

DIRECTOR SHIRE SERVICES REPORT

8th March 2005

DSS6 YOUTH INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICE
FILE: * GJH

SUMMARY:

Reporting on the progress in the establishment of a Youth Information and Referral Centre and the Bunker activity space in the Chappell Park Youth Precinct.



In late 2001 Kempsey Shire Council entered into a partnership with the Kempsey Campus of TAFE to deliver an external education program to the young people of the Macleay. The original venue was to be the Tozer St premises of the SES. When the program was late in it's planning stages it was realized that the premises in Tozer St were undergoing major repairs after severe flood damage and would not be available for the commencement of the course at the start of the semester.

The program was then moved to 19 Druitt St in South Kempsey in the cottage on the grounds of the old King Gee site. The program operated at these premises with huge success and went on to form partnerships with Dept of Education, Juvenile Justice, Mid North Coast Area Health Service, Durri Aboriginal Medical Centre, Djigay Student Association, Job Placement Employment and Training (JPET), TAFE outreach and many more.

Students involved in the activities surrounding the program were introduced to programs such as, Numeracy and Literacy modules, living skills, nutrition and cooking skills, job interview skills, budgeting skills and self esteem courses which included drama and public performance, circus skills, audio and photographic displays and compilations.

The course was so successful that the Kempsey Shire Council Youth Development Officer and two other workers from Youth Services in Kempsey were invited to present the program at a Dept Of Education national conference in Newcastle.

In late 2003 with the imminent construction of the PCYC facility, the need for the PCYC to take over the cottage as a site office was seen to be a priority. After discussions with Kempsey Shire Council (KSC) and the relative partners of the project it was agreed that

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the premises under the Kempsey pool, formerly occupied by the canoe club, would then become the activity centre for this project.

For the partnership project to proceed it was decided that the bunker area under the pool would be a suitable location if it were to be combined with the Community Solutions funded "Youth Information Referral Service". After negotiations with Mid North Coast Area Health Service (MNCAHS) it was decided to terminate the lease of the Memorial Ave Baby Health Care Centre and to use the existing site for the Youth Information Referral Centre. These negotiations included direct consultation with the existing staff at the centre by the Youth Development Officer (YDO), correspondence with Brett Thompson (Manager of child, adolescent and family services MNCAHS), and meetings with Terry Clout the CEO of MNCAHS.

Current Situation:

Planning is well under way for the Memorial Ave premises to be used as a "Youth Referral Centre". A Development Application is in progress to make the changes to the building required to satisfy all relevant OH&S issues. This project is in line with the current Social Plan findings that the nominated highest need for improvement of service to young people was that of mentoring and counselling. It also falls in line with:

- The Report to Council to move youth services to the proposed youth precinct area of Chappell Park 12 February 2004 and;
- Kempsey Shire Council Management Plan requirements to:
 1. Support Youth Based Activities
 2. Develop a youth Referral Centre
 3. Ensure that the Youth Referral Centre is set up in a permanent location/building.(KSC Management Plan 04/05, page, 13)

Within the "Youth Referral Centre" project, the building will be occupied by Youth and Family Counselling, Mediation, as well as visits from health services such as Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol, Sexual Health and other Counselling services. This service will not be a group drop in centre and will be catering for individuals and their families only. Any group activities will be catered for in the Bunker area.

Currently the NSW Dept of Education (DET) and Training are awaiting the DA approval of the Bunker and Youth Referral Centre so that they may start the Links to Learning Program through Djigay Student Association for early school leavers. NSW DET have been waiting since April 2004 and this project is seriously at risk of being cancelled if the venue is not approved shortly.

The Premiers Dept will provide financial assistance with funding totalling \$70,000 to establish the Centre and Bunker facilities, leading to a more cohesive approach to addressing youth issues in the Macleay Valley.

REPORT IMPLICATIONS

- ***Social Implications***

This project is definitely a chance for Kempsey Shire Council to lead the way in youth related issues in the Shire and will secure partnerships with neighbouring shires as well (this has already started). Projects like this will have a direct bearing on issues surrounding youth health, education and employment in the local area, and will only strengthen partnerships that bring all related services assisting with the development of young people together.

- ***Environmental Implications***

There are nil environmental implications.

- ***Economic Implications***

All costs will be met by the secured funding of the Premiers Department through the Community Solutions Program. However KSC is seriously at risk of losing the \$70, 000 if there are further delays in completing this project.

The program will only assist KSC by the improvement of already existing capital assets in the Chappell Park area.

- ***Director's Review***

Council is urged to support the Youth Referral Centre being established in the old Baby Health Centre in Memorial Avenue Kempsey.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Youth Information and Referral Centre and the Bunker activity space in the Chappell Park Youth Precinct be supported.

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DIRECTOR SHIRE SERVICES