City and especially appreciate when these events are affordable and accessible for all members of the family.

**(We) struggle to
find something to
do in this town in
the heat.**

***DURING SUMMER WE'RE
STUCK INSIDE.***

MOTHER, KARRATHA



Need for Information and Connection

Families—especially new parents and those new to town—need clear, accessible information about local services, programs, play spaces and social networks to support both their children and their own wellbeing.

Importance of Caregivers' Wellbeing

Children's wellbeing is closely linked to caregiver wellbeing. Many mothers are the primary caregiver and reported the need to build their own new support networks, which is vital for their mental health and their children's development.

Access to Early Childhood Education and Care

Workforce shortages and housing issues lead to long waitlists and under-capacity in early childhood education and care, preventing some parents from returning to work and impacting family income and wellbeing.

Access to Early Intervention

Parents of children with developmental concerns, delays or disabilities face long waitlists, delayed assessments and therapy and high costs, making it hard to access vital early intervention.

Value of Diverse Early Learning Services

Families appreciate a range of early learning options (playgroup, creche, toy library, etc.) and want more frequent, flexible and inclusive offerings that cater to all abilities and family needs.

Community Connections and Support

Families value facilitated playgroups and support roles, but many caregivers lack the capacity or willingness to volunteer. Volunteers often take on multiple roles out of necessity, highlighting the need for paid facilitators and support.

Awareness of AEDC and Child Development

Some families talk about development and some were aware of the AEDC. Families focus on play and social connection, not consciously on child development activities.

WHAT THE SERVICE PROVIDERS AND KEY STAKEHOLDERS TOLD US

Service providers reported they continue to work hard to overcome the challenges of running a business or organisation in the City of Karratha delivering human services. Contributions were received from a variety of micro-small businesses, not-for-profit organisations, networks and peak bodies. Key stakeholders provided state and national perspectives.

Major Themes from the Service Providers and Key Stakeholders

These themes reflect the service providers and community organisations input to be able to deliver sustainable and accessible services in the City of Karratha.

Theme	Service Provider and Stakeholder Feedback (Summarised for Strategy)
Workforce Attraction and Retention	There are ongoing shortages of skilled staff—especially in early childhood education, care, allied health and GP roles. High staff turnover affects service continuity. Many early childhood staff relocate for their partner’s work, making retention challenging.
Housing and Cost of Living	Limited affordable and available housing is a major workforce barrier, although local efforts to address this are appreciated. The high cost of living impacts both service providers and local families and many workers leave early childhood roles for higher-paying jobs elsewhere.
Funding and Sustainability	Funding for early years programs—including preventative supports and parent programs—is restricted and many small organisations find it difficult to remain viable without steady grants. Business eligibility for grants is limited and gaps between different funding models (NDIS, Medicare, private) restrict service availability.
Accessibility for Families	Workforce shortages contribute to long waitlists and limited local options, especially in towns outside Karratha. Families face significant out-of-pocket costs for private therapies and rebates are often lacking. Travel distances and commercial space costs further limit service access and some families are not aware of local services.
Awareness and Use of Data for Planning	Many providers aren’t aware of, or do not routinely use, AEDC, SEIFA, NDIS, or Closing the Gap data in service planning, though some leverage these datasets for funding applications and reporting.

To enhance access
to early years
services in the City
of Karratha, it is
essential to

ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY
SUPPORT FOR SMALLER
BUSINESSES.

BUSINESS OWNER,
KARRATHA



STRATEGIC CONTEXT AND FUTURE CHANGES

The City of Karratha's Early Years Strategy is firmly embedded within a multi-layered strategic context, ensuring that local actions align with national, state and regional policy directions and best practice.

Nationally, the strategy is shaped by key frameworks such as Australia's Early Years Strategy 2024–2034, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Strategy and Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031. These documents set a vision for all children to thrive, with a strong focus on equity, inclusion and integrated service delivery. National reforms—including i) the abolition of the Child Care Subsidy activity test; ii) the introduction of universal access guarantees to ECEC; and iii) changes to the NDIS for young children to Thriving Kids—are expected to directly impact service access and demand in The City, particularly for vulnerable and Aboriginal children.

At the State level, while Western Australia does not yet have a single, comprehensive early years strategy, several initiatives are highly relevant. The WA First 1,000 Days Framework and the WACOSS Thriving Pilbara Communities Outcomes Framework both emphasise holistic, community-driven approaches, equity and support for vulnerable families. Recent state commitments—such as expanding free kindergarten, out-of-school-hours care and establishing a dedicated Office of Early Childhood—signal a shift towards more coordinated and accessible early years services, especially in regional and remote areas like Karratha.

