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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?

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Date: 15 April 2009

Your Submission:

WHAT I WANT THE COUNCIL TO CONSIDER:

The change proposal in respect of the future of the Council's involvement in three early learning centres.

INTRODUCTION:

As a ratepayer, educationalist and the Dean of Education in the University of Canterbury I have a professional interest as well as expertise and experience in the question of public education, particularly in Christchurch.

WHAT SPECIFIC ACTION THE COUNCIL SHOULD TAKE:

The Council should maintain the status quo by retaining Tuam Street Early Learning Centre, Pioneer Early Learning Centre and QEII Preschool as educational and care services for the citizens of Christchurch.

WHY THIS SPECIFIC ACTION SHOULD BE UNDERTAKEN:

1. The change proposal states that "Changes in the Ministry of Education standards over recent years means that it is no longer possible to offer casual access." I am not aware of any changes in the standards of the Ministry which makes this so, and in fact, casual access can be offered. Therefore, this is a false claim in the change proposal and cannot be used to support a conclusion of closing or outsourcing the centres.
2. The change proposal states that "The early learning centres are not seen

as core Council business." In fact, early learning centres have been among the core features of civic provision in Christchurch for 79 years. The rationale may have changed somewhat over this period of time but what has been a constant theme is the notion of maintaining the well-being of adult citizens and their young families. Since the latter part of the twentieth century and into this century the need to support working parents has increased in the cities of all advanced democratic societies. In particular, this includes the provision of early childhood education and care to families so the parents of these families may variously undertake paid work and have time to pursue necessary leisure activities, such as are provided at Tuam Street, QEII and Pioneer.

The meaning of the concept of 'core business' is far from clear and cannot be taken for granted or as uncontested: 'core'; defined by whom, in whose interests, for what purposes?

It is simply perverse to assert that the provision of early childhood education and care at points close to the leisure facilities of the city and the civic offices is not core business. By supporting adults and their children these centres assist in developing our citizens and, thereby, contribute to the well-being, gross civic happiness and productivity of Christchurch.

To reflect the commitment of the city to early childhood education and care it is highly desirable that the Christchurch City Council retains control of the ownership, philosophy, pedagogy and direction of these centres. This goal would be lost if the centres were outsourced or closed.

The change proposal notes that "The Christchurch City Council is the only Local Authority in New Zealand providing childcare facilities." The fact that this is so is one mark of the national and international excellence of Christchurch as a city and a standard against which our other cities might be judged.

3. As an addendum to the claim that "...the combined operation of the centres has no effect on rates", the change proposal makes the further claim that "...this may change if the Ministry of Education reduces its funding or the cost of complying with the regulations governing child care facilities increases to a level that can not be fully recovered by fees and charges." The speculation that government funding will be reduced is without foundation and therefore provides no support for the conclusion of the change proposal to close or outsource the centres.

4. That the "...Council's three early learning centres provide only 1.08% of these services" in the city is not relevant to the decision of whether or not to move away from the status quo. Indeed, these centres demonstrate the commitment of the city to provide centres of support close to its own facilities. And in providing these centres the city can and should be committed to making them exemplary.

5. The change proposal concludes that "...both private and community providers would have the opportunity to tender" Why? Given the city's commitment to community development there is no reason to extend tendering opportunities to private providers, should the decision to outsource the centres be taken. The city should ensure that the centres are committed to community development and, therefore, they should remain with providers who are similarly committed. The entity with the clearest such commitment is the City Council and for this further reason the centres should remain within the ambit of the Council.