

**Submission by the Central Coast Regional Organisation of Councils  
to the Legislative Assembly on Public Works  
Inquiry into Joint Use and Co-location of Public Buildings**

**Terms of Reference**

The Central Coast Regional Organisation of Councils is of the view that the Inquiry's terms of reference should be broadened to include the following:-

- Shortfall of facilities
- Opportunities for joint use
- Integrated planning for facilities
- Examples of successful and unsuccessful projects
- Need for support by responsible officers

**Community and Recreation Facilities within the Gosford City and Wyong Shire Local Government Areas**

Gosford City and Wyong Shire Councils provides a network of community facilities as a focus for community activities, recreation and as venues for the delivery of community support services and programmes. These facilities function as both specific purpose and multi-purpose community facilities including libraries, public halls, swimming pools and recreation centres, youth, childcare and senior citizens centres and neighbourhood/community centres. They incorporate spaces and rooms for large public meetings/private functions, group activities, arts activities, recreation facilities, information, workshops, interviews/counselling services, office accommodation and the provision of a diverse range of health, education, welfare and leisure services and programs.

The provision of community facilities is a traditional role for Local Government. These facilities are a considerable asset base and community resource and represent a strong financial commitment by the Councils to the development and support of community infrastructure. The Councils constantly monitor and review the use and operation of these facilities to ensure they are effective in meeting community needs and responding to changing circumstances and more efficient models of service and facility provision.

It is also important for Councils to ensure the timely provision of community facilities and services commensurate with the needs of a rapidly growing population particularly in the Wyong Shire. Councils have a commitment to provide community facilities in areas where Section 94 contributions have been collected for the provision of community facilities. This occurs in new release areas where there is a lack of infrastructure and in the older areas where urban consolidation and renewal is occurring.

Providing a network of community facilities is one way in which Councils can have an impact on the social problems of the Local Government Areas. While a community facility will not solve the social issues of the area, it goes some way to addressing the infrastructure needs of the growing community.

Council is able to levy developers, under Section 94 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, for capital funding for community facilities.

In the past, there has been a time lag between new residents moving into an area and the provision of open space and community facilities. However, the Councils are endeavouring to address this issue with greater community participation and liaison with government agencies in the planning of community facilities, joint ventures and building facilities at an earlier stage of the development.

Community service organisations are usually funded for service delivery but not for capital costs. Many organisations spend a large proportion of their funding on rent and administration which impacts on their ability to maximise service delivery. Conversely, Councils are limited by Section 94 to spend the contributions on capital and not recurrent works.

Through partnerships and joint ventures, Councils can work with community organisations by providing office accommodation and opportunities for integrated service delivery therefore improving the agencies capacity for service delivery. It is important that any community service occupying a Council facility is effectively servicing the community and achieving the desired outcomes as well as meeting priority community needs.

### **Joint Ventures in Community and Recreation Facilities**

Each Council has a Community Plan that identifies the need to *pursue joint venture arrangements for the provision of community and recreation facilities*. These can be pursued in a number of ways, including providing community organisations space within Council community facilities to run permanent or outreach services to the community, entering into joint ventures to provide community facilities or directly leasing a community facility to an exclusive hirer.

There is a need for an increased level of cooperation between Local Government, Government Departments, eg Health, Education, Housing etc, other non-government agencies and the private sector, to ensure better planning and provision processes, and a co-operative approach is needed to achieve baseline services in new and recently released areas. This requires interaction between Federal, State and Local governments, non-government agencies and the private sector in the planning and provision of services and facilities.

A potential benefit of joint projects would be a reduction in capital and recurrent costs. Land, construction and operating costs would be shared amongst all parties, with the duplication of facilities minimised. The optimum use of facilities by the community would be achieved. This is important, especially in terms of timing the establishment of facilities, location of facilities and size of facilities. Timing is important for ensuring that facilities and services are delivered when the initial need occurs and not when a crisis emerges, such as schools becoming full to capacity.

The Community Support and Human Services Plan for Warnervale/Wadalba emphasises the opportunities of integrated service delivery and improved client and social outcomes for the community. Joint ventures are a method of achieving additional community facilities for the community.

