



Ordinary Council Meeting

10 March 2021

LATE ITEM

REPORT

ITEM NO

SUBJECT

11.3.5

SUPPORT FOR THE PROVISION OF CHILDCARE SERVICES IN AUGUSTA

11.3.5 SUPPORT FOR THE PROVISION OF CHILDCARE SERVICES IN AUGUSTA

LOCATION/ADDRESS	67 Allnut Terrace, Augusta
APPLICANT/LANDOWNER	Augusta Community Childcare Inc/Shire of Augusta Margaret River
FILE REFERENCE	RES/20761
REPORT AUTHOR	James Shepherd, Director Corporate and Community Services
AUTHORISING OFFICER	Stephanie Addison-Brown, Chief Executive Officer

IN BRIEF

- A known shortage of childcare facilities exists within the Augusta region of the Shire.
- Augusta Community Childcare Incorporated (ACC) has been established by local community members to provide a service to fill this gap, the organisation is incorporated as a not for profit community organisation.
- ACC undertook a study of potential facilities suitable for the provision of a childcare service within Augusta, the Augusta Recreation Centre was identified as their preferred location.
- ACC initially made an application to the Shire's 2020 Economic Stimulus Grant program for funds to upgrade the Augusta Recreation Centre to provide the required facilities.
- ACC have been working with the relevant regulatory agencies (Federal and State Government) to establish the required approvals and external operating funding support available to them to operate the service.
- ACC received confirmation as a registered childcare provider in February 2021.
- The State and Federal governments have indicated support for this project.
- Upgrades to the Augusta Recreation Centre have been identified as one option for consideration; Shire Officers are investigating alternative options which will be brought back to Council on or before 28 April 2021.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Notes the existence of a shortage of childcare provision within the Augusta region of the Shire and endorses in principle support to facilitate the establishment of a childcare service in Augusta
2. Authorises the CEO to investigate options that would enable the Shire to support the development of a childcare service in Augusta and report back to Council no later than the Council meeting of 28 April 2021

LOCATION PLAN

Nil

TABLED ITEMS

Nil

BACKGROUND

The shortage of available childcare places across the Shire has been recognised as an issue for some time now. Childcare can be split into long day care and outside school hours care (before and after school care). Long day care is primarily provided by the private sector whilst outside school hours care is delivered by both public and private sectors.

ACC is a community driven project that seeks to provide affordable childcare to the Augusta community covering long day care, vacation care and outside school hours care for children aged up to 12 years. ACC established a working party to investigate options for the provision of childcare services for Augusta and an initial approach to the Shire for support through the 2020 COVID-19 Economic Stimulus Grant program was made.

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As part of the original submission to the Shire's COVID-19 Economic Stimulus Grant a community survey identified the following potential demand for childcare and out of school hours care:

- 14 families (22 children in total) are currently members of the Augusta Playgroup
- Augusta Primary School has 72 children enrolled
- Karridale Primary School has 56 children enrolled
- 2016 Census data reported 39 children aged 0-4 years living in Augusta and 18 children aged 0-4 years living in Karridale.
- The Karridale Family Day Care Centre run by Sandra Morgan closed in August 2020 at which time it had 10 children enrolled and a waitlist of 12.

A business plan developed by ACC after multiple discussions with various childcare operators (including Shire managed, commercial, and private) identified that the best option for Augusta would be a community-based model. The features of this would include:

- A not-for-profit early learning centre overseen by a board of directors.
- A focus on inclusivity and intergenerational connections, encouraging service to the community.
- Promoting a true sense of belonging to the broader community and a lifelong desire for learning.
- Creation of a new, viable business in Augusta as it adapts to the post COVID-19 environment.

ACC have enlisted the support of the non-profit childcare consultancy, The POD in Bunbury to guide ACC through the process of gaining regulatory approvals for childcare service providers; this was achieved in February 2021.

Demand has been determined through a community survey, the review of state and federal reports and trends and requests for signed expression of interest enrolment forms with 22 received to date.

Projections outlined in the business case identify that a childcare centre would have significant economic benefits for the local business community, create employment opportunities, address a variety of social issues and indirectly benefit community organisations and projects; these are outlined below.

