Our Vision

A City which values its heritage, cultural diversity, sense of place and natural environment.

A progressive City which is prosperous, sustainable and socially cohesive, with a strong community spirit.
1. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ST PETERS CHILD CARE CENTRE & PRE-SCHOOL COMMITTEE HELD ON 24 FEBRUARY 2020 .......................................................... 1

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CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ST PETERS CHILD CARE CENTRE & PRE-SCHOOL COMMITTEE HELD ON 24 FEBRUARY 2020

Ms Georgia Brodribb moved that the minutes of the meeting of the St Peters Child Care Centre & Pre-School Committee held on 24 February 2020 be taken as read and confirmed. Seconded by Cr Moorhouse and carried unanimously.

2. PRESIDING MEMBER’S COMMUNICATION

Nil

3. QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Nil

4. QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE

Nil

5. WRITTEN NOTICES OF MOTION

Nil

6. STAFF REPORTS
6.1 DIRECTORS QUARTERLY ACTIVITY REPORT – MARCH 2020

REPORT AUTHOR: Director, St Peters Child Care Centre & Preschool
GENERAL MANAGER: General Manager, Corporate Services
CONTACT NUMBER: 8366 4585
FILE REFERENCE: qA61019 / A20520
ATTACHMENTS: A

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this Quarterly report is to provide information in respect to the following:

- Provide feedback on the Centre’s Strategic Plan and Business Plan prepared by Centre Management for the Child Care Centre.
- Undertake, under the direction of Council and on behalf of Council, the general oversight of issues related to child welfare, programming and safety of the Centre.
- To execute such powers as the Council may lawfully delegate to it.
- To do anything necessary, expedient or incidental to performing or discharging the functions of the Committee as listed in the terms of Reference or to achieving its objectives.

This report provides the Committee with a status report on the activities of the St Peters Child Care Centre & Preschool for the period 27 March 2020.

BACKGROUND

The Centre has been in operation since 1976. The Centre is licenced to accommodate 105 children per day, however to ensure the high quality of care the Centre is known for is maintained, the number of available places has been capped at an average of 94 places per day and 98 places during the 4th Term. The Centre provides care for babies from six (6) weeks old through to children aged up to and including five (5) years of age.

The key activities completed during the Quarter ended March 2020, together with actions completed in previous Quarters, as required by the Centre’s Strategic and Business Plans, are included in the Discussion Section of this report.

RELEVANT STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS & POLICIES

This report informs the Council on the St Peters Child Care Centre & Preschool activities and supports Council attaining:

Outcome 1: Social Equity: A connected, accessible and pedestrian-friendly community

Objective 1: Convenient and accessible services, information and facilities.
Strategy 1.2: Maximise access to services, facilities, information and activities.
Strategy 1.3: Design and provide safe, high quality facilities and spaces for people of all backgrounds, ages and abilities.

Objective 4: A strong, healthy, resilient and inclusive community.
Strategy 4.2: Encourage and provide opportunities for lifelong learning.
Strategy 4.3: Provide spaces and facilities for people to meet, learn and connect with each other.

The operations of Childcare Centres and Preschools are governed by the National Quality Framework. The Centre’s policies and procedures are reviewed and updated over a twelve (12) month to two (2) year period, in line with National Quality Standards and the Centre’s Continuous Review Policy.

FINANCIAL AND BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Not Applicable.
EXTERNAL ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS
Nil

SOCIAL ISSUES
The Centre actively promotes a policy of inclusion for all children and their families.
The information provided in the report has no direct social issues which need to be considered.

CULTURAL ISSUES
Not Applicable.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES
Not Applicable.

RESOURCE ISSUES
Not Applicable.

RISK MANAGEMENT
Not Applicable.

COVID-19 IMPLICATIONS
The provision of long day-care service is considered to be an essential service, and therefore continued to operate through the height of the pandemic. The initial response from the Federal Government to minimise the impact on families, was to pass a number of legislative amendments which allowed the Minister for Education to:

- increase the number of days that a family can continue to claim the Child Care Subsidy in cases where a child is absent from child care for more than the currently allowable 42 days;
- provide a families access to additional absences, without the need for evidence in relation to COVID-19; and
- waive the current obligation of child care services to require a family to pay gap fees if the service is forced to close.

To ensure that child care services remain viable and to enable staff to be paid during any closure, Centre’s will continue to be paid the Child Care Subsidy, which can be up to 85 per cent of the daily cost of a child’s care, if they are directed to temporarily close, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

What this meant for the St Peters Child Care Centre & Preschool (the Centre) was that it was continuing to receive the Child Care subsidy and the gap fee for each child enrolled.

During the height of the pandemic, a number of families withdrew their children from the services across the country, therefore Childcare Centres were experiencing a rapid reduction in income but due to the licencing conditions, which specify minimum Educator to Child ratios and employment agreements, could not reduce the operating costs to meet the loss of income.

