

**Report to General Manager**Attachments:  
Nil**SUBJECT:** Community Support Initiatives During COVID-19 Crisis**AUTHOR:** Helen Campbell, Manager Community Services**ENDORSED BY:** Rebecca Aukim, Acting Director Community and Library Services**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Feedback on the impacts the COVID-19 crisis is having on Community Centres and childcare services in Council buildings is being received. This report summarises the current situation and outlines areas where Council support to services might be considered.

The impact on community centres has been the widespread with closure of the centres themselves as well as their markets. The Crows Nest Centre itself remains partially open as its home support services are considered at all levels to be essential services. North Sydney Community Centre operates during school holidays for Vacation Care under the management of Gowrie NSW.

All centres are developing online services and have written to Council with suggestions of where Council can assist. The Crows Nest Centre has been more specific, as Council would expect, given its role in support of the frail aged and disabled.

The Centres do not pay rent and the only additional support offered so far has been Council meeting the cost of the emergency fencing for the March 2020 Northside Produce Market.

The impacts on children's services include a dramatic fall in attendances followed by a partial reversal of this trend, arising from the Federal Government's decision to keep centres open, ban childcare fees and arrange for payment of staff through other mechanisms.

Consideration has already been given during March 2020 to the services' levels of unrestricted reserves held at January 2020 and some small additional grants have been made to those in immediate need. In addition, Council's *D5-49 Waiving Charges COVID-19 Pandemic Policy* has been applied and rent relief given to the centres who pay rent.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Small grants from current budgets amounting to \$17,000 released from cancelled events such as International Volunteers Day and underspent consultancies in Children's Services have been applied to childcare services in immediate need. Rent relief amounts to 50% reduction in the rents shown in this report and will continue two months into the recovery period.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**1. THAT** Council notes the existing financial support and small grants funded from the adopted budget 2019/20 to local services.

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## **LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN**

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

- Direction: 4. Our Social Vitality
- Outcome: 4.1 North Sydney is connected, inclusive, healthy and safe  
4.2 North Sydney is creative and home to popular events  
4.3 North Sydney supports lifelong learning

## **BACKGROUND**

North Sydney Council's method of delivery in community services is a combination of (i) direct service (minimal), (ii) contract management, and (iii) stimulating the not for profit and volunteer sector (particularly the volunteer Boards of the community centres and child care centers) through Joint Plans of Management, professional support and a grants program

This report is usefully read in conjunction with Council's *Draft Community Grants and Subsidies 2020/21* which outlines the services, financial histories and current challenges.

## **CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS**

Community engagement will be undertaken in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Protocol.

## **SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT**

This report deals with (draft) State Government Legislation/Policy which may have a substantial effect on sustainability. This report is for information purposes only; a sustainability assessment was not undertaken.

### **Areas of Support Identified by the Centres & Community Transport**

#### **The Crows Nest Centre**

- Enhanced digital communication;
- Personal Protective Equipment to support service delivery;
- Chemicals and cleaning of common areas;
- Sustain Linen Service to Frail Older People; and
- Sustain Meals on Wheels to Frail Older People.

#### **Community Connect (Lower North Shore Community Transport)**

- Transport assistance to Crows Nest Centre clients.

#### **North Sydney Community Centre**

- Paying for an annual Zoom license: This is the centre's platform for orchestrating online classes and with it they will be able to offer additional events, workshops and clubs/community groups;
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- Subsidising Term 2 tutors' fees for a 9-week term;
- Funding for marketing: This would include Facebook/Instagram ads and digital marketing (i.e. North Shore Mums, Concrete Playground/Time Out);
- Contribution toward the Northside Produce Markets re-opening with COVID-19 measures in place costs will be higher with additional staff required (such as the 21 March 2020 market) with possibly less income and emergency fencing;
- Updating the centre's website; and
- Increasing the annual Council grant.

### **The Kirribilli Centre**

- It would be of great benefit to the Kirribilli Centre if Council were to run some of the lost markets as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. This would greatly help the Centre to regain some of its lost income;
- Assistance in the promotion of both the Kirribilli Centre and Markets with particular focus to those new programs that have had to be placed on hold; and
- Increasing the annual Council grant.

