

# 9. BUDGET FRAMEWORK & ROI PROJECTIONS

## Your Early Learning Centre



1 Sample Street, Sample Town SA 0000

Three-Tier Budget Recommendation with Projected ROI per Channel | March 2026

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*Prepared by ChildCare Marketing*

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*Increasing Occupancy in your Early Learning Centre*

## 9.1. How to Use This Budget Framework

This section provides a structured, evidence-based digital marketing budget framework for Your ELC, presented across three investment tiers: Essential, Growth, and Scale. Each tier is designed to reflect realistic cost-of-market conditions in regional South Australia and is aligned directly to the 12-month digital strategy detailed in Section 8.

The framework is NOT a fixed price list — it is a decision-making tool. Your recommended starting tier is determined by your current occupancy rate, competitive pressure, and available resources. As performance data matures, budgets should be reviewed quarterly and adjusted toward the channels delivering the best cost-per-enquiry (CPE).

Important: These projections are based on industry benchmarks for regional Australian childcare centres and should be treated as directional estimates. Actual performance will vary based on centre-specific factors including current website quality, existing brand recognition, local competition intensity, and ad account history. All figures are exclusive of GST.

## 9.2. Which Tier Is Right for Your ELC?

Use the decision framework below to identify your recommended starting budget tier based on current centre performance and competitive context.

Your Situation	Recommended Tier
Occupancy below 70%; high local competition; little digital presence; urgent need to fill places	Tier 2 — Growth (fast-track investment to build visibility quickly)
Occupancy 70–85%; moderate competition; some digital presence; steady but slow enquiry flow	Tier 1 — Essential (solidify foundations; grow organically before adding paid media)
Occupancy 85–95%; looking to maintain premium positioning and future-proof against new competitors	Tier 2 — Growth (defend your market position; own the digital space proactively)
New centre opening or recently relocated; need rapid local awareness	Tier 3 — Scale (maximum visibility investment in launch window)
Established centre with strong occupancy (95%+); limited waitlist; brand refresh only	Tier 1 — Essential (maintain presence; no aggressive growth investment needed)

## 9.3. Three-Tier Budget Overview

The table below summarises total monthly investment, annual commitment, and primary strategic focus for each of the three budget tiers.

	<b>Tier 1 — Essential</b>	<b>Tier 2 — Growth</b>	<b>Tier 3 — Scale</b>
<b>Monthly Budget Range</b>	\$800 – \$1,500	\$1,500 – \$3,000	\$3,000 – \$5,000+
<b>Annual Investment</b>	\$9,600 – \$18,000	\$18,000 – \$36,000	\$36,000 – \$60,000+
<b>Primary Focus</b>	Organic foundations (GBP, reviews, website, social)	Organic + entry-level paid (Google Ads, Meta Ads, content)	Full-funnel paid + content (scale ads, video, SEO, email)
<b>Ideal For</b>	Centres with moderate occupancy seeking steady growth	Centres needing faster results or facing strong competition	New centres, high competition zones, aggressive growth targets
<b>Est. Monthly Enquiries (at 12 months)</b>	5–10 additional	15–25 additional	30–50 additional
<b>Est. New Enrolments (Year 1)</b>	3–6	10–18	20–35
<b>Avg. Annual Revenue Added (at \$80/day avg. fee)</b>	\$25k – \$55k	\$80k – \$150k	\$165k – \$290k
<b>Payback Period</b>	6–12 months	4–8 months	3–6 months

## 9.4. Tier 1 — Essential Budget Breakdown (\$800-\$1,500/month)

Tier 1 is built entirely on organic and low-cost digital foundations. No paid advertising is included. This tier is appropriate for centres that need to build credibility and improve their digital presence before investing in paid channels. It assumes approximately 5–10 hours of internal staff time per month plus minimal external costs.

### TIER 1 — ESSENTIAL | Monthly Budget: \$800-\$1,500 | Annual: \$9,600-\$18,000

<b>Budget Item</b>	<b>Monthly Allocation</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
Google Business Profile management	\$0 (time cost: 2hrs/mo)	Highest ROI free digital tool; critical for local search visibility
Google Review program	\$0 (time cost: 1hr/mo)	Review requests via email/SMS; direct impact on GBP ranking
Website updates and maintenance	\$100–\$300/mo (or in-house)	CMS updates, photo uploads, blog posts, fee/CCS page maintenance
Social media management (organic)	\$0–\$200/mo (or in-house)	Facebook + Instagram; 3–5 posts/week; community management
Email marketing platform (e.g. Mailchimp)	\$50–\$100/mo	Monthly newsletter; enquiry nurture sequences; waitlist communications
Content creation (photography, blog writing)	\$200–\$500/mo	Smartphone photos + 1 professional shoot; 1 blog post per month
Childcare directory listings (Childcare.com.au)	\$100–\$200/mo	Enhanced listing for higher visibility in family research stage

