



**Mr Jason Whiteaker**  
**CEO**  
**Shire of Mundaring**  
**7000 Great Eastern Highway, Mundaring WA 6073**

Dear Mr Whiteaker

**RE: Development Approval for 1 Amherst Avenue, Darlington**

It is with pleasure that we present our development application for a family owned and operated child care centre at 1 Amherst Avenue, Darlington.

In support of our development application, we provide details below of the current childcare service gap that currently exists within Darlington, the benefits of increased childcare options, the anticipated synergies and cross patronage resulting from the proposed development in the context of the Darlington local hub activation, and the appropriateness of the particular location adjacent to the primary school.

Darlington has been a high priority area for us for a new child care centre for some time due to the complete lack of long day care places within Darlington, coupled with the presence of three primary schools. Primary schools have natural synergies with child care centres operationally, with the added benefits of the school being a driver of regular patrons for the centres.

**Childcare needs in Darlington:**

There are currently no long day care childcare places in Darlington, as confirmed through market research<sup>1</sup> and in a recent extensive child needs assessment undertaken by The Mitchell Institute for Education and Health Policy at Victoria University<sup>2</sup> (Assessment).

The Assessment reviewed the supply of childcare across Australia and compared this to the potential demand, being the number of children living in each neighbourhood. This revealed where in Australia the demand for spaces in early childhood education and care outpaces local capacity to provide services, areas they termed as 'childcare deserts'.

Per the Assessment, deserts 'is a term that comes from the early learning research literature and refers to areas where childcare is most scarce'.

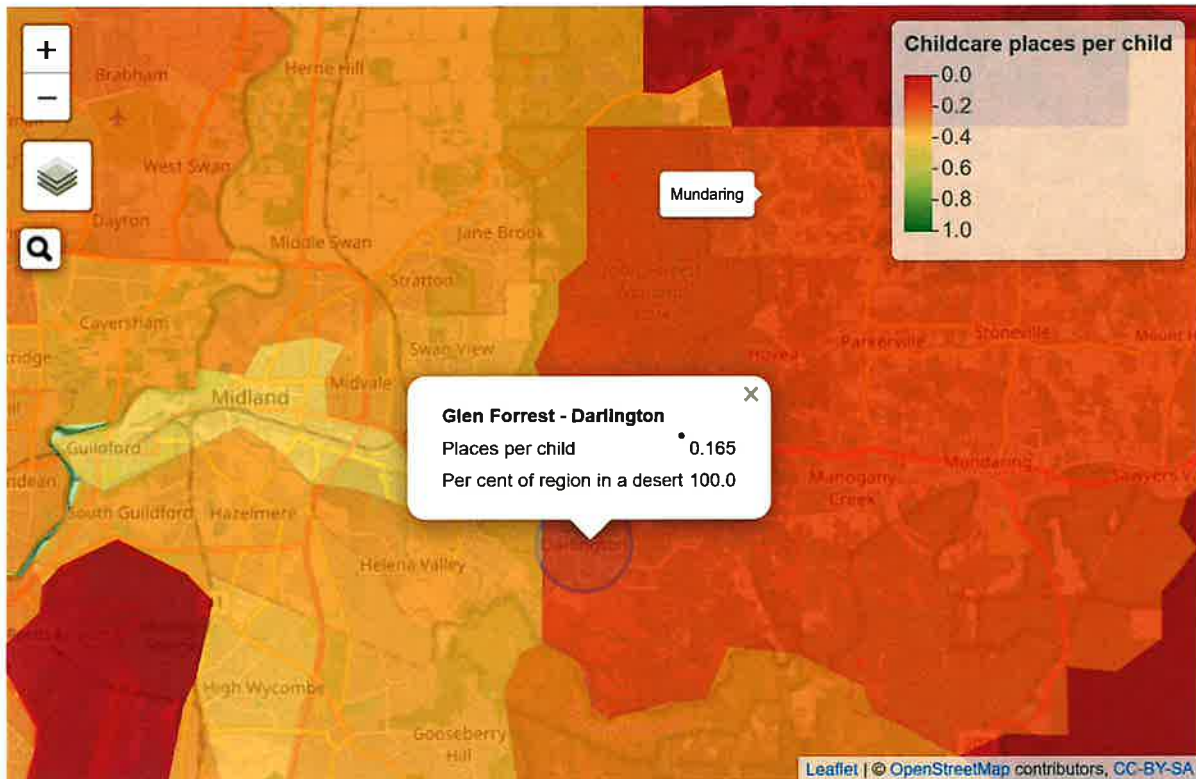
As clearly demonstrated in their corresponding interactive map<sup>3</sup> (below), 100% of the region of Darlington – Glen Forrest is in this 'desert' classification.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.careforkids.com.au/child-care/darlington/6070>

