

7TH APRIL 2009

RESOLUTION COMPLETED

DIRECTOR CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES REPORT

DCCS14

YOUTH ACCESS CENTRE (YAC)

FILE: LA2767 CC: 343 MLB

{Folio No. 395243}

SUMMARY:

Reporting on the progress on the establishment of the Youth Access Centre (YAC) in the former SES Headquarters building, River Street, West Kempsey

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DESCRIPTION:

At Council's meeting on the 14th October 2008, Council considered the future use of the former SES Headquarters. At this meeting it was resolved: -

"That Council make available the former SES Headquarters for the co-location of youth services with a rent free period of six (6) months. Following this initial period a lease be commenced at a weekly rental of \$200."

Development of the Youth Access Centre

After taking over control of the building in October 2008, the Community Development Officer – Youth, sought to utilise existing resources and community based groups to undertake the work of refurbishing the building.

Between October and December 2008 a number of meetings were held with Youth Services and the Youth Advisory Council concerning the operation of the facility, this included those organisations that intended to co-locate in the facility and co-ordinate programs from this location.

This consultation was essential in identifying the needs of the services and what refurbishment / restoration works would need to be undertaken for specialist rooms such as the GP Network's office.

In January 2009, the physical refurbishment of the building commenced.

As Council was gracious enough to provide the building, Council's staff have sought to undertake the refurbishment of the building within the confines of existing budgets and resources. Original quotations received indicated that the refurbishment project for the facility would have been approximately \$15,000.

Council was able to develop a partnership with Guri Wa Ngundagar Aboriginal Corporation for their Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) participants to undertake the refurbishment of these facilities. This partnership has been instrumental in providing a facility that will increasingly become a credit to the youth and forges effective partnerships with community based services and organisations.

As part of this partnership Council has paid for the cost of materials whilst Guri Wa Ngundagar Aboriginal Corporation have paid for the supervisor and workers to undertake the refurbishment.

Currently the facility is approximately 85% refurbished.

The kitchen and toilet facilities have yet to be refurbished. To address these issues a grant had been submitted to the Area Assistance Scheme for funding to undertake this and other works not completed within this initially refurbishment.

Participant Services

A number of services have indicated their desire to relocate to the facility. These include:

- Guri Wa Ngundagar Aboriginal Corporation – Youth services
- G.P's network - General Health and Mental Health services from the premises for Youth.

Interest has been shown by Each Reconnect to locate at the premises also. Mental health and Drug and Alcohol services have also agreed to co-ordinate some of their youth services from the premises.

A number of community groups are also interested in running programs out of the centre such as the aboriginal community from the now closed Green Hills Community Centre.

It is anticipated that more services will start to utilise this space once operations commence.

Perspectives on the Youth Access Centre from the Youth

One of the most important requirements of the Youth Access Centre is that youth feel comfortable accessing the facility. To that extent the Youth Advisory Council has been involved as a reference committee in the refurbishment and establishment of the centre. The following is a perspective from one member of the Advisory Council on their view of the centre:

"For years now I have been saying that the young people in Kempsey need somewhere to go: somewhere safe where they can get information, and call their own. When the idea of using the SES building for this type of function was proposed I became excited. Here are a few reasons why I think turning the Old SES building into a Youth Centre would be worthwhile.

- *At the youth forum held earlier this year, a common feeling among my peers was that the older people of Kempsey did not care about the young people. This building would show that they do care and fuel a sense of belonging to Kempsey.*
- *Another thing I discovered at the forum was that many people delayed going to a Counsellor because they don't trust the privacy, and were embarrassed to be recognised in those places. If information about health issues was displayed in the centre and health services were available there, then I believe that young people would more inclined to use these facilities. This is because the health care workers are there and information would be targeted for young people as the centre would serve a variety of purposes no one would have to know why they were accessing the centre.*
- *Life skills classes, career advice, access to the internet are all things which young people need (this can be supported by the forum) and can be provided by the centre.*
- *It would be a central location welcoming all young people not just a specific group.*

- *If young people were involved in running it and it caters for the needs of young people then young people will use it.*
- *After being a member of the YAC since the start of last year I realised that there are many things available to young people in Kempsey which we just don't realise. The centre would provide a base to locate information like this and give organisations or groups the opportunity to publicise events/workshops available to youth and even a place to run them. For example Young Achievers Australia.*

There is much potential for centre and it could serve many purposes for young people. I have always felt that young people need a safe place to receive advice about health, careers and what's available to them in Kempsey without being judged for it , and after the youth forum I realised there was consensus to this feeling.

This facility or centre is needed and I believe it would get a lot of support from young people and older people who want the younger generation to get the right information in a safe, friendly and youth oriented environment."

RECOMMENDATION IMPLICATIONS:

- **Environmental**

The environmental implication of this report is that the back of the Youth Access Centre is overgrown. The recent clearing works undertaken by Guri Wa Ngundagar Aboriginal Corporation has assisted to control weed growth.

The site also will be able to be utilised for youth based environmental projects in the future.

- **Social**

The facility will provide a focus for youth related services in the community which will contribute to the development of community cohesion. An issue identified by the Vinson Report as greatly lacking in the Kempsey community.

Our youth are disadvantage due to a number of factors all of which will be addressed to some degree by this facility. The main issues being:

- ◆ ***Access to Youth specific health services***
- ◆ ***Access to Youth specific extra curricula activities such as living skills in cooking and fitness.***
- ◆ ***Provide an environment where youth who study at TAFE can get practical hands on experience within a controlled environment that is real and meaningful.***
- ◆ ***Increase social services such as youth mentoring, mental health, drug and alcohol.***

- **Economic (Financial)**

The economic implications of this report are that considerable funds and in kind support have been committed to the project from both Council and Guri Wa Ngundagar Aboriginal Corporation.

Guri Wa Ngundagar Aboriginal Corporation has provided over \$4,000 in in-kind labour through their CDEP Work crews to undertake works on the building.

Council has also received in-kind assistance from Dulux Paints to the value of \$150.

- *Policy or Statutory*

The provision of a youth based facility was identified as an action within the Kempsey Shire Social Plan 2004 - 2009.

- *Director's Review*

A significant amount of work has been put into the Youth Access Centre by Council, the Youth Council and community organisations. Work is needed to be undertaken to make the premises viable from a service provider perspective, in terms of safety, cleanliness and access.

Council is requested to consider the efforts and funds put into the centre, as directly increasing the asset value of the property. An extension of six (6) months rent free period will allow new tenants to finalise lease arrangements and establish service provision.

2009. 266 RESOLVED:

*Moved: Cl. Hayes
Seconded: Cl. Green*

1. That an additional rent free period of six (6) months be given to further consolidate the centre as services have only recently begin occupy to the office space.
2. That Councillors be invited to the official opening of the Youth Access Centre.
3. That Councillors hold a works inspection on this item at a date to be advised.