



DIRECTOR SHIRE SERVICES REPORT

13th June 2006

DSS2 YOUTH INFORMATION REFERRAL SERVICE
FILE: 343 (306648) GRW {Folio No. *}

SUMMARY:

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



DESCRIPTION:

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 is at [Appendix B](#).

A decision was made by the Youth Network not to pursue the PCYC "Cottage" 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.

The following options have been developed to advance this project:

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 were 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 9 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 other options should Council reject the CBD option favoured by the Youth Network.

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

Option B

That the Youth Information Referral Service operate out of the existing 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.

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

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.

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.

During the course of investigations into the above option it became apparent that the two community houses were currently operating without development consent. Under current zoning conditions, consent to operate out of these two dwellings would be permissible if Council owned or leased the community buildings. Under LEP conditions this activity would be permissible with development consent. A Development Application is currently being prepared in relation to the above.

In the interim, the Department of Housing has confirmed that it is prepared to lease the two dwellings to Council at a peppercorn rental of \$1.00 per year. Department of Housing confirmed that they would be responsible for rates / water, structural maintenance, electricity and phone costs up to a mutually agreed amount.

Kempsey Shire Council would be responsible for lawn maintenance, cleaning of the premises.

Option C

The PCYC manager confirmed that the centre has received finding from Juvenile Justice for the employment of an "Activities Officer" for approximately 33 weeks. This officer is employed for 30 hrs per week. Whilst the majority of his time is taken up with PCYC type activities he is also undertaking youth referral tasks.

The manager of the PCYC advised that they would be interested in developing a partnership with Council, where the PCYC would employ a dedicated youth referral officer if Council funds the position from existing grant funds. The officer would be a PCYC employee and would operate from the PCYC complex and not the adjacent "cottage".

This would enable either one or two persons to be employed for approximately two years as no infrastructure costs would be involved. These persons could service the PCYC complex together with the community houses at South and West Kempsey.

Due to requirements stipulated by the funding body, these options need to be discussed and endorsed by the youth network before the project can be progressed further. A youth network meeting is currently being organised with relevant stakeholders. It is expected that this meeting will take place in July. Council will be represented at this meeting with senior officers and a councillor in attendance.

REPORT IMPLICATIONS:

▪ Environmental

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

▪ Social

No social implications arising from this report at this stage.

▪ Economic (Financial)

Funds currently held by Council will enable the service to operate should Council endorse either option A, B or C. No

ongoing financial commitments for the establishment or operation of the centre will be required from Council apart from those costs identified in Option B, cleaning and lawn maintenance.

- *Policy or Statutory*

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

- *Director's Review*

Endorsement will need to be obtained from the youth network in order to meet the requirements of the grant funding body.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the information be noted.

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A P Vermeulen
DIRECTOR SHIRE SERVICES