

Norfolk Island Regional Council submission for Early Education Centres on Norfolk Island.

To: Lotta Jackson; Robin Adams;

Early education and child care on Norfolk Island is in crisis as an essential service. Urgent action is required by council.

The expectation that locally run early education businesses will be able to meet Australian accreditation standards in the next 3-5 years will force the closure of 2 of the 3 centres currently operating on Island.

After 16 months of meetings with the new infrastructure Australian government representatives, the early childhood sector of Norfolk Island still don't know who we are accountable to or what model we are supposed to be following.

Here are the child services Norfolk Island has at present.

Banyan Park Playcentre Inc. Formerly the wives and Mothers club of Norfolk Island.

Director: Wendy Morrice.

For 4 year old children, Monday to Wednesday 9am-3pm only (currently 9 children)

For 3 year old children, Thursday to Friday 9am-3pm only (currently 7 children)

No before or after school care, no flexibility for parents to reduce or extend days per week. No vacation care. Centre closes during the school holidays, making parents who work full time in a difficult position to find care for their children.

Good size building, built on Crown land. Building donated by the Lions club over 30 years ago.

Not for profit community organisation with a revolving parent committee (usually lasting 2 years as their child attends). Have to do extensive fundraising of community money to stay in operation.

Have received yearly grants from the Norfolk Island Government in the past, between \$7k and \$12k per year.

Current Director wants to retire, her job has been advertised for 2 years on and off island and hasn't enticed anyone from Australia to apply mostly because of low pay structure and the grey area of EYLF (Australian Early Years Learning Framework) and NQS (National Quality Standard) not being applied here before on Norfolk Island. BPP may close or run with a skeleton staff of junior certificate 3 trained staff if director's position isn't filled.

Wizz Kids daycare. 0-5 year olds long day care centre.

Director : Brigette Graham

CLOSED before June 2016 due to Government changes and lack of support for the changes expected by the Australian Government of privately owned businesses.

Little House daycare. 0-5 year olds long day care service

Director Robyn

Last remaining childcare centre for babies and toddlers. Situated in an old style house, not a purpose built centre. Staff all need retraining. Currently staff only have certificate 3 in child studies and a nursing degree.

Owner/Director has expressed a desire to retire but as there is no other centre for the children to attend, she feels unable to.

With the implementation of the NSW accreditation system, this centre would also close. Without funding and grants to upgrade and retrain staff, there is no incentive to remain open.

Many unhappy parents have reported minor verbal and physical abuse to us and to the police about this service. Changes need to be made.

Minischool Educational Preschool. Breakaway group from Banyan Park 7 years ago.

Director: Cristina McRitchie (Holds diploma of early childhood studies)

Employs 1 staff, Heather McMillan (Early childhood teacher trained and holds diploma of child studies)

Plus 3 local helper volunteers; Rosemary Andrew, Lauren Tierney & Roberta Kolinisau

Situated on corner of Queen Elizabeth Avenue and Shortridge Road, in a rented house... no long term lease offered, option to buy but business isn't profitable enough to do so. Even though we are privately owned and not registered as a not for profit organisation (no parent committee etc), Minischool returns all money back into the preschool, often there is not enough to pay the Directors wage but we don't fundraise to make the difference, just cut the loss and work for a love job and need in the community.

Aims to offer more flexibility to working parents. Currently have 28 families using Preschool service throughout the week and up to 38 families accessing vacation care. There is no other vacation care offered at the school or elsewhere on island.

Open 50 weeks a year 8:30 til 3pm for 3-5 year olds.

Open for Vacation care in school holidays for 2-12 year olds. Permanent Preschool places not required during the school holidays are sold to school age families and Banyan park families who need the care during school holidays.

Open for before and after school care by bookings only. This can be arranged last minute and is useful for meetings, funerals etc. Open until 5:30pm.

I have tried selling Minischool business for the past year but without any accreditation, the child care brokers will not sell for you. I cannot even give it away, I have tried. There is too much unknown in the future.

I have written 8 lengthy proposals to non profit organisations in Australia such as Big Fat Smile, Good start and other community service organisations, although they all have the money and were interested in helping invest in the Norfolk Island community, once they looked into the grey area that is the local legislation that hadn't been worked out yet each organisation backed out of any deals.

A child care expert Maric Deverill was brought over from the CCCC (Childcare community cooperative) by Rob McKenzie courtesy of the Australian government. She informed myself at Minischool and Little house day care that our 'houses' would not meet accreditation standards unless major renovations were completed. We also would not be issued a license for a short term lease.

Rob McKenzie's solution was to offer me the crown land adjacent to Banyan park to build a purpose built building to house 0-5 year old children. This land would be offered to me for \$1 a week and I could own it outright in 20 years if I build this centre for over a million dollars.

The bank will not lend this sum on a non profitable business, (I have to keep my numbers small due to the internal size of the small house we are in.

