

STRATEGY AND POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEE

6 APRIL 2009

POLICY AND PLANNING

A4	LIARDET ST FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S CENTRE DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS
LOCATION/ADDRESS:	85 LIARDET ST, REAR OF 85 LIARDET ST AND 186 ESPLANADE WEST, PORT MELBOURNE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:	DAVID YEOUART EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR COMMUNITY ASSETS AND SERVICES
PREPARED BY:	GREG WOOD MANAGER COMMUNITY SERVICES
FILE NO.:	36/02/40
ATTACHMENTS:	ATTACHMENT 1: AERIAL PHOTO OF 85 LIARDET ST AND 186 ESPLANADE WEST, PORT MELBOURNE

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 For Council to consider progress to date and options for the construction of the new Liardet St Family and Children's Centre.
- 1.2 Council is being asked to assume control of land currently controlled by Lady Forster Kindergarten to facilitate the recommended option for this project.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Strategy and Policy Review Committee recommend that Council resolve to:

- 2.1 Recognise the history and traditions of the Lady Forster Kindergarten and support the continuation of those features of the Kindergarten valued by the community which are consistent with council, state and federal government policies on the provision of quality education, health and care of families and children.
- 2.2 Note that the Federal Government has committed \$1.6 M, the Victorian government has committed \$1.2M and the City of Port Phillip proposes \$1.7M for the 2009/2010 Capital Works Program to the construction of a new Liardet St Family and Children's Centre.
- 2.3 Support the construction of an integrated family and children's centre on the three parcels of land known as 85 Liardet St, 186 Esplanade West and the rear of 85 Liardet St.
- 2.4 Include in the new facility include as a minimum:

- A replacement of the 50 kindergarten places at Lady Forster Kindergarten
- A minimum of 60 long day care places including replacing those from Albert Park College Childcare centre currently temporarily located at Port Melbourne Primary School.
- Maternal and child health consulting rooms and new parent group space
- Space for playgroups (available for community use after hours)
- Orientation on the land to maximize the use of the natural environment by children
- That the Liardet St Family and Children's Centre Steering Committee recommend to council a final design based on these parameters.

2.5 Request that the Minister for the Environment and Climate Change approve a transfer of committee of management status for the two land parcels at 186 Esplanade West, Port Melbourne and rear 85 Liardet St (Crown Land Reservation 1204270) to Port Phillip City Council for the following reasons:

- Council proposes to construct, in partnership with the federal and state governments, a new family and children's centre on the land.
- A new centre provides maximum utilisation of available land for an integrated family and children's services centre
- A new facility will replace the existing Lady Forster Kindergarten building which has a limited lifespan.

2.6 Note that it is intended that children's services at the new facility would continue to be community managed notwithstanding the transfer of committee of management status for the land.

3. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

3.1 The City of Port Phillip (CoPP), in partnership with the federal and Victorian governments has agreed to construct a new, state of the art, family and children's centre on land comprising approximately 3,700 sq m at the corner of Esplanade West and Liardet Street in Port Melbourne.

3.2 The site of the project comprises three parcels of Crown Land. CoPP is committee of management for the parcel known as 85 Liardet Street, Port Melbourne (Crown land Reserve 1204736). A traditional kindergarten operates from the other two parcels of land under the Crown land Reservation 1204270, known as 186 Esplanade West and rear of 85 Liardet St, Port Melbourne, for which the Lady Forster Kindergarten is the committee of management. The kindergarten is licensed for 50 places, including extended hours care.

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- 3.3 The land on which Lady Forster Kindergarten has Committee of Management status is around 2700sqm. Council's parcel is approximately 900sqm. The setting has the advantage of having a natural outlook and proximity to parkland creating a strong sense of open space.
- 3.4 As CoPP has agreed to construct this project on behalf of the three tiers of government, it is important that CoPP becomes the committee of management for the entire site to enable it to deliver the family and children's centre project with clear authority.
- 3.5 In 2005 & 2006 Lady Forster Kindergarten approached Council with a "Masterplan" for their site, involving the upgrade of its building. The plan indicated its current building had a lifespan of approximately 10 years.
- 3.6 The Masterplan proposed use of Council's parcel of land, in addition to its own two parcels of land to create space for a further 10 kindergarten places. The Masterplan also proposed demolishing the existing building and including meeting rooms and a consulting room for use of specialists such as a speech therapist.
- 3.7 A number of meetings, instigated by Lady Forster Kindergarten, were held between council officers and Lady Forster staff and committee members during 2005/06. Lady Forster Kindergarten was requesting access to 85 Liardet Street to provide additional services to their service users including space to run parent group education sessions and to create a parent resource library.
- 3.8 Council has now been advised the Masterplan concept is no longer the position of the Lady Forster Kindergarten Committee of Management. It has not been disclosed how Lady Forster Kindergarten proposes to fund a replacement for their current building.
- 3.9 Attempts to engage Lady Forster Kindergarten on the recommended proposal for an integrated centre, providing them a new facility from which to operate, have not been successful.
- 3.10 Staff and families from the Albert Park College Childcare centre have been involved in discussions around the new centre, and require a new location to be secured as a matter of urgency.
- 3.11 Locations for playgroups in Port Melbourne are in short supply. Playgroups currently operate from a room at the Port Melbourne Family & Children's Hub. Consultations with the architect have indicated the facilities for playgroups could be improved and additional services provided in a new facility at Liardet St.
- 3.12 Establishing integrated family & children's centres, and maximising resources through effective use of the infrastructure, have been identified as key actions of Port Phillip's Municipal Early Years Plan (MEYP).
- 3.13 The importance of maximizing children's access to the natural environment and open space has been identified as an objective of Port Phillip's MEYP and a key determinant in improving child development, health and wellbeing.