## **Examples of Joint Facilities in Wyong Shire**

Wyong Shire Council has been a partner in a number of joint ventures to provide community and recreation facilities in Wyong Shire. Mingara Recreation Club was proposing to build a 25-metre swimming pool in the south of the Shire. Council had recognised a need for an aquatic centre in the same region. In partnership, Council was able to provide funding to Mingara Recreation Club to build a 50 metre indoor aquatic centre with lap pools and recreation pools and through an agreement Council was able to ensure ongoing community access. Wyong Shire Council and Gosford City Council have also jointly funded with Mingara Recreation Club a regional athletics track.

Another example is where Council and the Department of Education have entered into a joint venture to provide community access to Wadalba Community School. Located in the new suburb of Wadalba, the Department of Education was keen to accommodate the existing demand of students and be prepared for the urban growth of the Warnervale Wadalba area. The school caters for children from kindergarten to Year 12. Council saw the opportunity to provide some facilities to the growing community early on in the development phase and so negotiated a joint use agreement. This agreement covers a 300m<sup>2</sup> community centre funded totally by Council and available for community use at all times, a sports field that Council has significantly embellished with lighting, additional drainage and amenities to enable sporting groups to use the facility out of school hours and community use of the gymnasium and movement studio out of school hours. The success of this project has been largely down to the goodwill between the School Principal and Council and the fact that community use of the school is a revenue raising opportunity for the school.

Council is currently in negotiation again with the Department of Education and Training to embellish a school hall in a primary school at Woongarah to provide community activity space and access to the school hall out of school hours. This project is different in that the school is being built and operated through a Privately Financed Partnership for a thirty-year period.

A further example currently in the development stages is the Hamlyn Terrace Community Centre, which is a joint venture between Council and the Warnervale Uniting Church. This project will see the parties become joint owners of the parcel of land and each party will equally fund the construction costs. Council has identified the need for a local community centre for the people who live in Hamlyn Terrace and the Warnervale Uniting Church wants to build a regional church. Both parties share a need for a large meeting space, robust activity spaces, smaller meeting rooms and offices. This joint venture has seen the need for a development agreement and extensive management agreement to be drawn up between the parties.

Council has two other examples where an organisation has provide minimal funding to the construction of a community facility to ensure a permanent tenure in the building. The Spastic Centre NSW has provided \$100,000 into the Berkeley Centre to ensure the Spastic Centre has some purpose built space to operate their services. Similarly the Department of Education is providing \$150,000 towards the construction of the Blue Haven Community Centre to operate the Schools as Community Centres project adjacent to Blue Haven Primary School.

This is unusual for the Department of Education and Training who is usually prepared for joint ventures on their land where they own the asset but have been reluctant in the past to fund capital costs off Department of Education sites.

The positive aspect of the joint ventures Council has embarked upon has been the increased community access of facilities and maximising the facilities that can be provide by two parties. Some of the difficulties have been the extensive legal agreements that have had to be drawn to ensure the parties have equal access and rights to the facility. Council would be keen to pursue other joint venture arrangements in the future to provide community and recreation facilities and there will be opportunities to do this in the development of the new Warnervale town centre.

### **Examples of Joint Facilities in Gosford City**

Over the last ten years, Council has assisted the following schools and community organisations to establish facilities for general community use. These include:-

- A community cottage within the grounds of Chertsey Public School
- A multi-purpose covered outdoor learning area at Brisbania Public School
- Parkside Multi-Service Youth Facility (with assistance from the Department of Education and Training, Area Consultative Committee and the private sector)
- Ozanam Recreational Area at Kincumber (with assistance from the Catholic Church)
- Erina Community Centre and Erina Library (established within the Erina Fair Shopping Centre)

### **Improving the Community Use of Schools**

In 2002, the Central Coast office of the Department of Sport, Recreation and Tourism prepared a Regional Sport and Recreation Plan for the Central Coast. One of the initiatives was to improve the community access to recreation facilities in schools across the Coast.

Gosford City Council is currently negotiating with the Department of Education and Training, Erina High School and sporting groups to upgrade and utilise the school facilities. A draft agreement has been prepared and is presently being considered by the Department.

The outcomes of this project are being closely monitored and may provide a number of benefits to schools.

