

16 April 2009

Freepost 178
Draft LTCCP
Christchurch City Council
PO Box 237
Christchurch

Dear Sirs

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the consultation on the Long-Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) 2009-19.

Introduction

Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa/NZ Childcare Association (NZCA) is a national organisation that was formed as NZ Association of Child Care Centres Inc in 1963. It is a membership organisation that represents and supports early childhood education (ECE) services throughout New Zealand. NZCA is one of the largest single providers of early childhood teacher education in New Zealand.

It is the vision of our association that all children in New Zealand access early childhood services that provide high quality learning opportunities, complement and support their families' lives and enable them to know and embrace the cultural heritage of New Zealand.

In line with the Government's document Nga Huarahi Arataki, a 10-year Strategic Plan for Early Childhood Education, the association is committed to promoting participation and maintaining and improving quality in early childhood.

Submission

a) Role of the Christchurch City Council

We are surprised and concerned that the Christchurch City Council is reviewing its role in the provision of early childhood education and care for its youngest citizens. It is our view that local governments have an important role to play in supporting community-based ECE. An excellent example of this involvement is the project undertaken by the City of Manukau Education Trust (COMET) which provides leadership, advocacy, facilitation and co-ordination of education services within the City of Manukau. Investment in the planning, support and delivery of ECE services is a positive action by City Councils because of the benefits to children and families and the prosperity of the city.

Numerous studies (eg.Pascal & Bertram 2001) outline the benefits of public investment in ECE which are reflected in a number of social and economic

returns in the long term including, “increased tax revenues from parental take up of employment while the child attends ECE, and savings generated in educational welfare and justice expenditure” (Mitchell, Wylie and Carr, 2008 p. 92.).

b) Access to child-places in the CBD

The number of places for children in early childhood centres in the Christchurch City CBD is an important consideration when making the decision to close or relocate a centre. We understand from your proposal that there are “17 centres within the 4 avenues.” We are unclear about what area this covers and the number of child spaces they provide, but urge you to fully explore this question as part of your research around this community plan. ECE centres close to the centre of cities are seen as a vital resource to enable parents to enter the workforce and be productive. It also allows the council to support the requirements of the recent infant feeding legislation, the Employment Relations (Breaks and infant Feeding) Amendment Bill. Again research supports the view that people are more productive when childcare arrangements meet the needs of both parents and children.

c) Retaining community ownership

In relation to the outsourcing or selling of the centre, we would like to make a plea for maintaining community ownership, be this in the form of a charitable trust or incorporated society. Research undertaken by the Mitchell, Wylie and Carr (2008), identifies that community-based services are more likely to be invest in key indicators of quality such as staff qualifications, favourable ratios of teachers to children, professional development for teachers and non-contact time for teachers. These indicators of quality are strongly linked to long-lasting and positive outcomes for children.

All community-based centres are dependent on parent involvement and participation. Mitchell, Wylie and Carr identified strong benefits for families from participation in ECE including positive parenting and parental knowledge of child learning, development and behaviour.

d) Managing change

It is important that staff are supported through this period of change and we affirm your current consultation with both the Ministry of Education and NZEI, Te Riu Roa, the teachers union. There is always the risk if the culture of the centre or the terms and conditions of employment change, that teachers may leave or become disaffected, impacting negatively on children and families. We would hope that any ownership changes can be negotiated carefully to achieve successful staffing transitions.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa New Zealand Childcare Association does not wish to present its submission at a hearing.

Noho ora mai

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy Bell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nancy Bell
Chief Executive

References

Mitchell, L., Wylie, C., & Carr, M. (2008). *Outcomes of Early Childhood Education: Literature Review*. Research on behalf of Ministry of Education. New Zealand Council for Educational Research. Wellington NZ.

Pascal, C., & Bertram, T. (2001). Evaluating the costs and benefits of early childhood programmes. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 9 (2), p. 21-44.2001.