- 3.14 Both federal and state governments have committed to a broad reform agenda for early childhood education and care which focuses on providing families with high quality, accessible and affordable integrated early years' services.
- 3.15 Council is aware that soil on its own site would require remediation, involving significant costs. Council has not had access to the land on which Lady Forster Kindergarten has Committee of Management to assess soil remediation requirements, however it is anticipated that there would be similar costs associated with these parcels of land as on the adjoining land managed by council.

4. CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDERS

- 4.1 The Liardet St Family & Children's Steering Committee has met twice to consider this project.
- 4.2 Membership includes staff and families of the Albert Park College Childcare Centre, Committee of Management member from Lady Forster Kindergarten, Port Melbourne Rostered Playgroup, Childcare Access Port Phillip, DEECD and councilors.
- 4.3 Architects have consulted with representatives from APCCC, Childcare Access Port Phillip and Port Melbourne Rostered Playgroup
- 4.4 Lady Forster Kindergarten is opposed to relinquishing their Crown Land reservation for the purposes of creating an integrated family & children's centre, including their service.
- 4.5 Lady Forster Kindergarten has been unwilling to engage on design of such a centre as a result.
- 4.6 Lady Forster Kindergarten has suggested part of Lagoon Reserve could be used to accommodate the new facility, instead of their Crown Land reservation
- 4.7 The Childcare Access Port Phillip representative on the steering committee has suggested a double storey option should be explored in the option two and three to maximize childcare places.
- 4.8 Albert Park College Childcare Centre representatives have emphasised the urgency of their situation, and expressed concern over two storey options relating to privacy and overlooking onto ground levels play areas.

5. DISCUSSION

OPTIONS

- 5.1 Recommended Option
 - 5.1.1 The three parcels of land constitute a significant community asset and a new facility across the site represents the best use of this asset in the community interest now and into the future.

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- 5.1.2 The three tiers of government have indicated that they are prepared to make a significant investment (\$4.5M) to construct a new integrated facility on this site
- 5.1.3 Attempts to engage the Lady Forster Kindergarten Committee of Management in full participation in the project have not been successful.
- 5.1.4 Clear authority over the land needs to be established to enable the construction to be properly managed. The federal and state governments have indicated their preparedness for the City of Port Phillip to manage the project on behalf of the three tiers of government.
- 5.1.5 The history and traditions of the Lady Forster Kindergarten should be recognised and council should support the continuation of those features of the Kindergarten valued by the community which are consistent with council, state and federal government policies on the provision of quality education, health and care of families and children.
- 5.1.6 The Liardet St Family and Children's Centre Steering Committee is continuing to work on planning for the new centre. Planning to date indicates that the new facility would include:
 - 5.1.6.1 A replacement of the 50 kindergarten places at Lady Forster Kindergarten,
 - 5.1.6.2 68 long day care places including replacing those from Albert Park College Childcare centre currently temporarily located at Port Melbourne Primary School,
 - 5.1.6.3 Maternal and child health consulting rooms including space for new parent groups,
 - 5.1.6.4 Space for playgroups,
 - 5.1.6.5 Orientation on the land to maximize the use of the natural environment by children.
- 5.1.7 This option has the following advantages:
 - 5.1.7.1 Provide a new facility from which Lady Forster Kindergarten can continue to operate, replacing a building with a limited lifespan
 - 5.1.7.2 Increases childcare places in Port Melbourne and ensure the Albert Park College Childcare centre can continue to operate
 - 5.1.7.3 Maximises available outdoor play space and access to natural environment at around 2000 sqm for use by all children attending the centre, and takes advantage of the natural setting.