I have worked in Council run preschools/ after school & vacation care in both NSW and in Qld state schools and have approached the past 2 principals at Norfolk Island Central school about running a preschool or after school care centre/ Vacation care centre at the school. The school doesn't want to do this. I have asked the new infrastructure team if possible to build a council run centre and they said that it wasn't their job as a council. I know this all may be new to the Norfolk Island regional council but the early childhood sector collectively has been in meetings for over a year with Australian Government reform staff with no positive results to move forward with. We are still way back at stage one.. who are we accountable to, what model are we following, how can we comply with no funds, grants, etc.

Because of this, Minischool will be **closing** our doors at the end of this year and will not take any further bookings for 2017 despite having 21 children on the waiting list for next year.

There is no incentive to remain open other than being the "caring community" mentioned in the Regional council strategic plan. We always have been a caring community, even more so in the past when the community could take ownership of it. Now the Australian Government wants to 'help out', they must take ownership of providing this essential service to the island.

The early childhood sector has received very little support during transition while the Australian Government was in caretaker mode despite other industries (especially building industry being well supported). We have received no information or inclusion from the new NIRC either.

Without good quality childcare facilities there is a breakdown in essential services, parents cannot work.

Many of our families work for the Australian government, regional council and the school and will suffer if both Minischool and Little house are closed.

Hence CRISIS time for the NIRC, I suggest and hope that you can grant an emergency grant for remote and rural areas without access to quality childcare services for the working parents of this island.

A purpose built centre especially for 0-3 year olds is **immediately in need**, not in the long term plan.

Perhaps the crown land adjacent to the Banyan Park car park can be used and all children's services can be in the one area.

A vacation care centre is also essential for the safety, welfare and child protection of the children of Norfolk Island. These need to be first and foremost in planning otherwise a large number of children may be left home alone or left to wander around town during the school holidays.

The addition of occasional care and after school care will aid the tourism industry if visitors can safely leave children in quality care to partake in tours... this is non essential but can be included in the long term plan.

I cannot stress the importance of The Norfolk Island Regional Councils urgent action required due to the possible closure of all 3 remaining child care centres on the island by Christmas 2016.

Yours sincerely,



Operational Plan 2016 --- 2017

Lotta Jackson,
General Manager,
Norfolk Island Regional Council,
Kingston,
Norfolk Island

Dear Lotta,

I wish to make a submission to the Norfolk Island Regional Council operational plan 2016 – 2017, based on the principle of achievable outcomes through planning and recognising community requirements, avoiding duplication and managing the regional council's limited resources to achieve improvements rather than change just for the sake of change.

Taking into account the maturity of NIRC the operational plan should be couched in a manner that sets an environment of establishing a platform for professionally managed and improved budgeting policies, allowing planning to be based on historical financial figures.

Action 1.1 – Target--; Adopt Waste management Strategy by 1 October.

What Waste Management Strategy?

New target --: revise and develop Waste Management Strategy.

Time frame is to tight and may be better if extended out to 1 March 2017.

Action 1.3 Where does the Norfolk Plan 2002 sit in this action?

The existing Norfolk Island plan covers all land in Norfolk Island for which planning approvals are required, therefore planning controls already exist.

The Norfolk Island plan 2002 is specific to Norfolk Island, and appropriate.

Whereas the Environmental Planning and Assessment act. 1979 (NSW)

Would be cumbersome, contain many sections irrelevant to Norfolk Island

and

a waste of resources to introduce and implement. This action is unnecessary and a should be deleted.

Action 2.1 Is there a position of T.L. Heritage Management?

Council Advisory committee for heritage and culture has not been approved by council therefore how will Heritage and Culture committee be created by October 2016.

Where does the Museums Trust fit into this and what are the budgetary implications.

Action 2.2 Existing plans of management reviewed to determine usage and required service levels.

2.2 target is unachievable or too ambitious until the above has been achieved. There are smarter options to managing the reserves than past practices, consider moving this action to an achievable date.

Objective 3

3.1 Target, why do we need another public holiday for harmony day? Promoting cultural events that are relevant to Norfolk Island should hold priority.

Action 3.2 disagree with this action, as artefacts housed and displayed in separate buildings allows the collected exhibiting of artefacts that are related to specific events, periods or eras, therefore allowing visitors to the museums the opportunity to observe and appreciate artefacts specific to their personal interests in an uncluttered environment. Also the artefacts are displayed in separate buildings to reduce the unfortunate incidence of losing the majority of historical items through fire, which is what happened in the past. It has taken many years to get the museums to the point that they are at today even though there is a lot more that can be done to improve the interpretation of the KAVHA area, this action would be an absolute and unnecessary waste of precious time and resources.

6.2 Target, amend to read, seek approval and commence recommendation by 1 January 2016.

6.4 Action, delete Time of Day Metering option as funding is not warranted.

Insert Photovoltaic Power storage to optimize benefits of Photovoltaic Power systems.