### **Primrose Park Art And Craft Centre & The North Sydney Men's Shed**

- These centres have been required to shut due to the COVID-19 restrictions. They do not pay rent or have paid staff. The impact is the complete closure of the centres and no long-term financial issues have been identified.

### **May Gibbs' Nutcote**

- The Museum has shut in consideration of its high level of vulnerable volunteers and visitors. While Nutcote does not pay rent, it does have staff (1.2 effective full-time) and is suffering financial hardship. The Board has approached Council for assistance and existing budgets are being reviewed to see what can be done.

### **Children's Services**

The following Long Day Care and Pre-school Centres are provided with accommodation in North Sydney Council Community Centres. This accommodation acts in effect as a form of rental subsidy. Subsidy is also applied where the sites are small and approved childcare places are constrained, threatening viability. For historical reasons one service (KidsNest – the only occasional care service in North Sydney) pays rent as well as receiving a cash donation. Services are:

- Kelly's Place Children's Centre (Peppercorn + subsidy);
- Cammeray Children's Centre (\$12,000);
- Cameragal Montessori Preschool (\$12,000);
- KU Grandstand Preschool (Peppercorn) (\$11,000);
- KU Cammeray Preschool (Peppercorn) (\$12,000);
- KidsNest Occasional Care Service (\$6,500 + subsidy); and
- McMahons Point Community Preschool (Peppercorn + subsidy)

KU Greenwood Long Day Care Centre is distinct from these other services as it is managed for Council under a contract with KU in return for a management fee. This too is a small facility and is only sustainable thanks to KU's capacities of scale.

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Due to the impact of COVID-19, recent communication with Centre Based Day Care services confirmed there has been a significant decrease in the attendance and enrolments of children in care. This reduction equated to approximately 50% of the overall number of places available within these centres. Many of these services had expressed the likelihood of imminent closure due to the significant loss of revenue from fees.

In response to this widespread trend the Commonwealth Government announced emergency childcare assistance payments under the Early Childhood Care Relief Package designed to ensure services remain open.

Under this new Care Relief Package weekly payments to the equivalent of 50% of the services' fee revenue (capped at a maximum of \$11.98/hour). are now applicable to these centres.

The Department gathered information on fee levels based on a representative day in March 2020.

Two other forms of financial assistance are supporting the viability of services and offsetting the total loss of fee revenue from parents.

The first of these grants is the Job Keeper supplement, an amount of \$750/week per staff member and the other is an Exceptional Circumstance Payment, payable to services that have experienced an increase in the number of enrolments within their service. The Educators are aware of these grants and individually following up on what they are entitled to.

These changes have taken effect from 6 April 2020.

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7 April 2020

Ms Helen Campbell  
 Manager Community Development  
 PO Box 12  
 North Sydney NSW 2059

Dear Helen,

### Emergency Services Funding: COVID-19

COVID-19 has certainly presented us all with many challenges. Here at the Crows Nest Centre we have been striving to sustain community support for vulnerable older people, people with a disability and people who are homeless or at risk.

Sadly, we had to close our doors to the public from Wednesday April 1, in order to comply with the Prime Minister's directives on social distancing. Despite this significant change to service delivery, our staff and volunteers have worked tirelessly behind the scenes to continue to support vulnerable people where they reside:

- We have ranked nourishment as our number one priority service, viewing Meals on Wheels as an essential service.
- Assisted shopping comes a close second, with our clients phoning through handwritten shopping lists, staff and volunteers accessing priority codes, entering orders online and arranging home delivery of essential groceries - much to the relief of those with limited or no technology skills.
- Supply of fresh sheets and towels, via our much loved linen service, also remains a priority. Until recently, our dedicated volunteers arrived with fresh sheets and towels, enjoyed a chat, stripped and remade beds and returned to our Centre so we could arrange commercial laundering. However, with the advent of COVID-19 it quickly became apparent that we were unlikely to be able to sustain this service, especially when our volunteer workforce was halved overnight following the National Cabinet's decision that people aged 70 and over should stay at home (the average age of our volunteers is 67 years).

