

BREWARRINA SHIRE COUNCIL

Agenda Submission for Ordinary Meeting held on 28 June 2013

TITLE:	BREWARRINA CHILD CARE CENTRE	DOC REF: Item 16
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REPORT BY:	Lynn Moore Director Corporate and Community Services	DATE: 17 June 2013
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IPR REFERENCE:

PURPOSE:

To advise council of new developments arising from the proposed transition of the Brewarrina Child Care Centre to the Brewarrina Business Centre (BBC) as the auspicing body for the Integrated Aboriginal Child and Family Centre.

BACKGROUND:

Previously the Council advertised for expressions of interest to take over the day to day operations of the Brewarrina Child Care centre. The BBC was the successful applicant.

The original intent as discussed between BBC and BSC was for the Brewarrina Child Care Centre to come under the umbrella of the Integrated Child and Family Centre which would then enable the BBC to train and develop staff in a 'working' environment. It was made clear that the Brewarrina Child Care Centre would still deliver the same service as is being provided at present. (Refer report Jan 2013)
Several dates for the transition have come and gone with the issue over funding being the main obstacle.

Council Resolution February 2013

17/13 RESOLVED on MOTION by Councillor Pippas seconded by Councillor Slack-Smith that Council take the following action:

- 1. Not proceed with the proposed handover of the Brewarrina Child Care Centre to the BBC;*
- 2. Continue to operate the Brewarrina Child Care Centre until the Brewarrina Integrated Aboriginal Child and Family Centre is ready for occupation;*
- 3. Seek a guarantee from the funding body that:*
 - our staff commence new employment with the Child and Family Centre when it opens for business,*
 - our children be 'transferred' to the new Centre at this time;*
- 4. If the funding body guarantees the transition of staff and children, Council will cease operation of its Child Care Centre when the new Centre opens;*
- 5. Local Member, Kevin Humphries MP, and Federal Member, Mark Coulton MP, a formal letter be written to make them aware of the situation and be requested to intervene to enable the funding rules to be changed to enable a guaranteed transition of children using our Child Care Centre to the new Brewarrina Integrated Aboriginal Child and Family Centre on its completion; and*
- 6. In the absence of guarantees being made, a further assessment be made of Council's continued role in delivering child care services taking into account the financial viability of the Child Care Centre, this assessment to be carried out prior to the opening of the new Brewarrina Integrated Aboriginal Child and Family Centre.*

Actions taken since the Council resolution

30th April 2013 - A letter was written to Kevin Humphries by the General Manager on the ongoing plight of the transition of the Brewarrina Child Care Centre. This letter was on forwarded to the Minister for Family and Community Services / Minister for Women, Pru Goward MP.

May 2013 - A meeting was held, consisting of representatives of council and the BBC held with Minister Pru Goward, to clarify the issues surrounding the transition of the child care centre to the BBC. The outcome of this meeting was that a 'new group' to be formed – Children's Services Forum. This group was to review the provision of child care in the future. This group met in May and June. At the June meeting it was discovered that the pretext on which the group was formed (at the instruction of the Minister) was based upon incorrect information

23rd May 2013 – A response was received from the Minister Pru Goward acknowledging the issues raised in the General Managers letter but the result was the same:

Quote: *"The Community Services position is that negotiation about the provision of existing child care services, currently delivered by Council, remain a business decision between the Council and Brewarrina Business Centre."*

11th June 2013 – The General Manager again wrote to Minister Kevin Humphries, MP advising him of the response from Minister Pru Goward as the letter from Minister Pru Goward did little to address the issues which prevail upon our child care centre.

17th June 2013

A meeting of the members of the 'Children's Services Forum' was convened -all of the attendees at the "Children's services Forum' also attend the Local Area Reference Group (LARG) which was initially created to assist in the direction of child care in the future. It was then decided to utilise the LARG as the vehicle to progress this issue and not to continue with the 'extra meeting'.

As it stands the BBC still wish to undertake the transition of the Brewarrina Child Care centre and are being hindered by the 'red tape' surrounding this. The following are facts surrounding this:

- The new Integrated Child and Family Centre (CFC) is to be operational by the end of this year and owned and managed by Brewarrina Business Centre (BBC)
- The CFC infrastructure funding arrangement is for 75% indigenous preference for users. (acknowledge this is a Federal Government condition)
- The CFC is to be licenced for 32 children
- Operational funding arrangement may not continue for the CFC past 2015
- Brewarrina Child Care Centre (BCCC) is owned and operated by Council.
- BCCC is licenced for 32 children – current occupancy around 20 children.
- BCCC caters for both indigenous and non-indigenous children, currently 50% of each
- Council has a long standing resolution of not wanting to be in the business of running a child care centre but does so in the absence of an alternative provider
- Council has also resolved that it will keep its child care centre open until the new CFC is operational on the proviso that BCCC staff (all indigenous except for 2) and children are able to transition to the CFC. If that occurs, Council will close its centre.
- If CFC cannot get its funding rules changed to relax the 75% indigenous preference, Council's position is that its children may not be guaranteed a place in the CFCC, and therefore will continue to operate its own centre.

- If this occurs, CFC will have no trained staff for its centre and in all probability, both centres will operate below capacity and eventually close their doors
- The obvious loser out of this will be the Brewarrina community

CONSULTATION: (since commencement November 2011)

- Carole Medcalf, CEO, Brewarrina Business Centre:
- Brewarrina Shire Council : Rod Shaw, General Manager,
- Lynn Moore, Director Corporate and Community Services (Bre Shire Council)
- Gargy Ganguli, Manager Regional Strategies Communities & Early Years
- Teena Bonham, Family and Community Services
- Bill Palmer: Former CEO Brewarrina Business Centre
- Minister Kevin Humphries, MP
- Minister Pru Goward, MP

GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS:

A continuance for Council to run the Child Care Centre will require:

- a review of the staff numbers in direct relation to the numbers of children attending.
- a review of the fees associated with daily child care.
- Re-instatement of Child Care budget into the 2013-2014 budget.

CONCLUSION:

Brewarrina businesses already face many challenges in attracting and retaining staff for the essential service provision to our town child being a priority issue. Those most affected by the non-decision of the funding bodies to assist us are:

- Doctors
- School teachers
- Nurses
- Fire, ambulance, police etc
- Other professionals

There is consensus that child care is an important topic in all spheres of government however there is no consensus on how best to manage issues which are outside of the 'norm'. The question looms if council cannot continue to provide the service and the child and family centre is not 'permitted' to transition our centre then what is the future for Brewarrina.

The glaring oversight on behalf of the funding bodies is that in order for the new centre to operate they need the staff from the Brewarrina Child Care Centre - there are no other trained and qualified staff in Brewarrina.

RECOMMENDATION :

That the Brewarrina Child Care Centre report be received as information.

Rod Shaw
General Manager