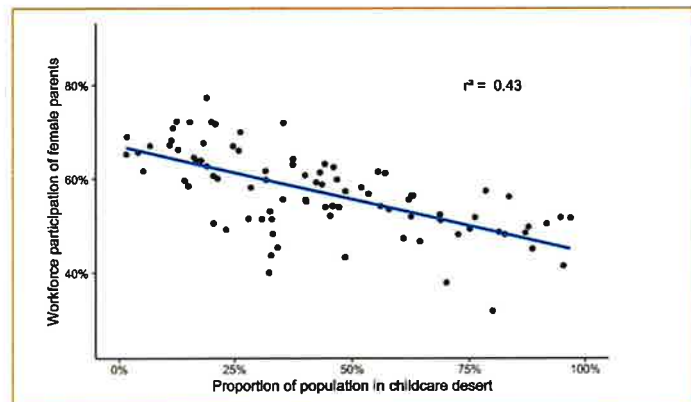
<sup>2</sup> Hurley, P., Matthews, H., & Pennicuik, S. (2022). Deserts and oases: How accessible is childcare? Mitchell Institute, Victoria University.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.vu.edu.au/mitchell-institute/education/early-learning/childcare-deserts-oases-interactive-maps>



Further, the Assessment considers the correlation between the accessibility of childcare and female workforce participation.

As represented on the chart extract from the Assessment (to the right)<sup>4</sup>, those in a childcare desert have lower levels of workforce participation for females who have a child aged under five in the household. The presence of a child care centre therefore, has the potential to facilitate increased female workforce participation.



We agree with the Assessment conclusions that ‘Access to quality childcare has enormous impacts on the current and future lives of Australians,’ and that ‘children need a system that meets their needs so that they can have the best start in life, regardless of where they live or the income of their parents’. It is our goal to deliver exceeding rated Early Learning options to support the family as a whole, particularly in areas where current provision is scarce. As acknowledged through the Covid-19 response, child care is an essential service, widely recognised as enabling families to work and/or study, and as stated by Tony Stuart (CEO UNICEF Australia) “.. the first 2,000 days in a child’s life have a significant bearing on health, development, and educational attainment, and the services provided by ECEC (Early Childhood Education and Care) supports this.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.vu.edu.au/mitchell-institute/early-learning/childcare-deserts-oases-how-accessible-is-childcare-in-australia>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.unicef.org.au/media-release/early-childhood-education-care-an-essential-service>

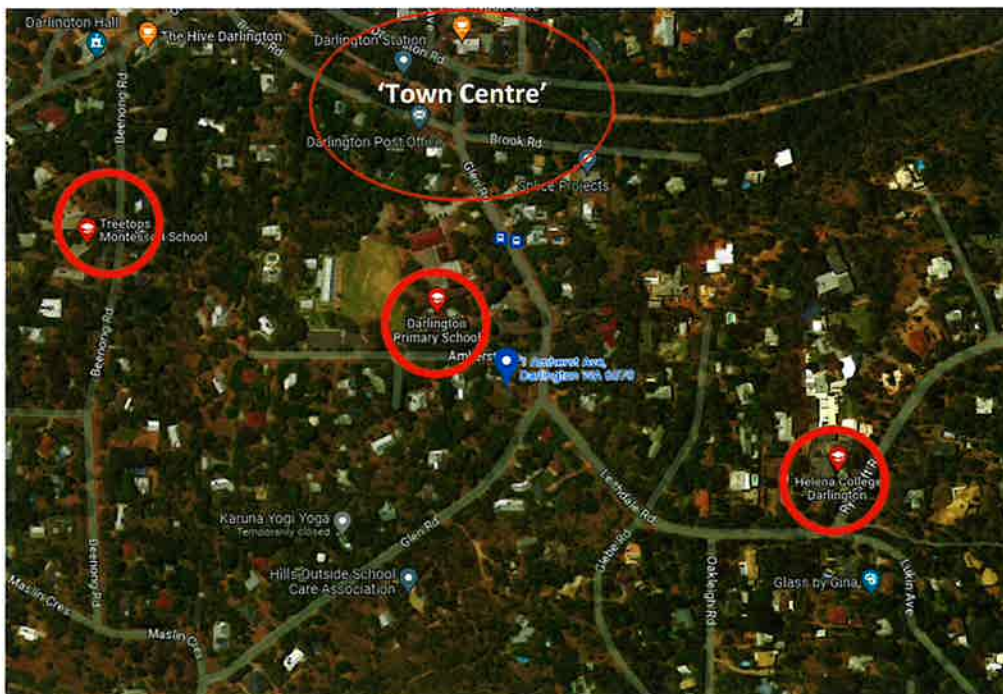


### Constraints inhibiting the delivery of these essential services

The property market for sites potentially suitable for childcare in Darlington has historically been tightly held, due to the longstanding Darlington Precinct Plan which prohibits child care, size of land required, topography constraints with significantly undulating land, wastewater restrictions given lack of sewerage connections, larger sites being zoned 'rural residential' for which child care is an X use, and general location / accessibility preferences for child care uses.

