

CITY OF JOONDALUP MEMORANDUM

TO: HIS WORSHIP THE MAYOR ELECTED MEMBERS CC CHIEF
EXECUTIVE OFFICER DIRECTORS
FROM: DIRECTOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
DATE: 10 AUGUST 2000
FILE REF: 09761
COUNCIL REPORT NO: CJ188-07/00
SUBJECT: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR COUNCIL REGARDING THE
TRANSFER OF SPONSORSHIP OF THE WHITFORDS AND OCEAN
RIDGE OUTSIDE SCHOOL HOURS CARE SERVICES

The following information is provided in addition to that already provided in Council Report CJ188-07/00 on the Transfer of Sponsorship – Whitfords and Ocean Ridge Outside School Hours Care Services.

CONSULTATION WITH PARENTS

On 28 July 2000, letters were posted to 220 families. These families were users of either:

- the Ocean Ridge or Whitfords After School Care Services;
- the Ocean Ridge or Whitfords Vacation Care Services in the April and July Vacation Care periods.

A total of twenty three parents either attended a meeting, phoned or wrote a letter in response to these letters.

Whitfords

The letter to the Whitfords parents outlined the proposal to transfer the sponsorship of the Whitfords Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) Service to the Padbury Education and Child Care Centre Ltd. It pointed out that the after school care service had been severely under utilised for quite some time with numbers averaging 12 children per day rather than 30. Further, that the amalgamation with another service provided an opportunity to ensure the long-term survival of the service. It assured parents that children with special needs would continue to be accommodated. The letter invited parents to attend a meeting on Wednesday 2 August at 7.30 pm at the Whitfords Outside School Hours Care Service. It also acknowledged the very short notice of the meeting and gave parents the alternative of contacting the Manager Community and Health Services or the Coordinator of Children and Family Services and of making another meeting time.

Ten parents attended the meeting on Wednesday evening and a further two parents made contact, one by phone and one by letter. The staff members from the Whitfords Outside School Hours Care Service also attended the meeting as did a staff member from the Resource Unit for Children with Special Needs.

The parents commenced their comments by expressing their concern for current staff members who may be made redundant as a result of any decision to transfer the service. Parents then asked questions about the services offered at Padbury Education and Child Care Centre Ltd as follows:

- Arrangements for collecting children from school.
- The types of programs offered.
- The balance between outings and centre activities in the vacation care program.
- Whether excursions are included in the vacation care fee of \$25.00 per day or \$110.00 per week.
- Numbers of children using Padbury Outside School Hours Care Service and whether places will be assured to existing Whitfords After School and Vacation Care users.
- The level of experience that the Padbury Education and Child Care Centre has with children with special needs.

The Manager of the Padbury Education and Child Care Centre provided the following information which was incorporated into a letter and sent on 3 August to the 10 parents who attended the meeting. The two parents who had contacted by phone or letter were sent the same information.

Transport:

The Centre has a bus. The current policy is that no children are left at schools unattended. Staff members are taken with the bus and dropped at the different schools to wait with the children.

Programs:

Programs are in accordance with State and Commonwealth guidelines for Outside School Hours Care. The Padbury Education and Child Care Centre also operates the Outside School Hours Care under the National Accreditation Standards of Programming. Programs will cater for the full age groups.

Excursions and Fees:

In relation to Vacation Care, the Padbury Education and Child Care Centre is in the practice of providing a balance between Incursions and Excursions, and centre-based activities. On average, one incursion and one excursion occur each week of the program. Incursions include activities such as fun buses, clowns and farmyard animals that are provided at the centre. Incursions and Excursions are extra and the costs can vary.

Numbers and Assured Places:

The numbers at Padbury will have no impact upon numbers at the Whitfords service as it currently is being run. The places of current users at the Whitfords service are assured in both vacation and after school care.

The Padbury Education and Child Care Centre will be running a Vacation Care service that is suitable to the size of the building.

Experience with Children with Special Needs:

The Padbury Education and Child Care Centre currently caters for a number of children with special needs and has done so since its inception.

The Padbury Education and Child Care Centre also accesses the services of the Resource Unit for Children with Special Needs and other support agencies. Management and staff of the Padbury Child Care Centre will be only too willing to meet and discuss issues with parents regarding their child prior to taking over the Whitfords service.

Ocean Ridge

The letter to the Ocean Ridge parents outlined the proposal to transfer the sponsorship of the Whitfords Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) Service to the YMCA of Perth. It pointed out that the after school care service had been severely under utilised for quite some time with numbers averaging 14 children per day rather than 45. Further, that the transfer of the Ocean Ridge Service to a service provider currently offering other OSHC services in the North Metropolitan area would offer the service economies of scale and thus provide an opportunity to ensure its long-term survival. It also assured parents that children with special needs would continue to be accommodated. The letter invited parents to attend a meeting on Thursday 3 August at 7.30 pm at the Ocean Ridge Outside School Hours Care Service. It also acknowledged the very short notice of the meeting and gave parents the alternative of contacting the Manager Community and Health Services or the Coordinator of Children and Family Services and of making another meeting time.

Six parents attended the meeting on Thursday evening and a further five made contact either by phone or letter. Two of the staff members of the Ocean Ridge Service also attended the meeting.

Parents commenced their comments by asking about the consultation and about whether Council members had already made the decision. It was pointed out to those present that the decision had been deferred until 22 August and that it would be up to Council to decide whether the provision of these services was the best use of ratepayers' funds. It was explained that the City had no intention of removing itself from service provision altogether but proposed to provide much needed services where no alternative service providers were available and/or where funding from the Commonwealth or State Governments was not available. The example of youth services was provided. It was pointed out that there were very few structured programs for young people after school and during the vacation periods. This was a particular issue for children with special needs, many of whom could not be left alone at home. The Coordinator of Children and Family Services later outlined an innovative program that had just been piloted at the Anchors Youth Service where five children with very high support needs had been included in the vacation care program. This provided an example of the types of services that Council might provide in the future.