Graphic design (Canva Pro or similar)	\$20–\$50/mo	Social media templates, newsletter design, flyer updates
TOTAL (approximate)	\$470–\$1,350/month	Excludes staff time; focused entirely on organic growth channels

Tier 1 ROI Estimate: Assuming 5 new enrolments in Year 1 at an average annual fee of \$9,000 per child, Tier 1 investment generates approximately \$45,000 in new annual revenue — a return of 2.5x to 4.7x on marketing investment.

## 9.5. Tier 2 — Growth Budget Breakdown (\$1,500–\$3,000/month)

Tier 2 builds on the Tier 1 organic foundations by adding entry-level paid advertising via Google Search Ads and Meta (Facebook/Instagram) Ads. This is the recommended tier for most centres facing moderate competition, with occupancy targets of 85–95%.

**TIER 2 — GROWTH | Monthly Budget: \$1,500–\$3,000 | Annual: \$18,000–\$36,000**

Budget Item	Monthly Allocation	Rationale
All Tier 1 activities (as above)	\$470–\$1,350/mo	Foundation layer maintained throughout
Google Search Ads (ad spend)	\$400–\$800/mo	'Childcare [town]', 'long day care', 'childcare near me' campaigns
Google Ads management	\$200–\$400/mo	Campaign setup, optimisation, monthly reporting (agency or specialist)
Meta Ads — Facebook + Instagram (ad spend)	\$200–\$400/mo	Awareness + lead generation campaigns; local family targeting 25–40
Meta Ads management	\$150–\$300/mo	Creative, audience targeting, A/B testing, monthly reporting
Content upgrade: Reels / short video	\$100–\$200/mo	Monthly Reels production (smartphone); boosts organic reach significantly
SEO — keyword targeting and link building	\$150–\$300/mo	Monthly SEO activity to improve organic rankings on priority keywords
TOTAL (approximate)	\$1,670–\$3,750/month	Blended organic + paid strategy; expect results within 60–90 days of launch

Tier 2 ROI Estimate: Assuming 14 new enrolments in Year 1 at \$9,000 average annual fee, Tier 2 generates approximately \$126,000 in new annual revenue — a return of 3.5x to 7x on marketing investment. This is the recommended tier for most centres in competitive catchments.

## 9.6. Tier 3 — Scale Budget Breakdown (\$3,000-\$5,000+/month)

Tier 3 is recommended for new centre openings, centres facing aggressive competition from new corporate entrants, or centres seeking to dominate their local market and build a multi-year waitlist. It includes full-funnel paid media, professional video production, and comprehensive content marketing.

**TIER 3 — SCALE | Monthly Budget: \$3,000-\$5,000+ | Annual: \$36,000-\$60,000+**

Budget Item	Monthly Allocation	Rationale
All Tier 2 activities (as above)	\$1,670-\$3,750/mo	Growth layer maintained as base
Google Search Ads — expanded campaigns (ad spend)	\$600-\$1,200/mo	Expanded keywords; competitor conquest campaigns; Performance Max
Meta Ads — full-funnel (awareness + retargeting + leads)	\$400-\$800/mo	Awareness → consideration → enquiry → enrolment full-funnel setup
Professional video production (centre tour + programs)	\$500-\$800/mo amortised	Quarterly professional video shoots; YouTube, website, and social use
Advanced SEO (technical + content + local citations)	\$300-\$600/mo	Technical SEO audit, schema markup, local citation building
PR and local community sponsorships	\$200-\$400/mo	Local media placements, community event sponsorships, school partnerships
CRM / marketing automation	\$100-\$300/mo	Automated email sequences; waitlist nurture; re-enquiry follow-up
Dedicated marketing coordinator or agency retainer	\$500-\$1,000/mo	Dedicated resource for execution, reporting, and optimisation
TOTAL (approximate)	\$4,270-\$8,850/month	Full-market-dominance investment; suitable for launch or high-growth phases

Tier 3 ROI Estimate: Assuming 28 new enrolments in Year 1 at \$9,000 average annual fee, Tier 3 generates approximately \$252,000 in new annual revenue — a return of 2.8x to 5.9x on marketing investment. At scale, the investment becomes self-funding within 3–6 months.

## 9.7. Channel-by-Channel Budget & Allocation Matrix

The following matrix shows recommended monthly spend per channel across all three tiers, enabling direct comparison and easy budget customisation.

