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CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL

Draft LTCCP 2009-19

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Submissions close on 16 April 2009

I wish to talk to the main points in my written submission at the hearings to be held between Monday 11 May 2009 and Monday 18 May 2009.

Are you completing this submission:

For yourself

If you are representing, how many people do you represent?

Name:

Odette Gallagher and Heather Alderton

Organisation Name:

St Albans Edu-Care Centre Inc

Organisation Role:

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Date:

15 April 2009

Your Submission:

We have been employed at St Albans Edu-Care Centre since 1995 and have seen tremendous changes in preschool education since that time. Without the support of the Christchurch City Council and Shirley/Papanui Community Board our preschool would not have been able to keep our fees affordable to the families we serve in the St Albans, Mairehau, Papanui, Edgware areas.

Odette joined our teaching team bringing her young daughter to preschool with her. At that time our centre cared for children whilst their parents had a break, shopping etc.

Over the years St Albans Edu-Care has developed a more extensive role in the community.

Families are the single most influence that impacts on childrens learning.

Children begin their journey as life long learners in the home, but for some children whose parents struggle with parenting, often because of a lack of skills, the preschool plays an enormous part in early education, not only for the child but also the parents.

Although our centre is old, and looks less inviting from the street, it is homely. Visitors and parents coming into the centre remark on the calm, friendly atmosphere, where children are empowered to learn in their own way.

We offer a nurturing environment, where every child and family member is acknowledged.

Our enrolments generally come from a recommendation of the quality early childhood service we provide, with some families from around the local area of the preschool. Many of our families have been connected with the preschool for a number of years, and encourage extended family members to enrol.

We currently have a long waiting list and are turning families away every week.

We serve an increasing ethnically diverse population that is moving into St Albans and Mairehau areas.

Several of our children are supported in the centre by Early Support Workers, following an Early Intervention programme from CCS, Champion Centre and Group Special Education services.

Many of our families are struggling on low incomes and are grateful for Government and local Council incentives that assist them.

Volunteer parents are on our Board of Governance. The values and ideas of our community are reflected in the actions of these parents and staff, our decision makers.

The community's wellbeing is dependent on making use of the skills, talents and experience of all members of the community. Families around the preschool give us support by helping out with minor repairs, painting equipment, rebuilding our Infant and Toddler play area and fundraising for ongoing maintenance and resources.

We utilize our local community as a resource and create a culture in the preschool where the community feels comfortable, welcome and valued. Eg The Mairehau Library, St Albans Park, Mahars Park Our Lady of Fatima school grounds, are all visited regularly by us.

We also have students from Mairehau High School, Burnside High School and U C Canterbury on work experience with us.

Our teachers support and encourage parents through education evenings, our parent library of books, magazines on Parenting. Listening to our parents, offering support, suggestions or advice is so important in a busy society where family support networks are not around with older members working or living out of Christchurch.

We also build a network of parents within the preschool to help each other.

Children are encouraged to develop a range of strategies for solving conflicts in peaceful, positive ways. Guidance of children at an early age will help to make our city a safer place in which to live.

Children are learning about sustainability through on going projects like planning and maintaining our raised garden, saving water, worm farming and recycling.

The financial support the Council has given us in the form of subsidized rent through a council grant has allowed our centre to support past and present families promoting their educational, social, economic, cultural, and environmental well being.

We encourage the Council and their staff to consider how valuable their contribution and continuing involvement in community preschools has been and will continue to be, as we provide quality educational opportunities for our future citizens.

We ask that the Council continue to subsidize the rents of Community not for profit preschools and that money be allocated in the LTCCP for a council grant to cover the renegotiated leases of these preschools.