Regionally and locally, the City of Karratha's strategy is benchmarked against other local government and community plans, drawing on lessons from similar contexts while tailoring responses to the City's unique demographic profile, high Aboriginal population and remote geography. The strategy aligns with multiple frameworks such as the City's own Council Plan 2025–2035, Community Infrastructure Plan, Disability Access and Inclusion Plan and Playground Strategy, all of which reinforce a commitment to inclusive, place-based and sustainable approaches for children and families.

EARLY YEARS STRATEGY 2026-2031 OVERVIEW

THEME 1: Activities, Programs and Events

GOAL: Our community has a variety of year-round activities, programs and events that support family wellbeing and child development in the early years (0-5 years).

Every family in the City of Karratha can access a diverse range of high-quality experiences that nurture both family wellbeing and the holistic development of children from birth to five. Programs, activities and events are designed to be inclusive and foster a sense of connection, where families feel connected, supported and valued. Children are given every opportunity to thrive through play, exploration and meaningful relationships with others. Importantly, families will have access to activities and programs they can enjoy together year-round, including options suitable for the Pilbara's hot weather.



Item	Objective	Outcome
1.1	Provide year-round activities, programs and events that are accessible, inclusive and family-friendly, supporting child development, celebrating local Aboriginal culture and language and incorporating family-friendly amenities.	Children and caregivers can fully participate in activities, programs and events that are inclusive, culturally connecting, family-friendly, strengthen child development and enhance community belonging all year round.
1.2	Increase community awareness of child development and the importance of the early years.	Families and community members are well-informed about the early years, have access to quality evidence-based programs and feel supported to engage in their community for their children's wellbeing and development.

1.3	Support service providers with funding, resources, training and data-sharing to embed child development outcomes into partnerships, funding submissions and program design.	Local service providers are equipped with the skills, resources and data they need to deliver coordinated, evidence-informed early years programs, secure funding and strengthen outcomes for children and families.
1.4	Align local early years actions with national child development targets, including the AEDC and also Closing the Gap targets for Aboriginal children, to improve equity and ensure children in the City of Karratha are supported to thrive.	Local programs and partnerships contribute to national child development priorities, with measurable improvements in AEDC outcomes and progress against Closing the Gap targets, reducing inequities for children in the City of Karratha. Living in remote Australia will be reduced as a barrier for developmental success when comparing results with state and national performance.
1.5	Target early child development program delivery with a focus on language and cognitive skills, aiming to bring children in the City of Karratha above the national average in the AEDC.	Children in the City of Karratha to improve their language and cognitive skills, with AEDC results for 5-year-olds exceeding the national average, reducing developmental vulnerability and supporting school readiness and learning for life.
1.6	Encourage co-design of activities, programs and events.	Programs are co-designed with community members and organisations to reflect local culture, values and priorities, resulting in more relevant, inclusive and well-attended activities.



Access to culturally-safe parenting programs that recognise the diversity of family structures and strengths of unique Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child rearing practices provide an environment that enables children to fulfil their cultural, developmental and emotional needs³⁵.

³⁵ National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Strategy (2021).

THEME 2: Places and Spaces

GOAL: Places and spaces in our community support child development and play, are inclusive, accessible and safe so families can use them all year round.

We're proud to live in a great part of the world and are committed to creating inclusive, family-friendly spaces across the City of Karratha that nurture every child's development year-round. Our places and spaces are designed to be safe, welcoming and accessible to all abilities and backgrounds. Reflecting local values, these spaces prioritise connection, fun, wellbeing and climate-resilient design to ensure families can participate throughout the year.



Item	Objective	Outcome
2.1	Design outdoor play spaces for year-round use to enhance fun, safety, socialising and learning.	<p>Babies, young children and their carers will have access to safe, fun and engaging outdoor play spaces and community amenities that are designed for year-round use and support early childhood development and community connections.</p> <p>This will be achieved through delivery of the Community Infrastructure Plan and Playground Strategy with young children and their carers as key stakeholders.</p>
2.2	Maximise affordable and accessible City-managed indoor spaces and events year-round, with pricing and programs that reflect local climate.	Families and community members can access affordable, inclusive and climate-appropriate spaces, activities and events year-round, with financial barriers reduced.



Inclusive, safe places and spaces that support play, connection and learning for families all year round.

THEME 3: Access to Services

GOAL: All families have access to the essentials for health, wellbeing, learning and development.

Every family in the City of Karratha will have equitable access to affordable, culturally appropriate and coordinated services that support children's health, wellbeing, learning and development. Gaps in availability and need for high-quality health and community services and early childhood education and care require workforce support and future planning. Families will be empowered with clear information and resources to make informed choices about their children's health and development, ensuring no child misses out due to cost, location, or eligibility. By meeting families' basic needs together as a community, we create the foundation for children to thrive and reach their full potential.



