

Officer responsible Community Relations Manager	Author Margaret Macadam (and the Early Childhood Education Strategy Team)
Corporate Plan Output: Community Liaison, Assistance and Advocacy	

The purpose of this report is to seek endorsement of the draft Early Childhood Education Strategy, detailed below.

IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION POLICY

The draft strategy has been developed as a means of implementing the Council’s Early Childhood Education Policy (adopted in September 1998). It clarifies the Council’s role in Early Childhood Education. It does not propose major changes to current funding arrangements. It aims, however, to provide clear guidance on the decision-making processes, with a view to ensuring consistency and equity in dealing with applications from service providers.

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The strategy has been developed by an officer/elected member working group, with representation as follows:

- Bill Binns (Property Asset Officer)
- Lyn Campbell (Children’s Advocate)
- Ingrid de Meyer (Community Development Adviser, Fendalton)
- Denise Galloway (Community Development Adviser, Sockburn)
- Tony Gemmill (Community Advocate, Fendalton)
- Sally Latham (Community Adviser and group convenor)
- Margaret Macadam (Senior Social Policy Analyst)
- Sally Thompson (Councillor)

The policy and the strategy were informed by the findings of the Early Childhood Education Review, which included extensive consultation. Advocacy Teams and Community Boards were then consulted on the draft strategy.

FEEDBACK FROM COMMUNITY BOARDS

All Community Boards endorsed the draft strategy. Three Boards also requested minor amendments, most of which have been incorporated into the draft strategy. Requested amendments that have not been included, along with the working group comments, are detailed below:

- That the Board does not support the inclusion of “low socio-economic status” amongst the selection criteria. (Passed but with dissent – Hagley/Ferrymead)

*Comment: As noted in the draft strategy, the Early Childhood Education Policy explicitly states that priority will be given to the least advantaged. Similar commitments are made in the Council's Community Development and Social Well-Being Policy, and its Children's Policy. Socio-economic indicators can identify areas of least advantage in the city including small pockets within more advantaged areas. The socio-economic status of an area is proposed as a selection criterion (ie as an aid to prioritising applications), and **not** as an eligibility criterion (which would describe the sort of ECE service which could apply for support). It is not to be used as a sole determinant, but in conjunction with the other selection criteria. It is not suggested that ECE Services in areas with higher socio-economic status should never receive Council funding. The working party therefore decided to retain the reference to low socio-economic status.*

- That the eligibility criteria also refer to hours of operation and the provision of trained staff. (Burwood/Pegasus)

Comment: Under the draft strategy, ECE Services are only eligible for Council support if they are recognised by the Ministry of Education. In order to be recognised, they have to meet certain standards, including the provision of at least one qualified staff member. As far as operating hours are concerned, some services may not have the resources for full-time provision, or may be responding to local demand for less than full-time provision. Such services should still be eligible to apply for financial assistance from the Council. Council funding may help services to extend their operation and improve the quality of their provision. The proposed amendment was therefore not included in the draft strategy.

- That when considering funding ECE projects in the Spreydon/Heathcote area, advice should be sought from senior metropolitan officers. (Spreydon/Heathcote)

Comment: This will be taken into consideration when the detailed implementation of the strategy is undertaken.

Based on the above consultation it is recommended that the draft Early Childhood Education Strategy (copy tabled) be adopted.

Recommendation: That the Early Childhood Education Strategy be adopted.