Agility and staff flexibility have remained at the forefront of our endeavours to continue to support vulnerable members in our community, many of whom live alone and are now very isolated. To date we have:

- Enhanced our electronic capabilities to allow staff to work remotely and prepare for an event where some or all staff are required to self-isolate.
- Corresponded with clients and volunteers by mail and where possible by email, to inform them about COVID-19 and the steps we have taken, including additional cleaning measures and the purchase of personal protective equipment, to ensure a safe environment for clients, staff and volunteers.



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[www.crowsnestcentre.org.au](http://www.crowsnestcentre.org.au) Managed by North Sydney Community Service Ltd ABN 83 002 567 875



- Reviewed client lists to determine clients who have relatives, neighbours, friends and other services and clients who rely exclusively on our Centre.
- Identified our linen service in its present form may be unsustainable if COVID-19 becomes widespread. Most of our clients could last one month in the same sheets, but few could or would want to last six months. To address this issue we decided to supply each client with extra sheets and towels. We procured a large supply of additional linen that could also aid us in the event of supply chain failure by our commercial laundry service.
- Purchased a large quantity of frozen meals to address increasing demand for Meals on Wheels, supply people who are homeless or at risk without concern for hygiene issues associated with cash handling, and create a buffer in the event of supply chain failure with our primary food supplier.

Council's Joint Plan of Management for our Centre has always supported and strengthened the Crows Nest Centre's strategic directions. At this time we are facing significant additional expenses, coinciding with the loss of all revenue from venue hire. As a result we are seeking a financial contribution of \$50,000 (plus GST) from Council (please see attached COVID-19 Budget – Additional Service Delivery Costs). This will enable us to sustain basic support services to vulnerable members of our community, who are trying their best to survive this catastrophic, once in a lifetime pandemic.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the encouragement and support we have received from yourself, Martin Ellis, Rebecca Aukim, Camelia Tobia and Eric Poulos during this difficult time. Kindness is valued by everyone at our Centre. There is still much to do and we appreciate being able to work in partnership to support our community.

Should you require any further information please don't hesitate to contact me by phone: 9437 7504 (direct) or email: [d.ward@crowsnestcentre.org.au](mailto:d.ward@crowsnestcentre.org.au)

Yours faithfully,

Denise Ward  
Executive Officer

<b>North Sydney Community Service Ltd t/a Crows Nest Centre COVID-19 Budget - Additional Service Delivery Costs</b>					
<b>Categories</b>	<b>Supplier</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>GST exclusive</b>	<b>GST</b>	<b>GST inclusive</b>
Enhance Digital Communication While Also Providing Additional Support to Clients and Volunteers Without Access to Digital Communication	Shynet	Virtual Private Network - to facilitate remote electronic access by senior staff	500	50	550
	Shynet	Web email - to support remote electronic access by service delivery/volunteer coordination staff	500	50	550
	Zoom	Electronic conferencing - to facilitate continuity of governance (e.g. Board meetings and Subcommittees), support select service delivery/group activities (e.g. Reach Your Potential: Employability Workshops for Skilled Migrants) and staff working remotely	1000	100	1100
	Worldwide Printing	Letterhead, followers and envelopes to correspond with clients and volunteers who do not have ready access to digital communication	1000	100	1100
	CNC Internal Printing	Printing of letters, fact sheets and assorted attachments to accompany communication to clients and volunteers who do not have ready access to digital communication	1000	100	1100
	Australia Post	Stamps to communicate with clients and volunteers who do not have ready access to digital communication	2000	200	2200
	Telephone	Additional phone calls to clients and volunteers staying at home or in isolation	1000	100	1100
	EWB	Rubber gloves	1000	100	1100
	Dynamic Gift Promotions	Hand sanitiser (500 x 60 ml bottles)	2750	275	3025
	EWB	Plastic bags for meal and linen deliveries Garbage bags for soiled linen	750	75	825
Chemicals and Cleaning of Common Areas Within the Crows Nest Community Centre	Venture Chemicals & Alvarez and Mantilla	Detergent, disinfectant and priority cleaning of lift buttons, light switches, door handles, sinks, toilets and common use surfaces	12500	1250	13750
	H Polesy & Co Pty Ltd	Purchase additional sheets (single, king single, double, queen), pillowcases and towels to enable continuity of service and allow for involvement of relatives, neighbours, friends and other services if CNC unable to sustain the same frequency of service delivery due to further isolation measures and/or reduced capacity of staff and volunteers (more than 50% of linen service volunteer aged 70 years and over or living with a chronic condition)	21000	2100	23100
Sustain Meals on Wheels Service for Frail Older People (most of whom are living alone) and People (most of whom are living alone)	Master Catering	Frozen meals to support people who are financially disadvantaged, homeless or at risk	5000	500	5500
<b>Totals</b>			<b>50000</b>	<b>5000</b>	<b>55000</b>



