

14. KIDSFIRST KINDERGARTEN, SOUTH BRIGHTON

Officer responsible Community Advocate, Burwood/Pegasus	Author Sam Ryan – Community Development Adviser, DDI 941-5326
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The purpose of this report is to seek Community Board funding consideration for building alterations for the Kidsfirst Kindergarten, South Brighton.

BACKGROUND

Kidsfirst Kindergarten is part of the Canterbury-Westland Free Kindergarten Association. The kindergarten provides a Monday to Friday early childhood and education service that involves 45 children per session, including four special needs children who attended four sessions every week during the past year.

The kindergarten's objective is to meet society's need for high quality, low cost and easily accessible education for pre-school children. The kindergarten also provides learning opportunities for parents and child-carers through hosting workshops either locally or through its parent organisation. It also has a close relationship with other education providers such as the local school, which provides support and resources particularly through the 'Project Early' Programme. The kindergarten also has a close relationship with other family and community support/local government agencies, such as the Champion Centre and Special Education Services.

The kindergarten was built over 50 years ago and was designed to cater for 40 children and a staff of two. Staff numbers have now grown to four, plus ancillary part-time staff who support special needs children. The working office space measures just 3m x 2.5m. At present staff cannot hold staff meetings in the office and book work is mostly done sitting at chairs/tables designed for 3-4 year olds.

PROPOSAL

The kindergarten is proposing to complete \$17,593 worth of office alterations and alterations to a toilet block to include disabled access. The toilet alterations are required to comply with local body regulations.

The office alterations have been costed at \$9,092, and the alterations required to the toilet to meet local body regulations have been costed at \$6,545 (excluding GST), with the total cost being \$17,593 (including GST). The kindergarten committee has saved \$4,000 through fundraising, and last year Westpac Trust granted \$6,000 towards the project. This leaves a shortfall of \$7,593. This does not take into account the new furniture and equipment required for a new office, which has been costed at a further \$7,000. The Pre-school's audited accounts for last year show a \$1,030 operating surplus on expenditure of \$24,250 with investments representing approximately six months' operating expenditure.

The alterations will enable the kindergarten to provide a more professional service in the following ways: children will have a quieter area to use for small group sessions; an unwell or unhappy child will have a quieter place to retreat; parents will have a place in which to share confidential information with staff in a private setting; staff will have an ergonomically designed and more pleasant environment so that three staff members could do administrative work during non-contact time; and it will be a space where staff can hold staff meetings and eat lunch. Wider benefits include: committee members will also have a space to hold meetings, prepare newsletters to families, meet administrative, fundraising and health and safety obligations, and a place to store records; the community would have an adult-orientated place to hold meetings. For example, an Individual Programme for a Special Needs Child requires up to ten education/health professionals to meet.

OTHER OPTIONS FOR FUNDING ALTERATIONS

Kidsfirst Kindergartens parent body owns the building and the property and the South Brighton Kindergarten does not pay rent. The chief executive of the parent body has confirmed that it is obligated to pay a share of any repairs or maintenance required. However, as the proposed alterations are driven by the local kindergarten committee, the Association is not required to contribute any funds towards the project. This policy is in place because there are 62 kindergartens in the Association, and there is a limited income which has to be spread across all kindergartens.

The Supervisor of the Kindergarten has recently confirmed with the Ministry of Education that the project does not meet the criteria to apply for funding for the building alterations (the criteria has been circulated separately to Board members). The project does not increase the number of places available for children and it does not fit under the criteria of removing health or safety hazards. It is important to note that the original project was conceived to increase work-space for staff, and as a result of the Kindergarten's application to the Council for resource consent, it is obliged to upgrade its facilities to install a disabled toilet to comply with local body regulations. The Supervisor has also confirmed that the Kindergarten has to fund raise already to meet running costs, and therefore it is very difficult to put aside any funds from fund raising to meet any extra project costs.

Staff

Recommendation: That Kidsfirst Kindergarten, South Brighton, be allocated \$6,545 from the Community Board's 2001/02 Discretionary fund as a contribution to meeting local body regulations in its building alterations.

Chairperson's

Recommendation:

1. That a letter be sent to the local member of Parliament and the Minister of Education expressing concern at the inadequate provision for basic facility needs.
2. That this matter be raised at the next meeting of the Board with local members of Parliament.
3. That the Board decline the application for funding from the Board's Discretionary fund.
4. That the application be referred to the Community Development Scheme.