We believe 1 Amherst Avenue mitigates the vast majority of these constraints, and is one of the only sites in Darlington that could facilitate a child care centre, due the following unique factors:

- Corner site extending to 1,973sqm – corner site being more favourable for acoustics and accessibility
- Is not located within the Darlington Precinct Plan area (however, we are cognisant of the objectives of the Plan nonetheless)
- Relatively level, regular in shape and usable block for development
- Zoned Residential R5: Child Care can be contemplated – Child Care is an 'A' use
- Shares an Access Road to the school, and adjacent a Local Distributor Road (Local Distributor more favourable for child care per the recent DPLH Draft Position Statement, and Access Road in this instance already being used for school drop offs and pickups – potential for synergies)
- Approximately 150m from two bus stops servicing Midland Train Station
- Conveniently located close to the 'town centre' of Darlington
- Critically, it is directly across from Darlington Primary School, in close proximity (500 metres) to Helena College - Darlington Campus (K-5) and 900 metres from Treetops Montessori Primary the latter two of which draw from an even further catchment. See map below.





### **Synergy with the adjacent primary school and the importance of early childhood education**

The proposed centre's program will be based on the Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Framework for Australia (EYLF or Framework<sup>6</sup>), developed by the Australian Government Department of Education for the Ministerial Council "to support early childhood providers, teachers and educators to extend and enrich children's learning from birth to 5 years and through the transition to school".

The Framework "draws on robust Australian and international evidence that confirms early childhood is a vital period in children's continuing learning, development and wellbeing."

In addition to the benefits and importance of early childhood education, there are widely recognised advantages of co-location of children's services facilities with primary schools. Convenience is offered to parents of children attending both facilities with reduced trips, while 'interaction between the two services provides a smooth transition for children entering the primary school system'. Sense of community is also strengthened and established early, as is a sense of Place.

A number of Local Councils including but not limited to City of Stirling, City of Wanneroo, City of Belmont, City of Melville and City of Rockingham, highlight their preference for childcare centres to be located adjacent to educational facilities in their childcare policies. We note the recently endorsed Shire policy also advocates for the location in close proximity to schools. "The Shire encourages convenient access to these services in and around local centres, existing educational uses/reserves and where appropriate, in residential areas"<sup>7</sup>.

### **Local WA family-owned centre**

As a local family-owned childcare provider, having sister centres under the brand of Studio 64, we take pride in our bespoke operations, and have been rated as one of the first in WA to achieve 'Exceeding' under the new National Quality Standards.

Of particular note was our Exceeding Quality Report for our Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities. In South Perth for example we:

- Have regular Local aged care provider visits to engage in activities with our children
- 'Edible Laneway' initiative where herb gardens were planted with our parents and the community
- Local Library fortnightly reading sessions with our children
- Local foreshore pram walks with the children so they can experience the local community and amenities
- Local collaborations with schools (e.g. mural artwork with Perth Modern, School readiness collaboration with South Perth Primary)

We are delighted and exceptionally proud to confirm that in May 2024, we have retained this 'Exceeding' rating against the backdrop of the increasingly higher expectations of the Regulatory body.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-01/EYLF-2022-V2.0.pdf>  
<sup>7</sup> 3.2 CHILD CARE PREMISES AND FAMILY DAY CARE, Planning Policy, Shire of Mundaring



We rely on word of mouth and adapt each carefully selected centre to the immediate environs and community. Our proposal seeks to respect the and contribute positively to the identity, character, and aesthetic of Darlington.

**New jobs**

The Centre will bring additional job prospects to the local community of Darlington, and cross patronage of families attending the childcare centre with nearby local businesses will provide opportunities to boost the local economy.

We are more than happy to meet to discuss further, are excited to invest in the Shire of Mundaring and hope to receive the Shire's support for this much needed service.

Kind regards

Trish Byrne

General Manager Property – Rpoint on behalf of Briscola Pty Ltd and Studio 64 Group