

8. THE MULTI SENSORY CENTRE - QUEEN ELIZABETH II PARK

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The purpose of this report is to update the Community and Leisure Committee regarding the development of a Multi Sensory Centre at Queen Elizabeth II Park.

BACKGROUND

A Multi Sensory Centre uses participants' senses as a means of communication and development, with innovative lighting and sound effects, objects to touch, and fun interactive equipment that create a wide range of sensory experiences for people with severe and often multiple disabilities.

The Multi Sensory Centre at Queen Elizabeth II Park was a project of the Turning Point 2000 Children 2000 Committee. The Committee's adoption of the project followed research which advised that there was very little recreation available for children with profound disabilities. The decision to locate the centre in a leisure facility was a unique one, in that normally multi sensory facilities are located in special schools or facilities for people with disabilities. However it was felt that by locating the centre at Queen Elizabeth II Park the whole family of a child using the centre could either share that experience with the child or attend to their own recreation needs while the child was being cared for in the centre. It was also felt that by locating the centre in a public facility the community at large would grow more used to accepting people with profound disabilities into the community.

The Children 2000 Advisory Group established a management group for the multi sensory project, consisting of people who work with and have an interest in people with disabilities.

Upon the closure of Turning Point 2000 in April 2001, multi sensory funding was passed to Christchurch City Council Leisure, to continue the development of the project. Funding for a co-ordinator to develop the concept of the Multi Sensory Centre was then provided by the Council.

PROGRESS ON DEVELOPMENT OF THE MULTI SENSORY CENTRE

A fundraising partnership with the Kiwanis has raised funds that have enabled the centre to work with local companies on design and fabrication of specialised equipment. The customisation of equipment accommodates the specialised needs of centre users while addressing health and safety requirements.

Progress regarding the outfit of the Multi Sensory Centre has met with several obstacles. Through discussions with project architect Ross Maguire, audio/visual experts and equipment designers, it became apparent that the centre would require above standard ventilation and electrical systems. The estimated cost of this was well above initial expectations. Funds for additional construction were then raised through the Community Trust and New Zealand Lottery Grant Board Community Facilities (\$161,000).

Recently the Multi Sensory Centre was the recipient of a grant that has allowed the production of additional and very exciting equipment. The inclusion of this equipment has necessitated the reworking of the electrical and computer schematics. This work has held up the commencement of the building fit out.

To date \$463,000 has been raised for the equipment and fit out of the centre. This has enabled a centre which will be state of the art for the whole world, both in terms of its size and the highly specialised equipment which has been designed for it.

Recently a charitable trust has been established to oversee the centre and to enable other funding sources to be accessed.

OPENING OF THE CENTRE

Once the specialised equipment has all been fabricated and the fit out of the centre completed the centre will be opened in July, 2003.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the information be received.