

AFFECTED LOCAL EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRES WELCOME PUBLIC COMMITMENT BY CITY OF PORT PHILLIP TO INVESTIGATE ALL VIABLE ALTERNATIVES TO SALE

The Committees of Management, staff and families from Eildon Road Childcare & Kindergarten, Elwood Children's Centre and The Avenue Children's Centre & Kindergarten welcome a motion passed at last night's City of Port Phillip Council meeting, which provided clear instruction for council officers to work with the affected centres to identify all viable alternatives to sale.

The second motion was passed by seven of the nine Councillors confirming their commitment to obtain the best possible outcome for the centres. Those in favour were Cr Louise Crawford, Cr Peter Martin, Cr Tim Baxter, Cr Heather Cunsolo, Cr Katherine Kopsey, Mayor Marcus Pearl and Cr Christina Sirakoff. Cr Rhonda Clark voted against the motion and Cr Andrew Bond abstained.

The three centres particularly want to acknowledge Councillors Louise Crawford, Tim Baxter, Peter Martin and Katherine Copsey who voted in favour of the first motion put to Council, which proposed halting the sale process while other options were properly explored. While this motion didn't succeed, we thank these Councillors for standing up for our services and reflecting the strong community support that exists for our services.

The successful second motion included:

- clearer instruction for council officers to work collaboratively with the centre committees to identify viable alternatives to sale.
- a request for the CEO to provide to Councillors a report on the alternate options, including but not limited to: upgrade, rebuild, relocation, lease-to-own, and community purchase.
- confirmation that should Council resolve to sell the Eildon Road Childcare & Kindergarten property, the indicative settlement date be moved from the end of 2022 to the end of 2023.
- a set of guiding principles for the options analysis, which included: no permanent loss of kindergarten and childcare places in Council or Community Managed centres in Elwood, St Kilda, St Kilda East or Balaclava; and access to a variety of models and scales of childcare centres.
- confirmation that Council will NOT make a decision on the sale of the three properties until they have received the feedback and reviewed the options from the community engagement and the analysis report..
- a request for council officers to recommend ways to support our three centres during the drawn out process.

Caroline Thornton, President of Eildon Road Childcare & Kindergarten said last night's successful motion was a significant win for the three centres. "While Cr Crawford and Cr Baxter's original motion to halt the sale process was unsuccessful, this much-needed development has provided the centres, their employees and the families that rely on these services a glimmer of hope that Council will finally start to rigorously explore all viable options, instead of ploughing ahead with the sale process."

Claire Byrne, President of Elwood Children's Centre said, "after a very troubling start - following last year's decision by Councillors to press ahead with an intention to sell the centres - it was heartening to see the majority of Councillors make comments in support of retaining the services of the centres, whilst acknowledging the value they provide to the community at last night's meeting."

Louise Hird, President of The Avenue Children's Centre and Kindergarten said, "the motion is a side-step of sorts. While stopping the rushed and ill-thought sale process would have been an even better result, the motion directs Council to work collaboratively with the centres to explore all possible options - not just sale and permanent closure of our valuable services."

"We hope to see improvements in the way Council and council officers engage with the centres for the remainder of the process."