

PGP FUNDING IN DETAIL

GROWTH FUNDING: HOW IT WORKS

Past editions of *Growing Places* have provided information on funding available through the Preschool Growth Program. From time to time, the Preschool Growth Program is approached by services interested in 'applying' for funding. Instead of an application process, we work with preschools to identify growth opportunities that can be achieved with funding through our program. This process involves an exchange of information about the service—our recommendations are informed by what we know from data about the area's demographics and identified need. Of course, preschools are free to self-identify opportunities for growth but there is no rigid application process.

STEP 1: We first work with existing preschools to examine whether they have capacity to grow under their current licence. As many preschools have more children enrolled than their funding cap accommodates, where there is a demonstrated need, we assess whether the preschool can expand licensed numbers—basically, whether the premises could accommodate more children without changes. If the answer is 'yes', the service submits a licence variation to Community Services. The Preschool Growth Program can then provide funding for the potential additional enrolments up to the service's new funding cap.

STEP 2: Where a preschool's existing premises has available space for expansion, we look at how the service could go about using this space. Sometimes, we may provide small amounts of funding to facilitate the necessary measurement, plans, development application approvals and costing estimates for the service. This funding can be a pathway to capital works funding which must result in considerable growth in enrolments and increased licensed numbers, with a resulting increase in the funding cap. Once this process is complete, we can then fund the potential spots* created.

STEP 3: In some instances, there will be strong cases for preschool spots in areas where there is a substantial undersupply of preschool programs to meet the demand. These areas have been identified by Community Services and also through our work with social planning data.

Where a new preschool may need to be established, we first exhaust possibilities with existing services. We then look to any auspice organisations/councils that may already operate children's services in the area to seek their engagement.

In continuing our investigations, we then determine who holds the land in the area. Often, land is owned by local government as a community space, or owned by a church or other community organisation, or even a local public school.

We then work with interested groups to do everything possible to establish a new service in response to the demand. Overall, when we are recommending funding, we look at the future population need for the service in addition to the immediate need and we have an over-arching principle of sustainability.

CAPITAL FUNDING: WHAT IS IT FOR AND WHAT IS IT NOT FOR?

All capital funding provided through the Preschool Growth Program (PGP) links to growth in preschool spots for a service, and will tie in with license requirements.

There is a substantial lead in process leading to a capital funding request where PGP Project Officers assess and consider possibilities with the service. Recommendations for capital funding are made after considering social planning data, existing services in the area and whether or not other avenues of funding have been exhausted. The growth phase of the Preschool Investment and Reform Program is not intended as a capital funding program. Capital works take a long period of time and substantial funding to achieve growth, so if growth can be achieved through other avenues this is first explored.

- Capital funding is generally not considered where a preschool is under cap, unless there are circumstances where the service is hampered in growth by elements that would be eliminated through capital works.
- All capital works must result in increased licensed numbers and increased funded spots, which are then able to be funded as potential growth once the space is ready for children.

- Capital funding is not for non-essential construction that is unrelated to preschool growth. The Preschool Growth Program is aware that many services have urgent need for minor capital improvements to their premises (such as upgrading playgrounds, kitchens, staff rooms or purchasing new equipment) but this is not the program for these kind of projects.
- For capital funding under \$250,000 the funding agreement (and the money!) is issued by PGP—for larger projects it comes from Community Services. Capital funding requires substantial documentation in order for the funds to be released. All capital funding (regardless of the amount) goes through the same approval process via PGP.

Does your preschool have premises that could be developed further to achieve growth? Is there clear demand in your area and have you exhausted other growth possibilities? Speak with your Project Officer to explore this further.

* Spots are the number of 2.5-day enrolments that a preschool can enrol under their licence across the week.