Item	Objective	Outcome
3.1	Improve access to health, development and community services by advocating for increased availability of town-based services and access to facilities.	Families have greater access to regular, locally available health and wellbeing services, reducing travel barriers, improving equity and strengthening child and family outcomes.
3.2	Collaborate on early years sector workforce strategies to support the availability of high-quality, early childhood education and care (ECEC), health and community services.	Building the early years workforce means more local jobs, greater workforce participation, more childcare options and quality services which makes the region a more attractive place for families to live and work
3.3	Advocate to increase early education and care options, including new facilities, home-based family day care, occasional care and outside-school-hours care.	Families, including those with shift work or irregular schedules, have greater access to flexible, high-quality early education and care options that suit their needs, reducing barriers to workforce participation and supporting child development.



THEME 4: Connected Community

GOAL: Families are welcomed, included, informed and connected.

All families in the City of Karratha—residents, newcomers and visitors—feel welcomed and included. The City fosters connection, friendship and peer support so every family can build a sense of belonging and community. Events, programs and public spaces celebrate diversity and strengthen networks that reduce isolation and enhance wellbeing. The community honours and celebrates local Aboriginal culture and the Pilbara's unique environment. By promoting mutual respect, collaboration and consistent access across all towns, the City ensures families are informed, confident and part of a vibrant, supportive community. When families thrive, children thrive.



Item	Objective	Outcome
4.1	Develop a centralised digital information hub with interactive maps to showcase the local amenities, service locations, events and programs.	Families, community members, potential new residents and visitors have easy access to accurate, centralised information and maps of local amenities, services, contact lists, events calendar and programs, leading to greater awareness, participation and community connection.
4.2	Deliver a welcome and orientation program that provides families, community members, potential residents and visitors with clear information about the area, amenities, events and services.	Families, community members and visitors feel welcomed, informed and connected to services and activities, fostering belonging, participation and stronger community networks. New residents are encouraged to relocate.
4.3	Enhance the visibility, accessibility and consistency of City communications (digital and physical) to ensure all families are well-informed about programs, events, services and opportunities in every town.	Local families can easily access up-to-date information through multiple channels—such as social media, community boards, physical noticeboards and the digital hub—that keeps them informed about early years services, programs and events, while also supporting awareness of child development.
4.4	Foster community connections across generations and cultures for young children and their families to learn and share together (aligned with the Reconciliation Action Plan development and Age Friendly Strategy 2021-2026).	By partnering with local community members, peer groups and organisations, the City creates opportunities for young children and their families to connect across generations and cultures, strengthening relationships, celebrating diversity and building a more inclusive and cohesive community.

Being connected to community, culture and decision-making fosters resilience and supports long-term wellbeing.³⁶

³⁵ ARACY – Every Child Thriving

THEME 5: Strategic Advocacy

GOAL: The City of Karratha champions early childhood development as a community priority, ensuring children aged 0-5 and their families are supported to thrive.

The City of Karratha champions early childhood development as a community priority. Working with families, service providers, community organisations, Council and internal teams, the City ensures local needs shape decisions guided by evidence and best practice. Dedicated resources and strong advocacy drive innovation, while early years priorities are embedded across planning and community agendas. By supporting workforce participation, leveraging partnerships and funding and engaging the community, the City delivers inclusive initiatives with accountability at the centre.



Item	Objective	Outcome
5.1	Actively advocate and influence at local, state and national levels by sharing local evidence and data and calling for increased investment, policy reform and place-based solutions.	The City's children and families benefit from stronger representation in decision-making, targeted investment and policies that better reflect local needs.
5.2	Implement the Early Years Strategy 2026-2031 as a success measure of the Council Plan 2025-2035 (Goal 3).	<p>Internal Accountability Outcome (Council and staff): Through professional development and reporting, elected Council members and staff have increased knowledge of the early years priorities and child development, leading to stronger governance, informed decision-making and consistent integration of child-friendly principles across City policies and services.</p> <p>External Impact Outcome (families and community): Families and community members have access to clear, transparent information on progress and priorities, fostering trust, accountability and a shared commitment to creating a child-friendly community.</p>
5.3	Embed the early years as a core strategic priority across all relevant City portfolios.	Integrate early years priorities into City strategies, policies and infrastructure planning processes to ensure children 0–5 and their families are considered in Council decision-making and investment across all service areas.
5.4	Provide, advocate for and leverage funding opportunities from government, business and philanthropy to address inequity and deliver targeted, evidence-based opportunities.	Funding and partnerships secured to deliver targeted programs, activities and events for vulnerable children and to increase the number of children considered developmentally 'On Track' in the AEDC.
5.5	Child safety is embedded in the City of Karratha's services, leadership, governance and culture, supporting the implementation of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.	The City demonstrates a strong child-safe culture where policies, practices and governance uphold children's rights, safety and wellbeing, ensuring families and the community have confidence in all services and activities.



whatwemakeit.karratha.wa.gov.au