The Premier's Department, as part of the management committee overseeing the implementation of the plan, is surveying all schools on the Central Coast to ascertain the type of recreation facilities they have available and the level of community access currently occurring, and to assess the potential to use school facilities for sport and recreational purposes.

## **Permanent and Outreach Community Services In Community Facilities**

There are benefits to the community for Councils to provide space for community organisations and government agencies in community facilities. Under Section 94 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, Councils are able to levy developers for capital funding for the provision of community facilities but not recurrent funding for services.

Recurrent funding for community services on the Central Coast has not been commensurate with the population growth. This has been further exacerbated by the State Government agencies lumping the Central Coast in with either the Hunter or Northern Sydney regions, which has not reflected the true needs of the Central Coast community. The region has therefore not received an adequate proportion of funding.

The recent trend of integrated service delivery has benefits to the community of improved access for clients to a range of services and facilities, increased efficiency, achieving more from the use of limited resources and enhanced effectiveness.

It is appropriate for Councils to become partners in improved service delivery through the provision of community facilities from Section 94 contributions and other agencies can provide the service to the community. By Council providing space for community organisations within community facilities, community services can maximise funding on service delivery, which has the greatest impact on the community. Through the tenure agreement, Councils can ensure that agencies occupying Council community facilities have measurable outcomes of service delivery, which meet community needs. This way Councils are supporting integrated and efficient service delivery and agencies are accountable for their service outcomes.

Partnerships are not limited to government agencies providing community services such as community health services or education. They can be developed with government funded community services organisations and with non-government community service providers, such as the Salvation Army, UnitingCare Burnside, Centrecare etc.

Community services providers may have permanent space and run a regular service, eg a family service which runs parenting programs, counselling and playgroups etc or an outreach service which may be able to share an office with another service and offers their service on a sessional basis, eg early childhood health. The service must be of benefit to the community and needs to be accessible to the community.

## **Collaborative Planning**

In 2001, Wyong Shire Council and the Central Coast Regional Co-ordination Management Group, established by the NSW Premier's Department, developed the Community Support and Human Services Strategy for Warnervale/Wadalba. The Strategy advances more recent State Government policies regarding 'whole of government' approaches to service provision, and developments in social capital theory over the past decade. These are collaborative, multi-sectoral approaches to building a community and efficient, co-ordinated service delivery, which require ongoing commitment and participation by a wide range of State Government agencies, non-government agencies and Wyong Shire Council.

In taking this broad approach, it is expected that the social outcomes for the residents of this new development will be substantially better off than in a traditional urban development of the past. It is anticipated that agencies will be able to plan and provide services in a co-ordinated, integrated way.

The implementation of this Strategy is now three years on and, while there is still good will on the part of the Regional Managers of State Government agencies, Wyong Shire Council and non government agencies, it has been very difficult to attract the funding required to implement the strategies and provide the services and facilities for the community as they move into the new area. Existing services and facilities in Wyong Shire are already struggling with the demands of the existing population and are unable to continue stretching their services to meet the needs of the new community.

In 2002, the Premier's Department put a business case to NSW Treasury seeking \$10 million over five years to implement the Strategy. This funding was requested to come to the region as a pool of funding and for the region to determine the best way to use the funding to provide services and facilities in Warnervale/Wadalba.

This funding bid was unsuccessful despite some confidence shown by Treasury that it may have been approved. The Community Support and Human Services Strategy for Warnervale/Wadalba is an innovative approach to the planning and delivery of human services to a new community and, as such, needs Government support for such collaborative processes, with innovative funding methods which would allow the region to determine the way in which services and facilities are delivered to best meet the needs of the local community.

Without this support collaborative planning is a waste of time.

## **Conclusion**

The Councils continue to see the benefits of working collaboratively with others, whether this is in planning services and facilities, delivering services in an integrated way or entering in joint ventures with Government, non Government agencies and the private sector. The important factor is whether the joint initiative improves the quality of life for people living in the community. A lot of effort is put into the legal agreements between the parties and this can significantly delay the process. Agreements need to be simple and clear for all parties to implement.

Finally such joint initiatives should be supported by funding. Government should recognise and support the efficiencies and effectiveness of collaborative planning and provision of services and facilities and implement more flexible ways to respond to local solutions such as pooled funding which cuts across the 'silo' mentality of Government agencies.