At the height of the Pandemic, 24 families had withdrawn their children from the Centre, which equated to 54 vacancies across the week and a loss of revenue of $5,454 per week and a further $71,000 loss in revenue for the June Quarter. In addition, a further 21 families retained their space at the Centre however elected not to send their children to the Centre.
As these families had decided to utilise their allowed absences, the Centre continued to receive the Child Care Subsidy that these families were eligible to receive. In these circumstances, the Centre was also required to charge the Gap fee, with the Gap fee being the difference between the Centres’ daily rate and the Child Care Subsidy that the family is eligible to claim and receive.

Given the increasing number of families, across Australia, withdrawing from childcare and other families experiencing some resentment in having to continue to pay the Gap fee, when the extent of the voluntary removal of their children from care was unknown, the Federal Government announced on 2 April 2020, that child care would be free from 6 April 2020 until 28 June 2020 and the Childcare Subsidy Scheme was suspended and replaced with an Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package.

The funding arrangements under the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package are:

- 50% of the Centres fee revenue based on the reference fortnight ended 2 March 2020; and
- JobKeeper Payment for eligible employees.

As Local Government is ineligible for the JobKeeper Payment, for Council operated Childcare Centres, the income halved as a result of the Federal Government policy decision to provide free childcare through the COVID-19 pandemic. For this Council, prior to COVID-19, the average weekly fee income for the June quarter was estimated to be $45,000, which was made up of the Child Care Subsidy and Gap Fee compared to the weekly Early Childhood Education and Care Relief payment of $19,600.

Following an approach by the Local Government Association on behalf of Council operated Child Care Centres, the State Government announced that, through its Community and Jobs Support Fund, it will match the Federal Government’s standard payments payable under the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package. This means that the St Peters Child Care Centre and Pre-school, will receive $235,200 from the State Government’s Community and Jobs Support Fund.

As the reference fortnight, which the package income is based on, is a below capacity fortnight, as the Centre, like many childcare centres, transition new enrolments in over February and March rather than having all new enrolments commence at the start of term.

As a result, the Centre is under-funded for at least five (5) enrolments. In addition, the Centre has a number of families that are not eligible for the Child Care Subsidy and therefore have not applied for a Customer Reference Number (CRN) and therefore these families are not included in the reference week. Despite the additional State Government assistance, the Centre’s income will experience a revenue shortfall in the order of $70,000.

In response to the health implications of the pandemic, the following initiatives were introduced to reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- reinforced the importance of hand hygiene to both Staff and the Children attending the Centre;
- staff and families were advised that if they were unwell, not to attend the Centre;
- restriction of access to Council facilities to essential persons only;
- establishment of a hand hygiene station outside the main entrance of the Centre;
- introduced a main door drop-off and pick-up routine, to minimise the number of people coming in and out of the Centre;
- outdoor sleep time (weather dependent)
- daily temperature checks;
- increased cleaning of high touch surfaces; and
- in-line with social distancing restrictions, suspended excursions and special events.
CONSULTATION

- Committee Members
  Not Applicable

- Community
  Not Applicable

- Staff
  Not Applicable

- Other Agencies
  Not Applicable

DISCUSSION

Child Numbers

The Centre is licensed for a maximum of 105 children daily; however to ensure a high quality of care, the daily attendance numbers are capped at an average of 94 long day care places per day. Based on current staffing levels, the Centre has capacity for up to 28 under two (2) year old, up to 30 two (2) to three (3) year old and up to 36 over three (3) year old. The mix of the numbers per age group may change on an as needs basis. The average number of children for which services were provided for the December 2019 quarter is detailed in Table 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of Child</th>
<th>Staffing Ratio</th>
<th>Number Allowed at the Centre (maximum)</th>
<th>Number of Children - Average for the Quarter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under Twos (2) (6 weeks - 24 months)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerald Room</td>
<td>1:4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby Room</td>
<td>1:4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over Twos (2) (2 years to 3 years)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aquamarine Room</td>
<td>1:5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diamond Room</td>
<td>1:5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over Threes (3) (3 years to 4 years)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amethyst Room</td>
<td>1:10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool (4 years to 5 years)</td>
<td>1:10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>94</td>
<td>80.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>90.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of sessions where 90 children attended for the quarter</td>
<td>20 days out of a total of 62 days</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average attendance – Year to Date</td>
<td>88.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As detailed in Table 1 above, the March 2020 Quarter is below the desired capacity. Although it is not unusual for the Centre to slowly build capacity in the first few months of the year, due to the COVID-19 Pandemic this has impacted attendances.
As detailed in Figure 1 below, the March and June Quarters traditionally have low attendance numbers, so while the attendance numbers for the last two Quarters have been at or exceeding budgeted attendances, the challenge is to be in a position to maintain the budgeted occupancy for March and June Quarters. As a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic, attendance numbers for March were significantly down, with 24 families forgiving their place within the Centre and an additional 21 families electing not to send their children. To minimise the impact of the decrease, vacant staff positions were not recruited and the rostered hours for casual staff were reduced.

**FIGURE 1: CHILD NUMBERS**

As illustrated in Figure 2, due to the lower than expected enrolments, the Centre has exceeded the minimum child to staff ratios for the March 2020 Quarter.

