



KEMPSEY
Shire Council

DIRECTOR SHIRE SERVICES REPORT

9TH May 2006

DSS7 YOUTH INFORMATION REFERRAL SERVICE
FILE: 343 (306648) GRW

SUMMARY:

Reporting on the proposed location of the Youth Information Referral Service.



As directed by the funding body for the Community Solutions Program (Dept Community Services) a meeting was held with an independent facilitator, Ms Trudi Hodge – Meli, to determine whether the PCYC would be a suitable location for the Youth Information and Referral Service. The meeting took place on 10 April 2006. A copy of the minutes are at [Appendix C](#).

A decision was made by the Youth Network not to pursue the PCYC location as a site for the service. The group raised concerns in relation to possible intimidation by police officers, issues of confidentiality and the high cost of refurbishment as reasons for the rejection.

Option A

The group supported the relocation of the service to a CBD location in order for the service to be seen as “neutral” for all clients. The group was unable to ascertain the cost of such a move. Issues such as rentals, refurbishment and capital costs are yet to be confirmed. The group hoped to forward a detailed project proposal to Council for consideration at the Ordinary meeting of 9th May 2006.

The minutes of the meeting of 10 April 2006 do not clarify how the service would operate, who will operate the service and the proposed administrative structure of the referral service. It was also of concern that no particular agency or individual has volunteered to champion the proposal. The service would operate for a 12 month pilot period only. Funds would need to be sourced from various government departments for the ongoing operation of the centre.

Following concerns that the project proposal would not be available prior to the Council meeting of 9 May 2006 and funds would be "lost" if not committed before the end of this financial year, a telephone link up with major stakeholders was initiated by the Manager of Community and Lifestyle Services. The purpose of this meeting was to develop a second option should Council reject the CBD option favoured by the Youth Network

Representatives from the Department of Community Services (Kempsey) Community Solutions (Ashfield), the Department of Housing and Kempsey Shire Council discussed a number of possible options on 27 April 2006.

Option B

An alternative option was considered whereby the Youth Information Referral Service would operate out of the existing The Department of Housing cottages located in South and West Kempsey. Department of Housing confirmed that both dwellings had secure private offices/meeting rooms which did not require refurbishment. Both dwellings were equipped with computers, desks, filing cabinets and chairs.

The Department of Housing confirmed that no rentals would be charged should the referral centre co-locate, as they saw this placement as complimenting their existing structure. The Department of Housing have a community worker employed 2 days per week as a Housing Referral Officer. Both South and West Kempsey have been identified as areas of high disadvantage.

The Department of Community Services has confirmed that existing funds of \$61,000 could be utilised to employ a referral centre worker (3 days per week) which would enable the project to operate for a two year period as no capital costs (furniture hardware) and recurrent costs (rentals) would need to be sourced.

The Department of Community Services advised that should Council decide to endorse this option, Council would need to seek approval to have the purpose of the grant changed. They advised that they would look favourably upon such a request.

The one disadvantage with this proposal is that clients residing outside the Kempsey area may find the South or West Kempsey locations less attractive than a CBD location.

REPORT IMPLICATIONS:

▪ Environmental

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

▪ Social

The relocation of the Youth Information Referral Service to South and West Kempsey will provide an urgently needed service to those most in need.

▪ *Economic (Financial)*

Funds currently held by Council will enable the service to operate should Council endorse either option A or B. No ongoing financial commitments for the establishment or operation of the centre will be required from Council.

▪ *Policy or Statutory*

There are no policy or statutory implications arising from this report.

▪ *Acting Director's Review*

The lack of detailed information and ongoing commitment in relation to the Youth Network proposal (Option A) is of concern considering the need to have funds committed before the end of the financial year. Option B has merit however the lack of a CBD location may impact on the effectiveness of the operation.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council endorse the proposal to operate the Youth Information Referral Service from the Department of Housing cottages in South Kempsey and West Kempsey.

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A P Vermeulen
ACTING DIRECTOR SHIRE SERVICES