# North Sydney Community Centre

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PO Box 562 North Sydney 2059

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info@northsydneycentre.com.au

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North Sydney Community Centre Incorporated  
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Rebecca Aukim  
North Sydney Council  
PO Box 12  
North Sydney NSW 2059

April 15, 2020

RE: NSCC Council Assistance: April 2020

Dear Rebecca,

Thank you for your email and concern. We would be very grateful for any assistance Council can offer to support the North Sydney Community Centre at this time. Our enrolments for Term 2 thus far, compared to last year's enrolments, are showing a 55% drop. Last year at this time we had 669 enrolments and this year we have 371 enrolments.

Due to the government order pertaining to Covid-19, we closed NSCC and suspended our programming such as After School Care, Playgroup, Produce Markets, Venue Hire and some Adult Classes (i.e. Pottery). We have been working diligently to put as many courses online as possible and would be very grateful if Council could please provide assistance with any of the following:

- Paying for an annual Zoom license: This is our platform for orchestrating our online classes and with it we will be able to offer additional events, workshops and clubs/community groups. We receive a discount via our membership with Business Australia (through ConnectingUp), 9 hosts costs \$1042.55.
- Subsidising Term 2 tutors fees: We would appreciate assistance with running classes to build up participants and retain enough cash flow to pay the tutors and admin staff; tutor payroll for Jan 1-March 31, 2020 was \$3371.50. Our enrolments in the middle of the day are currently nil, thus if we could bring the prices down to a minimum for these courses, it may help attract/keep participants. I have been in touch with Monique Piazza about possible funding for our lunchtime fitness classes as was done in Term 1, however it is not confirmed. One lunchtime class tutor costs (Mon-Fri) is approx. \$420 per week (\$70 per hour, per tutor) for 6 classes, or \$3780 for a 9 week term.
- Funding for marketing: This would include Facebook/Instagram ads and digital marketing (ie. North Shore Mums, Concrete Playground/Time Out). An advertising subscription to Concrete Playground (a marketing campaign is \$2200) to reach new audiences and retain our current audience would be very helpful; they have a fairly tech-savvy audience who would be inclined to take up our virtual offerings. We would like to run Facebook advertisements, or a Google ad, re: our online courses (prices vary from \$2/day, so approx. \$50 for a solid outreach would be helpful).
- Contribution toward staffing costs: Once the Northside Produce Markets re-open; with Covid-19 measures in place costs will be higher with additional staff required (such as the March 21 market) with possibly less income.
- Updating our website: We would like to have the current website company execute this and, as an example, for 10 hours their fee is \$1200.
- Increasing our annual Council grant would be incredibly helpful as well.

If Council is unable to assist with any of the above I certainly welcome discussions about any other possible support. Please don't hesitate to contact me anytime on 0409 047 580 or email me: [director@northsydneycentre.com.au](mailto:director@northsydneycentre.com.au)

Kind regards,  
Michelle Worthley  
Acting Director



Rebecca Aukin  
A/Director Community & Library Services  
North Sydney Council

As per your email and request, I am writing to update North Sydney Council on our current status regarding our services. I will break this down into our business components of which there are currently three, soon to be two. I will also endeavour to provide a break down, where applicable of free services versus those that bring in revenue..

