



NSW DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

**Submission
No 68**

Head Office 4-6 Cavill Avenue, Ashfield NSW 2131 • Locked Bag 28, Ashfield NSW 1800
DX 21212 Ashfield • Tel (02) 9716 2222 • Fax (02) 9716 2999

DGD 05/61525

Mr K Greene MP
Member for Georges River
Chair, Inquiry into Infrastructure Provision
in Coastal Growth Areas
Standing Committee on Public Works
Parliament of NSW
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

10 MAY 2005

Dear Mr Greene

I refer to your letter dated 3 March 2005 seeking a submission from the NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS) to the Standing Committee on Public Works - Inquiry into Infrastructure Provision in Coastal Growth Areas.

DoCS has a strong association with other human service agencies and non-government organisations. DoCS offices in the Southern and Northern Regions of New South Wales are directly impacted by the growth of coastal communities.

The Regional Accommodation Master Plans (RAMPs) developed in early 2004, identified in coastal growth areas a lack of suitable support facilities and available commercial accommodation space. In particular, there is a lack of quality commercial office accommodation in the Northern areas of New South Wales for the increase in office accommodation space required for the recruitment of new caseworker staff over the next five years.

On average, DoCS will require up to 1,000m² of new quality office accommodation in most major centres across metropolitan and regional New South Wales. In 2004, DoCS received approval by NSW Treasury to approach the market for the construction and lease of new office accommodation where it was identified there is a lack of quality commercial office space. DoCS has approached the market at eleven sites in coastal growth areas during 2004-2005.

Generally, current human service infrastructure consists of buildings which mainly provide aged and disability services, community health services and various other community/youth centre services often having originally been established by local Councils.

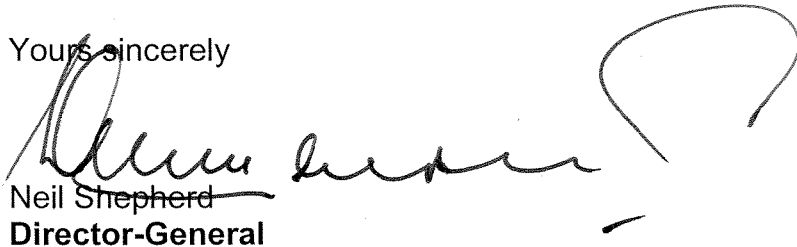
A key infrastructure issue is the difficulty in accessing services due to the distances involved and inadequate and expensive public transport systems in most rural coastal areas. Services are predominantly clustered around the major population centres with little human service system infrastructure development associated with new property developments.

For example, a whole-of-government working party has been established in the West Dapto area (Southern Region) to determine human service system responses and infrastructure to support the new community. The final land release at West Dapto will have approximately 30,000 to 50,000 new residents. It is anticipated that additional capital and recurrent funds would be required to establish infrastructure such as child care centres, neighbourhood centres and infrastructure to support outreach and mobile services.

A case study is attached of identified human services infrastructure requirements for the Great Lakes area which demonstrates the need to provide a facility for future services during population growth.

If further advice relating to DoCS' infrastructure requirements in coastal growth areas is required, I invite you to contact Mr Alan Ramsey, Executive Director Corporate Services on telephone 9716 2890.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Neil Shepherd', is written over the printed name. To the right of the signature is a large, loopy flourish or scribble.

Neil Shepherd
Director-General

CASE STUDY - HUMAN SERVICES INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIREMENTS GREAT LAKES

Population trends

Great Lakes has a total population of **31,384 people**¹ (15,451 males and 15,933 females). This represents an increase of 2,775 people (**9.7%**) since the 1996 Census, and an increase of 5,385 people (**20.7%**) since the 1991 Census. 39% of the population live in Forster and 18% live in Tuncurry.

There were 859 people (**2.7%**) (423 males and 436 females) who identified as being of Indigenous origin. This represents an increase of 206 people (**31.5%**) since the 1996 Census, and an increase of 464 people (**117.5%**) since the 1991 Census.

The median age of people is 47 years. 17.8% of the population are under 15 years of age. Since the 1950's Forster and Tuncurry have experienced rapid growth, outstripping other population centres in the Great Lakes district.

DoCS Funded services

The Department currently funds the following services:

- There are eight (8) Services through the Children's Services Programs
- There are two (2) Services through the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program.
- There are five (5) Services through the Community Services Grants Program
- Six (6) projects are funded through the Families First Strategy, one of which is located in Great Lakes
- One (1) project are funded under the Aboriginal, Child, Youth and Family Strategy.

Human Services Infrastructure

Some of the existing infrastructure established in Forster:

- The Hunter New England Area Health Services provides a range of ancillary health services through the Forster Community Health Centre.
- Hunter New England Area Health Service has recently established the Tobwabba Aboriginal Medical Service which provides general practice services for the local indigenous community.
- The Forster-Tuncurry Community Centre is funded under HACC and managed by Great Lakes Council. This centre provides a facility for HACC funded and Council programs to address the needs of people who are frail-aged and disabled. Co-located services include: Meals on Wheels, Community Transport, Senior Citizens, Centre-Based Respite Service, Great Lakes Neighbour Aid, Great Lakes Leisure and Respite services and Community Options.

Identified Human Services Infrastructure requirements Great Lakes Family Centre

In June 2003, the Department approved a one-off allocation of \$35,000 from unexpended Families First funds to Great Lakes Council. The rationale was to initiate development of the Great Lakes Family Centre as a demonstration of the principles of integration and working together expressed in the Families First framework. It was envisioned that the project would be a model that would improve the provision of existing services to families and provide a facility for future services as the population grew.

¹ ABS 2001 Basic Community Profile – Great Lakes Local Government Area

The Great Lakes Council has donated land for the purpose of developing a multi-purpose childcare and family centre. This land is located at the corner of Lake and Hadley Street, Forster. Once established, it is proposed that Great Lakes Council, via its committee structure, will manage the project and that Council will also undertake management of the building. Great Lakes Council have had plans drawn for the centre, however, initial costing estimates were higher than expected. Plans are now being redrawn to better facilitate the housing of services in a more cost effective manner. Council have also identified that they have insufficient resources to develop the land further without a substantial injection of funds.

Existing not-for-profit services which have expressed an interest in the family centre model are: Forster Neighbourhood Centre; Family Day Care – Great Lakes/ Gloucester (incorporating In Home Care, Family Day Care and the Families First Volunteer Home Visiting Service); Manning Support services (incorporating Families First Outreach Family Worker Forster and Family Worker Fathers, The Men's Shed-Forster; Homebase Youth Services; HomeStart-Forster/Tuncurry.

All of these services are currently operating out of premises that are inappropriate. Existing premises are too small with inadequate work space, often do not comply with OH&S requirements, have limited or no security on buildings and no security of tenure.

Children's Services

The following child care centres require to be extended to meet the increase in demands from the community:

- Buladelah
- Nabiac
- Tea Gardens/Hawks Nest.