One of the parents then asked for a full 1999/2000 budget including:

- Non operating grants/contributions;
- Profit/loss on asset disposal;
- Depreciation; and
- Corporate overheads.

The Manager of Community and Health Services undertook to provide this information to all parents present.

Parents also made the point that, in their view, if the YMCA could operate the program with a break even budget, then the City should also be able to do so. It was pointed out that Council and other large organisations appeared to have higher overheads than smaller community based organisations. In addition, as the YMCA had been successfully operating eight services in the North Metropolitan area, it had the experience to increase the utilisation of the service where the City had failed in this endeavour. The efforts that the City had made to increase utilisation were then outlined. Parents also asked the following questions about the services offered by the YMCA and about the transfer of sponsorship:

- Will fees go up after the YMCA takes on the service?
- If the service can't break even with the YMCA, what will happen?
- Will the program be made suitable for children with high support needs? (Parents commented that if there are too many outings this is not suitable for children with high support needs. Parents wondered if it would be possible to have a sample vacation care program)
- Would YMCA consider employing existing staff?
- Can the YMCA assure parents that the current users of vacation care will be able to access a place once the transfer has taken place, particularly children with special needs?
- Will YMCA use the same bus charter company?

The YMCA of Perth provided the following information which was incorporated into a letter and sent on 10 August to the 6 parents who attended the meeting. The parents who sent letters or phoned received the same information.

Fees:

YMCA fees are currently \$11.00 per day for After School Care and \$29.50 per day for Vacation Care and there are no plans to increase these at present.

If the service does not break-even:

After consultation with families using the service and having pursued all options to achieve financial viability any YMCA OSHC service which was not breaking even would have to close. (The YMCA recently had to close its Merriwa Service but arranged transport for all remaining children to another of its OSHC services. It has also been working with the Landsdale community to ensure the survival of that OSHC service. It advised parents that there may be a need to close the service if utilisation did not increase. It then held a public meeting with parents, the Council, the relevant schools and a developer. The developer provided interim funding to keep the service going and the parents formed an action group to build numbers in the service. The situation will be reviewed in September and it appears that there will be sufficient numbers to continue the service.)

Suitability for children with special needs:

All YMCA OSHC programs are structured to provide exciting and stimulating activities for children aged 5-12 years. Children with high support needs have been successfully included in YMCA programs on a regular basis. (Sample programs were also made available and provided to parents)

Employment of existing staff:

Staff vacancies would be advertised and the most suitable applicants appointed. Existing staff would have the opportunity to apply.

Assured places in vacation care:

The YMCA mails out Vacation Care programs to previous users which provides them with the opportunity to enrol early to ensure a place. Children with special needs are most welcome at YMCA OSHC services providing appropriate care can be provided by trained support staff and funding is available for extra staffing requirements. (Council staff have had discussions with staff at the Resource Unit for Children with Special Needs who are eager to assist the children currently using the Ocean Ridge service to make a smooth transition to the YMCA service)

Bus charter company:

If the current bus charter company is registered and competitively priced then it is likely that this service will be retained.

The Acting Chief Executive Officer of the YMCA of Perth has also indicated that he considers that a transfer of sponsorship would be better effected from the beginning of Term 1, 2001. This would enable meetings to be held with parents in Term 4 to discuss more fully the proposed changes, a review to be undertaken of the bus transport service, an assessment to be made of the inventory of equipment to be transferred to the YMCA on the changeover and a more detailed assessment of income and expenditure to be made.

CHANGE TO INFORMATION ON REGULATIONS

The Council Report (CJ188–07/00) states the following.

The Regulations will also set out the requirements regarding qualifications of staff. In the area of staff qualifications, both Services will not be able to meet the requirements of the Regulations.

The City has recently learnt that:

Staff currently employed in outside school hours care services will not be required to become qualified unless a change in employment occurs.

and

Qualifications for staff will be phased in over a 5 year period.

NEED FOR CHANGE TO RECOMMENDATIONS IN COUNCIL REPORT CJ188–07/00

During the consultation process, the concerns of parents were acknowledged and responses made to immediate concerns. A number of parents indicated that they may seek a delegation to Council. However, it is still considered that the transfer of sponsorship of these services is the appropriate action to take. Clearly, concerns may arise during the process of transferring the services and there will be a need to carefully monitor this and to continue to respond positively. In order to take account of suggestions made by parents, the YMCA and Padbury Education and Child Care Centre

Ltd and to ensure a smooth transfer of services, the recommendations to Report CJ188–07/00 need amendment. Therefore, it is suggested that the recommendations be amended to read:

- 1. APPROVES the transfer of sponsorship of the Whitfords Outside School Hours Care Service to the Padbury Education and Child Care Centre Ltd with effect from 22 September 2000 or as soon as practicable;**
- 2. APPROVES the transfer of sponsorship of the Ocean Ridge Outside School Hours Care Service to the YMCA of Perth with effect from the first day of Term 1 2001;**
- 3. NOTIFIES the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services of the City's intention to transfer its Whitfords and Ocean Ridge Outside School Hours Care services;**
- 4. OFFERS staff holding the positions of Senior Playleader and Playleader at Whitfords and the two staff holding the positions of Playleader at Ocean Ridge redundancy packages calculated as outlined in Report CJ188 – 07/00 but adjusted to take account of the date at which the services cease to be operated by the City.**