

Submission form

PLEASE READ BEFORE COMPLETING YOUR SUBMISSION

The public consultation period is from Tuesday 10 March 2009 to Thursday 16 April 2009.

It will help us if you clearly:

- state the issue you want the Council to consider;
- state what specific action you think the Council should take, and
- state why that should be done.
- type or use black ink for your submission.

Please note: We are legally required to make all written or electronic submissions available to the public and to Councillors, including the name and address of the submitter. In making submissions available to the public, the submissions will be posted electronically on the Council's website. Information will be available to the public subject to the provisions of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987. If you consider there to be compelling reasons why your contact details and/or submission should be kept confidential, you should contact the Council Support Team, telephone 941 8999.

You may send us your submission:

On the internet:

You may enter your submission using the form provided on the Council's website at www.ccc.govt.nz

By email:

ccc-plan@ccc.govt.nz

Please make sure that your full name and address is included with your submission.

By mail:

(no stamp is required) to:

Freepost 178
Draft LTCCP
Christchurch City Council
PO Box 237
Christchurch 8140

No anonymous submissions will be accepted.

Whether you use this form or not, you must provide your full name, address and telephone number. If you are submitting on behalf of an organisation please state this and your role within that organisation.

Submissions must be received (NOT postmarked) at the Tuam Street Civic Offices no later than 5pm on Thursday 16 April 2009. To ensure receipt, hand deliver last-minute submissions to the Civic Offices, 163-173 Tuam Street.

Your submission

If you wish, you can present your submission at a hearing. If that is the case, please tick the appropriate box below. The hearings will be held from 11 May 2009 to 18 May 2009. Five to ten minutes will be allocated for speaking to your submission, including time for questions from the Councillors. The Council will confirm the date and time of your hearing in writing, by email or by telephone call.

I do NOT wish to discuss my submission at the hearing, and ask that this written submission be considered

OR

I wish to discuss 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 On behalf of a group or organisation

If you are representing a group or organisation, how many people do you represent? _____

Contact Name ANNA GRUCZYNSKA

Organisation name (if applicable) _____

Organisation role (if applicable) _____

Contact Address 47 CONWAY ST
BARRINGTON, CHRISTCHURCH Postcode 8024

Phone No. (day) 03 371 8441 Phone No. (evening) 03 980 2204

Email (if applicable) sgledownunder@yahoo.com

Signature [Signature] Date 5 April 2009

My name is Anna Gruczynska and my daughter is currently enrolled full time at the Tuam Street Early Learning Centre (TLC).

I would like to make a submission in response to the CCC Draft Long-Term Council Community Plan 2009-2019, specifically addressing the recommendation:

“To sell the Tuam Street Early Learning Centre [...] If a sale cannot be achieved then the proposal is to close the Tuam Street Early Learning Centre.”

My submission is that the Council should re-consider the proposal to sell or close TLC and that the Council should make every effort to ensure the continuity of care provided by TLC after the move of the civic headquarters to their new location by commencing an immediate search for suitable premises in the vicinity of the new HQ building, and by continuing to support TLC on its current site until such time that new premises are found.

I am making this submission both as a parent currently using the services of TLC, and as a citizen of Christchurch concerned about the future direction in the development of our city.

As a parent, I have been a customer of TLC since November 2003, when our eldest daughter commenced at the age of 6 months. Our younger daughter joined in March 2006 also at the age of 6 months. For over 5 years we have enjoyed the exceptionally high quality, and the continuity of care provided by TLC, resulting from the dedication and commitment of staff, and the low staff turnover. I see it as potentially having a negative impact on our younger daughter if she were suddenly forced to move to the care of people unknown to her and deprived of the continuity a short time before going to school.

As a citizen of Christchurch, I am concerned that the proposed closure would adversely affect the level and quality of services provided to the people who use central city on a regular basis, in particular those who work there.

The Wellington City Council Early Childhood Policy states that:

“The Council has an interest in the provision of quality ECE services because of the contribution such services make to promoting economic and social wellbeing.”

“ECE services provide the city with necessary social infrastructure to:

- provide good educational choice for children
- promote labour force participation
- attract and retain a highly skilled population base
- increase lifestyle choices for families
- build strong, connected communities.”

(Source: <http://www.wellington.govt.nz/haveyoursay/publicinput/pdfs/earlychild-policy.pdf>)

I strongly believe that the same could and should be applied to the Christchurch City Council, who have a crucial role to play in ensuring that services and infrastructure are available to city centre users, especially as evidence suggests that that private operators are unlikely to step in and fill that gap (please refer to my point s 1 & 3 below).

