

# 1. REPORT ON THE FIRST NATIONAL OSCAR 2000 CONFERENCE

RR 11005

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Corporate Plan Output: Community Services 6.1 Text 100.iii	

The purpose of this report is:

- To provide a brief account to Councillors of the OSCAR (Out of School Care and Recreation) 2000 Conference, attended by Council representatives Louise Birkett (Out of School Programme Strategy Co-ordinator, Community Relations Unit) and Vanessa Taylor (Holiday Programme Manager, Leisure Unit);
- To describe the profile of out of school programmes at a national level; and
- To indicate how Christchurch City Council is placed in provision and support of out of school care services in respect to other parts of the country.

The National OSCAR 2000 Conference was organised by the management of the National Association for OSCAR (N.A.OSCAR), which operates from Wellington. The National Association acts as the national co-ordinating body for Out of School Care services around New Zealand, with a broad based membership (Christchurch City Council is a member). Over two hundred delegates attended from all around New Zealand, as well as representatives from Australia.

The opening address was by Judy Lawrence, the Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Womens Affairs. She looked at the key findings of the recent national childcare survey, and how the results fit in terms of the Ministry's and government's key work priorities. There is a growing recognition by the Government that childcare services, of which out of school care plays an important part, make a significant contribution to the economy. These services enable people to re-enter the workforce, and increase the flexibility of employees' hours of work, both important factors for employers. However, publicly funded childcare is still a low priority for government in New Zealand when compared with many European countries – the Swedish government provides 64% of funding for childcare, Denmark 63%, and France 30%.

The significant contribution that out of school services can make to the economy is being recognised by government agencies such as the Social Policy Agency, WINZ and the Ministry of Women's Affairs, all of whom had representatives at the OSCAR Conference. However, the lack of a co-ordinated approach to out of school care by central government was raised at the conference. The fact that the Ministry of Women's Affairs holds responsibility for the area, WINZ administers the government subsidy, with CYPFA (Department of Social Welfare) monitoring and implementing the minimum government standards was not lost on conference delegates or political representatives.

The Keynote speech was delivered by Dr Pat Petrie, Senior Research Lecturer at the Thomas Coram Research Unit, University of London, and Founder and Co-ordinator of the European Network for School-age Childcare. A number of relevant and useful workshops were offered over the course of the weekend. On the final morning of the conference, a series of questions highlighting issues related to out of school care were compiled by delegates for a panel of political representatives from the major political parties. The representatives were Nanaia Mahuta (Labour), Hon Max Bradford (National), Lynley McKerrow (ACT), Dr Liz Gordon MP (Alliance). The panelists were then required to respond to the questions posed by the audience.

Issues raised included questions regarding the administration of the Government subsidy by WINZ, which has been criticised for being complicated and ultimately obstructive to those wanting to apply for the subsidy. Questions were also raised regarding on-going support of the sector by Central Government, in terms of funding, legislative and structural support, in view of the fact that women in receipt of a benefit whose children have reached the age of six are required to return to the workforce.

The National Association for OSCAR is run as a not for profit organisation, and plays a significant role in raising issues with and lobbying central government about topics such as funding, quality standards and training. The out of school programme sector is a well organised and well co-ordinated national movement. Christchurch City Council is one of the leading local government bodies in recognising the value of out of school programmes, both in providing services and in supporting the sector in Christchurch. This was reflected in the fact that Christchurch was one of only two city councils represented at the conference.

A number of other local government bodies and councils provide varying degrees of support, ranging from limited funding assistance, to some direct provision of services. A comprehensive nationwide survey of local government involvement in out of school services is to be undertaken collaboratively between Christchurch City Council and Waitakere City Council, following up on work already carried out by the Shirley/Papanui Community Board.

In addition, the distribution and quality of programmes in the city are to be commended, as well as the local support service for these programmes, the OSCAR Network in Christchurch, as compared with many of those in other parts of the country. Programme quality standards, both those of Christchurch City Council and the OSCAR Network in Christchurch, are of a high standard.

In conclusion, the First National OSCAR Conference highlighted that out of school care and recreation is firmly on the political and social agenda in New Zealand. The national co-ordinating body, the National Association of OSCAR, continues to lobby government for improved financial, legislative and structural support, whilst a commitment to support programmes and community-based programme support networks at a local level varies widely across the country.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the information be received.
  2. That the Council continue to lobby Central Government regarding:
    - (a) Lack of adequate funding to support Out of School Programmes.
    - (b) The lack of co-ordinated approach by Government towards Out of School Programmes.
    - (c) Greater recognition by Central Government of the contribution that Out of School Programmes make to the economy.
    - (d) The need to simplify the administrative arrangements regarding funding for Out of School programmes.