Channel / Activity	Tier 1 —	Tier 2 —	Tier 3 —	Notes
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	Essential \$800- \$1,500/mo	Growth \$1,500- \$3,000/mo	Scale \$3,000- \$5,000/mo	
Google Business Profile (management)	\$0 (time)	\$0 (time)	\$0 (time)	Free tool; allocate 2hrs/month internal time
Google Review program	\$0 (time)	\$0 (time)	\$0 (time)	Time investment only; highest free ROI activity
Website maintenance and updates	\$100–\$300	\$200–\$400	\$300–\$600	Higher tiers include SEO content integration
Social media — organic management	\$0–\$200	\$0–\$200	\$200–\$400	Content creation time; graphics tools
Email marketing platform	\$50–\$100	\$50–\$100	\$100–\$200	Mailchimp, ActiveCampaign, or similar
Content creation (photos, blog, copy)	\$200–\$500	\$300–\$600	\$500–\$900	Tier 3 includes professional video
Directory listings (Childcare.com.au etc.)	\$100–\$200	\$100–\$200	\$150–\$300	Enhanced profiles for family research channels
Google Search Ads — ad spend	\$0	\$400–\$800	\$600–\$1,200	Tier 1: not recommended until organic is strong
Google Ads — management	\$0	\$200–\$400	\$300–\$600	Agency or specialist management fee
Meta Ads (FB/IG) — ad spend	\$0	\$200–\$400	\$400–\$800	Brand awareness + lead generation campaigns
Meta Ads — management	\$0	\$150–\$300	\$300–\$600	Creative, targeting, reporting
SEO (keyword targeting, links, technical)	\$0–\$100	\$150–\$300	\$300–\$600	Tier 1: DIY only; Tier 2–3: specialist required
Video production (amortised monthly)	\$0	\$0–\$100	\$500–\$800	Quarterly shoots amortised over 3 months
PR / sponsorships / community	\$0	\$0–\$100	\$200–\$400	Local media and community investment
CRM / marketing automation	\$0	\$50–\$100	\$100–\$300	Automated nurture sequences
TOTAL MONTHLY (approx.)	\$450–\$1,400	\$1,550–\$3,500	\$3,950–\$7,900	Adjust based on in-house vs. outsourced work

## 9.8. ROI Projections by Channel

The following projections are based on industry-average conversion rates for Australian childcare marketing campaigns and internal ChildCare Marketing benchmark data. They represent Year 1 estimates assuming consistent strategy execution.

Key Assumptions: Average annual fee revenue per enrolled child = \$9,000. Average household enrolls 1.3 children. Enquiry-to-tour conversion rate = 40%. Tour-to-enrolment conversion rate = 55%. Organic channels have a 60–90 day ramp-up period before delivering consistent results.

### Tier 1 — Essential: ROI by Channel

Channel	Monthly Spend	Est. Monthly Enquiries	Cost Per Enquiry	Est. New Enrolments
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				(Annual)
Google Business Profile + Reviews	\$0 (time)	3–5 per month	\$0 (time)	3–5 enrolments
Website SEO improvements	\$100–\$300	1–2 per month	\$50–\$300	1–2 enrolments
Social Media (organic)	\$0–\$200	1–2 per month	\$0–\$200	1–2 enrolments
Directory Listings	\$100–\$200	1 per month	\$100–\$200	1 enrolment
Email Marketing	\$50–\$100	1 per month	\$50–\$100	1 enrolment
<b>TOTAL — TIER 1</b>	<b>\$250–\$800/mo</b>	<b>7–11 per month</b>	<b>\$25–\$115 avg</b>	<b>7–11 enrolments (Year 1)</b>

### Tier 2 — Growth: ROI by Channel (additional to Tier 1)

Channel	Monthly Spend	Est. Monthly Enquiries	Cost Per Enquiry	Est. New Enrolments (Annual)
Google Search Ads	\$600–\$1,200/mo	8–15 per month	\$40–\$75	8–15 enrolments
Meta Ads (FB/IG)	\$350–\$700/mo	4–8 per month	\$45–\$88	4–8 enrolments
SEO acceleration	\$150–\$300/mo	2–4 per month	\$38–\$150	2–4 enrolments
All Tier 1 channels	\$250–\$800/mo	7–11 per month	\$25–\$115	7–11 enrolments
<b>TOTAL — TIER 2</b>	<b>\$1,350–\$3,000/mo</b>	<b>21–38 per month</b>	<b>\$35–\$79 avg</b>	<b>21–38 enrolments (Year 1)</b>