### **The Kirribilli Centre**

Owing to Covid-19, the centre closed to the public on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March when State and Federal government lockdown made it impossible to run any classes or groups in a safe manner. The centre had to email all clients that pay for room hire ( a source of income for the centre) and in most cases refund all potential revenue from room hire and class registration fees ( for example a yoga class) to the end of June, 2020. Some individuals and clients are happy to receive credit for when the centre resumes full operation. I think the greatest impact for our clients are those that use the play area at the back of the building with our toy shed. This is a free service provided to all participants, funded by revenue raised from room hire and donations for the annual purchase of toys.

Other free services such as the Bridge Group, Book Clubs (of which we have two) Movie discussion group, free legal services, JP services etc, see our website for full listing, <http://www.thekirribillicentre.org/> have had to cease because of social distancing recommendations. Some have chosen to continue their services online and where possible have been given assistance.

Classes requiring the payment of fees, such as yoga and Pilates, have had to cease owing to social distancing.

Move to online and other initiatives.

*The Kirribilli Centre*

**Address:** 16-18 Fitzroy Street, Kirribilli, NSW 2061

**Phone:** (02) 9922 4428

**Website:** [www.thekirribillicentre.org](http://www.thekirribillicentre.org)





We have placed one yoga class online and our 'well-being for seniors' class where we upload small exercise routines provided by the instructor for individuals to continue to perform some level of exercise at home. Our online limited classes are free. The Centre also initiated a program to assist older isolated members of the North Sydney Community by linking up to a volunteer or staff member who would phone at the frequency requested to check in and have a chat and to assist with the purchase of household items if the individual was not able to leave their residence.

### **The Kirribilli Markets.**

The Kirribilli Markets provides almost half of the Centre operational funding. As the restrictions tighten, we were forced to cancel the Kirribilli markets. The first market closure occurred on the 28<sup>th</sup> March. We have cancelled all markets up until the end of May. Like the refunds provided to the Kirribilli Centre clients that pay for room hire the same rules apply, with many stall holders requesting a refund and a very small number asking for a credit to be used once the Kirribilli Markets become operational.

Move to online...

We quickly developed our virtual market to keep the connection between the Kirribilli Markets, the stall holders and customers. For a small fee, stall holders can upload images and information about their products with links to their own social media and websites. We are leveraging our social media followers and connection to help support the stall holders on our virtual markets. At our last Board meeting the decision to open the virtual market to local business in the Kirribilli/ Milsons Point area was made. It is hoped that this will assist local business in the area to inform people that they are open.

### **The Carers' Program**

This program has come to an end, however the qualified Counsellor will continue to be employed by the Kirribilli Centre. The counsellor is providing some online counselling sessions to anyone in need.

Financials

*The Kirribilli Centre*

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Our latest financial can be found at <http://www.thekirribillicentre.org/publications>

### **What support might Council be in a position to offer**

Council is a great supporter of the community centers via leases to building, assistance with maintenance, Grants and much more, however we are facing tough times under strange unprecedented circumstances. The Kirribilli Board has put in some measures to ensure that we are sustainable with the GM constantly reviewing these measures. We have applied for the Job Keeper Allowance and Cash Flow assistance packages for staff members that are unable to attend work.

I would like to make some suggestions for councils' consideration.

Firstly, it would be of great benefit to the Kirribilli Centre if Council were to allow us to run some of the lost markets once we are able to. This would greatly help the Centre to regain some of its lost income.

Secondly, assistance in the promotion of both the Kirribilli Centre and Markets with particular focus to those new programs that have had to be placed on hold.

Thirdly I am not sure if Council would consider an increase to the grant the Kirribilli Centre receive each year, however if it did that would also be of great assistance.

Rebecca, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide you and Council with this update. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require further information.

Regards,

Carl Piraino  
General Manager  
Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre.

*The Kirribilli Centre*

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