- Augusta Primary School rates below average on the ICSEA index (a categorisation of the socio-educational backgrounds of families, indicating poverty and disadvantage). Against a national average of 1000, Augusta Primary School's rating was 974 in 2019, compared to Karridale Primary School at 1018, Rapids Landing Primary School at 1031 and Margaret River Primary School at 1038. Families with access to childcare have increased capacity to work and increased discretionary household income which create flow on benefits to the local economy.
- More women in the workforce results in higher economic growth. A McKinsey Global Institute study (The Power of Parity, September 2015) projected that closing gender gaps in employment would increase global gross domestic product (GDP) by 26 percent by 2025.
- First homebuyers and homebuilders support the construction industry and feed into the enrolment numbers of primary schools.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the importance of childcare to the economy as it has enabled essential workers to continue working and to reduce the reliance on family members and friends for informal care.
- An Augusta based childcare centre would provide reliable and accessible childcare to families in the greater Augusta area (including Karridale, Scott River and Nillup).
- Reliable, local childcare increases the long term reliability of employees who can work longer, more consistent work hours.
- Reliable, local childcare increases access to the workforce for local businesses, many of whom are struggling to find and retain permanent staff due to COVID-19.
- Childcare facilities create strong community connections, in turn building a stronger connection to investing, employing and buying local.
- A local childcare service would increase the ability for Augusta to accommodate working-from-home or small business individuals already living in the area or looking to relocate from Perth to the regions.
- A childcare centre would create up to 6-8 FTE local jobs.

- A childcare centre would act as an attractor for new families considering Augusta and add to the vibrancy and sustainability of the town's economy
- A childcare service would provide a visible career pathway for work experience and school leavers, and Early Childhood Education is among the training courses currently attracting a 50% subsidy by the state government as part of the Lower Fees, Local Skills program for growth industries.
- Local childcare increases buy local opportunities for parents who are not required to access childcare out of town.

CONSULTATION AND ADVICE

External Consultation

- Augusta Community Childcare Inc.
- Federal Minister for Forrester, Nola Marino
- State Labor Candidates, Jane Kelsbie and Jackie Jarvis
- Augusta Community Resource Centre

Internal Consultation

- CEO
- Director Corporate and Community Services
- Director Sustainable Infrastructure and Development
- Manager Community Sport and Recreation
- Manager Legal and Governance
- Co-ordinator Building Assets and Maintenance

DISCUSSION / OFFICER COMMENTS

Augusta Community Childcare has undertaken significant work to date establishing the organisation, seeking expressions of interest, working with State and Federal agencies in relation to regulatory requirements and funding as well as seeking additional funding through grants from local organisations.

To date the following grants or financial support has been confirmed:

- \$5,000 in funding has been secured from Department of Communities for our Senior's Engagement Program.
- \$15,000 has been secured from Augusta & Districts Community (Bendigo) Bank.
- \$4,000 funding from Leeuwin Lions.
- \$300 from Augusta Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
- \$100,000 State Labor 2021 Election Commitment.

A \$10,000 grant application has also been submitted to the Department of Communities Grant for Women Program 2020-2021 for a Women's Connect Project whilst a further application for an additional \$6,000 from Leeuwin Lions is pending confirmation.

The Federal government have also confirmed that the service will be eligible for the Child Care Subsidy via Centrelink for eligible parents.

Project Scope and Funding

Initial contact with the Shire for funding was through the Community Care Package Economic Stimulus grant program in late 2020. At the time Shire officers felt that more work was required to establish the full scope of the proposed childcare facility along with the associated costs. As a result the grant application was deferred with ACC asked to provide further information to support further consideration of their initial application.

To ensure that all potential options are considered the Shire is seeking approval to investigate the following potential facility upgrade options that would provide the necessary flexible, multiuse space that could accommodate a childcare service subject to approval by Council.

1. Augusta Recreation Centre upgrade or renewal
2. Augusta Shire Offices extension
3. A standalone facility located within the Augusta Civic Precinct

Preliminary desktop work will develop an options report for Council's consideration. This report will cover the key project components of site suitability, constructability and cost. The cost projections for works identified at this stage are in the order of \$500,000.

STATUTORY ENVIRONMENT / LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The establishment of a childcare centre in Augusta would be subject to the necessary statutory approvals in relation to planning, building and leasing/licencing.

STRATEGIC PLAN / POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Community Strategic Plan 2036 (CSP)

Key Result Area 3 – Ensuring Sustainable Development

Key result Area 4 – Vibrant and Diverse Economy

PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Nil

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Nil

Long Term Financial Plan

Nil

Whole of Lifecycle considerations

Nil

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Environmental

Nil

Social

Augusta children would have access to pre-school learning which is available to communities elsewhere in the Shire.

Economic

A reliable, sustainable, year-round childcare service would act as supporting social infrastructure to facilitate economic growth.

ADVOCACY

Nil

IMPLICATIONS OF ALTERNATIVE RESOLUTION

Nil

VOTING REQUIREMENTS

Simple Majority

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

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2. Authorises the CEO to investigate options that would enable the Shire to support the development of a childcare service in Augusta and report back to Council no later than the Council meeting of 28 April 2021

ADVICE TO APPLICANT / PROPONENT

Nil

ATTACHMENTS

1. CONFIDENTIAL Augusta Community Childcare Business Plan

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