### Tier 3 — Scale: ROI by Channel (additional to Tier 2)

Channel	Monthly Spend	Est. Monthly Enquiries	Cost Per Enquiry	Est. New Enrolments (Annual)
Google Ads (expanded + Performance Max)	\$900–\$1,800/mo	15–25 per month	\$36–\$72	15–25 enrolments
Meta Ads (full-funnel)	\$700–\$1,400/mo	8–15 per month	\$47–\$88	8–15 enrolments
Video content (YouTube + social)	\$500–\$800/mo	3–5 per month	\$100–\$267	3–5 enrolments
Advanced SEO + PR	\$500–\$1,000/mo	4–8 per month	\$63–\$250	4–8 enrolments
All Tier 2 channels	\$1,350–\$3,000/mo	21–38 per month	\$35–\$79	21–38 enrolments
<b>TOTAL — TIER 3</b>	<b>\$3,950–\$8,000/mo</b>	<b>51–91 per month</b>	<b>\$43–\$78 avg</b>	<b>51–91 enrolments (Year 1)</b>

## 9.9. Realistic Annual Revenue Return by Tier

The table below calculates the estimated annual revenue return for each budget tier, based on conservative enrolment projections and an average annual fee of \$9,000 per child.

Metric	Tier 1 — Essential	Tier 2 — Growth	Tier 3 — Scale
Annual marketing investment	\$9,600–\$18,000	\$18,000–\$42,000	\$47,000–\$96,000
Conservative Year 1 new enrolments	4–6	10–15	20–30
Revenue per enrolment (avg. annual fee)	\$9,000	\$9,000	\$9,000
Est. new annual revenue (Year 1)	\$36,000–\$54,000	\$90,000–\$135,000	\$180,000–\$270,000
Return on Marketing Investment (ROMI)	2.0x – 5.6x	2.1x – 7.5x	1.9x – 5.7x
Break-even point (months)	Month 4–8	Month 3–6	Month 3–5
Ongoing value (Year 2+ retention)	+\$36k–54k/yr	+\$90k–135k/yr	+\$180k–270k/yr

## 9.10. Recommended Budget Phasing (12-Month Ramp)

Rather than committing to maximum spend from Day 1, the following phasing plan allows Your ELC to build confidently from foundations to full-scale investment, with budget increases tied to demonstrated performance milestones.

Phase	Budget Recommendation
Months 1–3 (Foundation)	Start at Tier 1 regardless of ultimate tier target. Invest in GBP, reviews, website fixes, and social media. Establish tracking and Analytics before any paid investment.
Months 4–6 (Acceleration)	Upgrade to Tier 2 once organic foundations are in place. Launch Google Search Ads with a conservative budget (\$400–\$600/month). Review CPE after 60 days before scaling.
Months 7–9 (Optimisation)	Scale what works. If Google Ads CPE is under \$60, increase budget 20–30%. Launch Meta Ads once Google is optimised. Cut any underperforming channels.
Months 10–12 (Scale or Consolidate)	If occupancy is above 85%, consider scaling to Tier 3 or maintaining Tier 2 with budget redirected to video/content. If occupancy target is met, shift to brand maintenance mode.
Year 2 onwards	Organic channels become self-sustaining; paid media becomes more efficient as retargeting audiences build. Expect CPE to reduce 20–30% in Year 2 vs. Year 1.

## 9.11. Section Summary & Investment Recommendation

Section 9 has provided a three-tier digital marketing budget framework with detailed channel breakdowns, ROI projections, and phasing guidance. For most centres in a competitive regional

catchment like [Your Town], ChildCare Marketing recommends beginning at Tier 1 for the first 3 months to establish tracking and organic foundations, then scaling to Tier 2 from Month 4 onwards. The evidence from Sections 1–8 indicates that Your ELC has a genuine opportunity to capture significant market share — and the ROI data confirms that marketing investment at Tier 2 generates returns well above industry benchmarks. The question is not whether to invest in digital marketing — it is how quickly to do so.

<b>OUR RECOMMENDATION</b>	Begin with Tier 1 (Month 1–3) then graduate to Tier 2 from Month 4. Review performance at Month 6 and assess Tier 3 readiness at Month 9 if occupancy targets are on track.
<b>MINIMUM EFFECTIVE BUDGET</b>	\$800–\$1,500/month (Tier 1) as a non-negotiable baseline. Below this level, marketing investment is unlikely to generate measurable enrolment growth.
<b>PRIORITY SPEND</b>	Before ANY paid advertising: invest in Google Business Profile, review generation, and website conversion improvements. These have the highest ROI of any digital activity.

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