In reviewing my submission, I would like to Council to consider the following points:

1. The Council's proposal carries a very high risk that the availability of care will eventually be discontinued, even if the desired outcome ("selling TLC as a going concern, including or excluding the relocation of the current building by the purchaser. A lease would be offered on the land until such time as the Council or subsequent owner needed the site") is achieved in the short term.

It is my belief that high rental costs in central Christchurch would be a barrier to private operators and should the Council not be able to continue leasing the land at affordable rates, the centre would be forced to close.

This likelihood was evidenced in the Wellington Positively Poneke crèche case (2006), where the crèche was forced to move from the Council-provided premises and even though they were able to secure alternative premises in a privately-owned building, the fact that the building was not community-owned prevented them from receiving discretionary grants funding from the Ministry to convert the premises. Positively Poneke Crèche had to close as a result. (Source: www.wellington.govt.nz)

2. The reason given for the proposal (that "The centres were set up primarily to provide flexible or casual access as well as some regular booked access for users.", and that due to changes in MED standards the profile of users is different from that originally intended, i.e. most users are now regular community users, not casual users) is immaterial and irrelevant.

What is material and relevant is that there is an ongoing high need for the services provided by TLC. The need for the services has perhaps evolved, but it has not diminished, quite the contrary - the availability of spaces at TLC is very restricted, with even some currently enrolled children unable to attend the hours they would like to, and enquiries from new families being turned down.

3. Furthermore, the statement that "It is possible that a privately owned and operated early learning centre may be built in the vicinity [of the new headquarters]" is a speculation and does not constitute a valid reason to close existing facilities.

As mentioned above, I strongly believe that high rental costs in central Christchurch will be a barrier to new private operators entering the market. The Wellington City Council ECE Policy finds that:

"Community providers report that the main barrier to the establishment of services is securing land and buildings, at reasonable cost, in optimal locations. Good sites for ECC are often in locations central to communities, in popular and costly sites."

and I believe the same applies in Christchurch.

4. The statement contained in the Council's proposal that "There are 17 child care centres within four avenues" in justification of its proposal is incorrect.

Enquiries made at the 17 centres listed showed that a number of them were outside the 4 avenues, or had restricted access (special religious character, non-English language of instruction etc.), or did not provide care from birth, instead starting at 2 or 3 years of age (an important factor for families with more than one child).

In fact, only 4 centres could be considered to offer services comparable with those offered by TLC. All of them reported long waiting lists, in excess of 6 months, some as long as 18 months, and some not accepting names on their waiting lists at all.

TLC closing would escalate the already acute shortage of childcare places in central Christchurch.

5. The proposal states further that "There are 279 providers of early childhood education in Christchurch". It should be considered, however, that the vast majority of those are suburban childcare centres which may be close to where people live, but unlike urban centres, are not close to where they work, a distinction of utmost importance.

The Families Commission BLUE SKIES REPORT NO 14/06 found that

"it is a real benefit to parents having onsite care or subsidised care, and the employer reaps the benefit of a less stretched parent trying to fit in childcare drop-offs and pick-ups into the working and commuting day."

Quoting respondents saying that:

"When she was at my husband's workplace crèche she was just there for the working day, whereas now she is also in for the travel time, which makes the day a good hour or more longer, which we are really aware of. Also, as employees were on the crèche committee there was more sense of involvement and community than with a private centre."

And

"One of the advantages for me of onsite or nearby childcare facilities shared with other employers is that I can pop in there in my lunchtime and breastfeed or take her for a walk. So it would be really helpful if more employers did that."

(Source: New Zealand cultural norms of parenting and childcare and how these relate to labour force participation decisions and requirements - Mervyl McPherson, PHD; Social, Demographic and Evaluation Research and Massey University, November 2006).

Being placed in a suburban centre close to where we live would add at least an hour a day to the time our daughter spends at the centre, a difference that would be acutely felt by her and by us. It would also mean we would be unable to visit during the day, a benefit which we still enjoy and which we certainly found invaluable when our daughters were younger. Furthermore, we would not be able to respond as quickly in the event of illness.

Summary

In summary, my submission is that the City Council has the duty to ensure that adequate childcare services are provided in central Christchurch as part of ensuring adequate infrastructure for central city users - public transport, parking etc.

Evidence suggests that private operators are unlikely to fill the gap left by the Council, and the closure of TLC would be detrimental to the current and prospective users of TLC, including CCC employees and the wider community who use central city on a regular basis, predominantly as their place of work.

I therefore request that the Council continues to support TLC.