**Educator to Child Ratios**

The Centre is required by the National Quality Standards to maintain a minimum Educator to Child Ratio at all times. The minimum Educator to Child ratios are detailed in Table 2.

**TABLE 2 – MINIMUM EDUCATOR TO CHILD RATIOS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Grouping</th>
<th>Educator to Child Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-24 months</td>
<td>1:4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 months – 36 months</td>
<td>1:5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37 months to 5 years</td>
<td>1:10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As illustrated in Figure 2, due to the lower than expected enrolments, the Centre has exceeded the minimum child to staff ratios for the March 2020 Quarter.
FIGURE 2: STAFF TO CHILD RATIO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quarter Ended</th>
<th>Under 2 - SPCCC</th>
<th>2 - 3 SPCCC</th>
<th>Over 3 - SPCCC</th>
<th>Under 2 - DECS</th>
<th>2 - 3 DECS</th>
<th>Over 3 - DECS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jun-17</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep-17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec-17</td>
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<td>Mar-18</td>
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<td>Jun-18</td>
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<td>Sep-18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec-18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar-19</td>
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<td>Jun-19</td>
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<td>Sep-19</td>
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<td>Dec-19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar-20</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Staffing

To ensure that the Centre meets the required staff to child ratios, the Full-time Equivalent Educator positions required are:

- Under 2’s 7.00 FTE
- 2 -3 years 6.00 FTE
- Over 3’s 4.00 FTE

To ensure the ongoing continuity of care, during periods of staff absences, permanent staff are supported by pool of casual staff who back fill planned and unplanned absences, vacancies and short shift cover for lunch breaks, Centre open and closes. Not only does this ensure that children are cared for by familiar Educators when their primary care givers are absent from the Centre, it ensures that operational costs are maintained, as there is less reliance on engaging temporary contract staff through temporary contract labour hire agencies to cover absences.

As shown in Figure 3 below, there are three vacant full-time positions. These vacancies have arisen due to maternity leave and staff electing to change their employment conditions to casuals. The increase in the part-time staff is due to staff who had previously been on maternity leave, returning to the Centre in a part time capacity.

In addition, the Centre cook has recently resigned. The position is being backfilled by temporary staff while the recruitment process takes place.

With the decline in attendance numbers due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the recruitment process was placed on hold. The recruitment will resume once the State moves out of the COVID-19 restrictions are eased and occupancy increases and staff are required to meet the Educator to Child ratios.
Universal Access to Early Childhood Education

Funding can be claimed for every four (4) year old child who remains at the Centre in the twelve (12) months prior to full-time schooling and has access to fifteen (15) hours of preschool services, providing the child is not accessing a preschool service from another external service, such as a Department of Education Preschool or Kindergarten.

For the year-to-date period to December 2019, the Centre has received $4,214 under the Universal Access Scheme for the children utilising the Centre for the preschool service. The funding has been used to offset the salary costs of the Early Childhood Teachers. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Centre is yet to receive the March 2020 Quarter payment. The Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) has advised that it is retaining the payment, to enable an estimate for the June 2020 Quarter to be determined based on pre-COVID 19 attendances.

National Quality Standard

Staff practices, policies and procedures are continually reviewed in line with the new National Quality Standards and a Quality Improvement Plan has been completed. The Centre has undergone a round of Rating and Assessment. The Centre received an overall rating of ‘Meeting’ under the revised framework.

The seven (7) areas identified under the National Quality Standard are:

- Educational program and practice
- Children’s health and safety
- Physical environment
- Staffing arrangements (including the number of staff looking after children)
- Relationships with children
- Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
- Leadership and service management

The Centre has been rated as ‘Meeting’ the standards set under the revised The National Quality Framework which came into effect on 1 February 2018, having met all of the forty (40) of the elements.

While under the National Quality Standards, the Centre is to be regularly assessed, the details of the timing of the next review are unknown.
Strategic Plan

The Centre’s Strategic and Business Plans have been approved by the Committee and the Council. The Centre’s Business Plan established Key Result Areas/Targets. The achievement of the outcomes up to March 2020, are contained in Attachment A.

OPTIONS

Not Applicable.

CONCLUSION

The St Peters Child Care Centre & Pre-school is recognised as a leader in the provision of high quality child care. It is expected that this will continue. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Centre, along with other Childcare Centre experienced a significant decline in attendance during the height of the pandemic. As the State has contained the health impacts of COVID-19 and the social restrictions and mass gathering restrictions are being eased attendance numbers have been increasing. The Centre on average for the March 2020 Quarter had 80 children accessing the service on a daily basis, with an expectation that this will increase throughout the year.

COMMENTS

Nil

RECOMMENDATION

That the report be received and noted.

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Cr Moorhouse moved:

That the report be received and noted.

Seconded by Ms Georgia Brodribb and carried unanimously.
7. **OTHER BUSINESS**
   Nil

8. **NEXT MEETING**
   Monday 27 July 2020

9. **CLOSURE**
   There being no further business the Presiding Member declared the meeting closed at 6.10pm.

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Cr Evonne Moore
PRESIDING MEMBER

Minutes Confirmed on ____________________________

(date)