

Support for the Pavilion School

The Whittlesea Community Futures is seeking State Government support to enable the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Pavilion School to build a secure future in the City of Whittlesea and expand its operations to meet the growing demand.

What is happening right now?

The Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) established the Pavilion School in response to an identified need in the Northern Region for an alternative to mainstream school. The School is a program for students who have been exited from or disengaged from mainstream schools and who are having difficulty transitioning to TAFE and other accredited programs.

The Pavilion School aims to re-engage young people who are currently disengaged from any form of education, by providing students with a relevant and individually tailored education program. The Pavilion School is particularly suited to students who have complex life situations and who present with a range of risk factors. This program meets the educational standards of the DEECD in Victoria. The Pavilion School provides students with a learning environment that is supportive and productive.

It has two campuses – East Preston and South Morang. The South Morang (Mill Park) campus operates from the EDGE Youth Service facility run by the City of Whittlesea. This space is at capacity and the waiting list is growing. Council is unable to expand the area available to the school and has worked hard to identify other sites that may be able to accommodate growth.

Growing youth population

The need for additional space will continue to grow as the population of the City of Whittlesea is expected to grow by 120,556 people between 2013 and 2031 leading to a forecast total of 297,151 peopleⁱ. The sheer number of additional young people will put pressure on existing resources.

The City of Whittlesea's age profile is characterised by a relatively younger population than that of Greater Melbourne. In 2011 there was a larger percentage of 'Primary schoolers 5-11 years' (9.5% for City of Whittlesea compared to 8.4% for Greater Melbourne); a larger percentage of 'Babies and pre-schoolers 0-4 years' (7.4% compared to 6.5%); and a larger percentage of 'Young workforce 26-34 years' (16.3% compared to 15.4%)ⁱⁱ. The largest population growth between 2013 and 2023 is forecast to be in people aged under 15 years and in those aged 30-49 years of ageⁱⁱⁱ.

Significant number of local young people disengaged from school system

There are a significant number of young people in the City of Whittlesea who have disengaged from the school system. In 2011, 9.2% of the City of Whittlesea's population aged 15-24 years were not employed or attending an education institute compared to 7.4% in Greater Melbourne^{iv}. This varied across the municipality, ranging from a low of 3.7% in Blossom Park to 14.5% in Lalor.

In 2012 a report on school disengagement was prepared for the Hume Whittlesea Youth Connections Consortium and the Hume Whittlesea Local Learning and Employment Network

(LLEN) by the Asquith Group. The report found that there were 436 young people under the age of 16 who were attending school irregularly or not at all in the City of Whittlesea. Of this under 16 year old cohort the report identified 40 young people who were totally disengaged from school. The report identified that there were many more young people over the age of 16 who were not engaged in any education and training. Importantly the report identified that there were few alternative options for young people who had been expelled or disengaged from schools in the Northern Region. It states that the Pavilion School is the only alternative option for young people who are under 16 years.

Pavilion School is at capacity

The Pavilion School has waiting lists at both of its campuses. At the time of writing this document, the Mill Park campus has 26 young people on the waiting list. While this list fluctuates, it doesn't fall below 20 students as the school can only bring a new student in, when another student exits. Young people on the Pavilion waiting list find it extremely difficult to find alternative education provision as they have complex needs and present with co-occurring risk factors. For this reason young people on the wait list are missing school for up to nine months while they wait for a placement at the Pavilion to become available.

How much will it cost?

Costs for building and refurbishment would depend on the site and situation. The Pavilion School requires adequate space for three classrooms, office space for 12 staff and two counselling / meeting rooms. This could be within existing premises, for example a co-location with a similar service, or it could be a new building on existing government or private land.

The Pavilion School is funded through DEECD and would get an increased operational budget as more students enrolled. A larger school site would mean more classrooms, additional students and more school funding.

How does the community benefit?

DEECD will provide critical opportunities for young people disengaged from mainstream education to continue to learn and understand the long term benefits of learning success by securing the long term future of the Pavilion School and providing the resources for its expansion to meet demand.

The benefits for the students are significantly improved life outcomes and the benefits for the community are more engaged and connected young people. The Pavilion School engages students with high risk and complex life situations. If these students are engaged in a protective school environment, they are less risk to the community and create less demand on the welfare and DHS systems. The Pavilion School transitions 82% of its exiting students to further education and employment, thereby reducing demand on Centrelink and easing youth unemployment rates.

What objectives does this help us achieve?

Federal Government

- National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions
- Improving Tertiary Pathways

Victorian Government

- DEECD - commitment to providing appropriate compulsory education for all young Victorians

City of Whittlesea

- Municipal Lifelong Learning strategy and Action Plan

Key Messages

- The Pavilion School is a successful model re-engaging young people in education and has a growing waiting list
- Growing number of young people particularly in the growth areas
- Whittlesea Community Futures is seeking State Government support to expand DEECD's support for the Pavilion

i Forecast.id (2013). City of Whittlesea Profile

ii Profile.id 2013

iii Forecast.id 2013

iv atlas.id 2013