- 5.1.7.4 Provides ample space to increase the services and facilities available to families and the community in Port Melbourne. Expansion of services include Maternal and Child Health consulting rooms, space for new parent groups and space for playgroups, which can be used as a space for community use after hours.
- 5.1.7.5 Achieves operational efficiencies for services using the centre, through shared provision of staff meal rooms, toilets etc.
- 5.1.7.6 Achieves improved environmental sustainability and reduced maintenance costs for the community by replacing aging infrastructure with a new facility built with strong Environmental Sustainability Design features.
- 5.1.8 The disadvantage of this option is the dissatisfaction of the Lady Forster Kindergarten in losing direct management responsibility for portions of Crown Land they currently occupy.
- 5.2 Option 2
 - 5.2.1 If council were restricted to land it controls then a Albert Park College Childcare Centre (APCCC) could be replaced on this site with a maximum of 35 to 40 Places
 - 5.2.2 This option has the advantages that it provides a permanent location for Albert Park College Childcare centre and that the state government's \$1.2M may continue to be available. It would also cost council less money.
 - 5.2.3 The disadvantages of this option are:
 - 5.2.3.1 Integrated, services would not be able to be provided.
 - 5.2.3.2 Federal government funding would be forfeited (\$1.6M)
 - 5.2.3.3 Children attending Albert Park College Childcare would have around 450 square metres of outdoor space available to them, as opposed to around 2300sqm for children attending the Kindergarten next door.
 - 5.2.3.4 Insufficient land size to expand services to the Port Melbourne community for the future, for example, no capacity to provide MCH services including new parent groups or spaces for playgroups to meet.
 - 5.2.3.5 This option does not address the declining quality of the Lady Forster Kindergarten building. It is unlikely that any additional funding would be available in the foreseeable future from any of the three tiers of government for rebuilding the kindergarten.

- 5.2.4 A variation of this option would be to build a second storey. This would enable some additional services to be accommodated e.g. maternal and child health and new parents groups but not playgroups
- 5.2.5 This variation would also have the disadvantages of more relative expense (require lift etc) and would not be consistent with its proximity to Lagoon Reserve, a park precinct.

5.3 Option 3

- 5.3.1 A third option would be to restrict the building to 85 Liardet St and the land to the rear of 85 Liardet. This option would leave the current Lady Forster Kindergarten building untouched on 186 Esplanade West
- 5.3.2 This option has the advantage of allowing more facilities e.g. maternal and child health and space for new parent groups to be included on the ground floor and would cost less than the recommended option.
- 5.3.3 The disadvantages of this option are:
 - 5.3.3.1 Not enough room for playgroups
 - 5.3.3.2 The shape and size of the land would impact on the design of the indoor and outdoor space – the building could not be orientated for maximum passive solar design.
 - 5.3.3.3 Available outdoor play space for APCCC children would be 620sqm, as opposed to around 1400sqm for children attending the Kindergarten next door.
 - 5.3.3.4 This option does not address the declining quality of the Lady Forster Kindergarten building. It is unlikely that any additional funding would be available in the foreseeable future from any of the three tiers of government for rebuilding the kindergarten.
 - 5.3.3.5 This option is not consistent with the conditions for federal government funding for the project.
- 5.3.4 A variation of this option would be to build a two storey building. This would allow for playgroups to be included but has the disadvantages of additional expense (lift etc) and a two storey building in the park precinct.

5.4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.4.1 The recommended option is consistent with a range of council policies regarding integrated services and facilities for children and their families.
- 5.4.2 Establishing integrated family & children's centres has been identified as a key action of Port Phillip's Municipal Early Years Plan (MEYP) i.e. 'establish a program of co-location for stand alone services such as Maternal and Child Health, kindergarten, childcare and related services.' The MEYP identified six goals that support the

establishment of these facilities in particular 'adopt a fully integrated approach'.

- 5.4.3 Council also adopted a Community Hubs Policy in 2004 which provides the framework for the planning and delivery of integrated family and children's services models for Port Phillip.
- 5.4.4 Council's Health Plan also promotes opportunities for greater social cohesion and integration of service provision as key determinants of improved health and wellbeing outcomes for children and families. The recommended option is also consistent with the Council Plan 2005-2009 goals to 'consolidate services and activities in community centres in key locations' and 'Bringing people together to make our city better'.
- 5.4.5 The recommended option is also consistent with the policies that underpin the establishment of the newly created, integrated State Government Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the department's 'Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development' and related policies (e.g. Children First, Best Start, A Fairer Victoria, and Joining the Dots, Victoria's plan to improve outcomes in early childhood - National Reform Agenda).
- 5.4.6 The Australian Government has committed to a broad reform agenda for early childhood education and care which focuses on providing families with high quality, accessible and affordable integrated early childhood education and care (Draft Early Years Learning Framework, 2008).
- 5.4.7 Option 2, as a single purpose childcare centre, is not consistent with the council, state and federal government policies regarding integrated service planning and provision for the early years outlined above.
- 5.4.8 Option 3 includes some integration of services, in line with council policies, but the quality of the space is compromised by using only two blocks that are not of an efficient orientation or size for optimum design for long term community planning.
- 5.4.9 The three parcels of land, at a total land size of approximate 3600sqm is a rare asset to the community for use for educational and family services. Short of parkland being used for such a service, similar size parcel of land is unlikely to be available for future community use.

5.5 FINANCE / RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.5.1 The recommended option provides best outcome for the long term community needs in the most cost effective, and environmental sustainable manner.
- 5.5.2 The recommended option is consistent with federal and state government funding requirements (\$2.8M federal and state funding in total).

- 5.5.3 The draft capital works program for 2009/2010 provides for \$1.7M of Council funding consistent with the recommended option.

5.6 LEGAL & RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 5.6.1 State and federal funding was based on provision of integrated early years' services. Options 2 and 3 would involve Council forfeiting Federal Government funding of \$1.6M to deliver an integrated family & children's centre in the Port Melbourne community.
- 5.6.2 Options 2 and 3 are not consistent with State Government policy on creation of integrated services. However state funding may still be available, as the \$1.2M was earmarked for the replacement of APCCC.
- 5.6.3 There is a risk to the City of Port Phillip's reputation to deliver quality integrated family and children's services infrastructure, if the recommended option were not to proceed.
- 5.6.4 Family's and Children's human rights are best catered for by the provision of quality integrated services as provided for in the recommended option.

5.7 SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

SOCIAL EQUITY

- 5.7.1 The recommended option has the potential to provide additional integrated, affordable and accessible care, education and health services to children, their families and the local community. Increased opportunities for community connection and friendship would be created.
- 5.7.2 Flexible facilities would allow for greater adaptability of the physical environment as community needs change over time. Actively engaging the community and local service providers in the planning for this model of service provision would ensure its relevance to the local community now and into the future.
- 5.7.3 Strong neighbourhood partnerships and integrated service provision will ensure long term flexibility, sustainability and quality services for the Port Phillip community.

ECONOMIC VIABILITY

- 5.7.4 The recommended option will seek to maximise council's finite resources and, through more effective and flexible use of facilities, would reduce costs of providing services to the local community.
- 5.7.5 The development of additional integrated family and children's centres will increase the longer term sustainability and viability of the early childhood care, education and health sector. Consolidating administrative aspects and processes would increase efficiencies. There could be opportunities to utilise staff across a range of services

and programs as well as resource staff and families in a more effective manner.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

- 5.7.6 The recommended option, through the design and operations of more suitable premises, will demonstrate significant environmental improvements and increased sustainability compared to what is achievable with the existing buildings.

CULTURAL VITALITY

- 5.7.7 The recommended option would enable families to be better connected to supportive networks from the birth of their first baby.
- 5.7.8 Integrated facilities, with a range of universal and specialist services, would have increased capacity to respond to children and families with additional needs, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and families in complex situations. Integrated facilities support lifelong learning, from birth.

6. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

6.1 TIMELINE

- 6.1.1 April 2009: Request Minister to transfer Committee of Management
- 6.2.2 June 2009: Steering Committee to finalise recommended design for council consideration
- 6.2.3 October 2009: Council to award tender for construction
- 6.2.4 October 2010: Target for completion

6.2 COMMUNICATION

Key messages

- 6.2.1 There is plenty of land for all children to share on the three parcels of land located at the corner of Esplanade West and Liardet Streets.
- 6.2.2 Council values the traditions and history of Lady Forster Kindergarten and in recognition of the limited lifespan of its existing building, wants its services to continue from a high quality family & children's services centre.
- 6.2.3 Council is committed to providing a new location for the Albert Park College Childcare centre.

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- 6.2.4 Council is committed to the delivery of high quality integrated family & children's services, in partnership with the federal and state governments, to support their policies of early years' reform.
- 6.2.5 The integrated model will deliver more childcare places, more playgroup spaces and more maternal and child health services for the community.
- 6.2.6 The use of the three parcels of land will allow council to deliver a community asset that respects the 80 years of education tradition on the site, while looking forward to delivering improved services for families over the next 80 years.
- 6.2.7 Council will continue to work with all key user groups and the community to achieve an outcome in the best interests of the community.