

## 8.2 PROPOSAL FOR BATESFORD RESERVE YOUTH AND COMMUNITY HUB

Responsible Councillors: Paul Klisaris and Joy Banerji

### ***NOTICE OF MOTION***

*That Council:*

1. *Approves the commencement of a project to explore the potential to develop a youth and community hub within Batesford Reserve, Ashwood to support the needs of the surrounding community.*
2. *Supports the coordination of the planning, feasibility and design concepts for the proposed Batesford Reserve Youth and Community Hub.*
3. *Supports an application to the Department of Planning and Development for a grant of \$30,000 to undertake the community and facility planning.*
4. *Refer to this proposal using the working title of Batesford Reserve Youth and Community Hub.*
5. *Undertakes community consultation and engagement throughout this process.*
6. *Considers a costed concept plan at a future Council meeting prior to any further grant application processes.*

### ***INTRODUCTION***

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval to investigate the opportunities to develop a multipurpose community facility on Batesford Reserve. The project will examine the feasibility of a hub including a service provision model, key partners, budget and site potential.

### ***BACKGROUND***

Previous consultations and community reports have identified a lack of appropriate community infrastructure and services within the Ashwood/Chadstone Community. Reports have highlighted the need for:

- Accessible services and support for disadvantaged families;
- Counselling and support services for families, young people and adults who experience anxiety, depression and the effects of trauma;
- Services that address isolation and other health and well-being issues;
- Examining opportunities for the provision of a locally based community Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL);

- Improving access to services that reduce vulnerability due to inadequate income or poor emotional and physical health;
- Increased group space for the neighbourhood houses to enable additional programs to be offered that reduce vulnerability, meeting rooms for self-help or facilitated groups that tackle sensitive issues.
- Community meeting space

Neighbourhood Renewal (NR) areas have been identified by State Government as areas of high need within the Victorian Community. In the City of Monash, Ashwood and Chadstone are part of the Ashwood Ashburton and Chadstone Neighbourhood Renewal catchment and comprise 5,149 people in 2,099 households. NR areas are typically characterised by high proportions of public housing, relatively low-socio-economic status and a lack of access to resources, both economic and social. The lack of access to economic resources (low socio-economic status, being unemployed and underprivileged) is also correlated with poor mental health outcomes.

### ***CURRENT SERVICE PROFILES***

#### **Monash Youth and Family Services (MYFS)**

Council currently offers a range of youth and family support options in the Chadstone and Ashwood Community. With support from the State Governments Youth Participation and Access Program, Monash Youth and Family Services manages the Activate social recreation program, based at the Jordanville Community Centre, and support and outreach services for local young people. MYFS offers these outreach services through local schools and also offers parenting programs in conjunction with Amaroo Neighbourhood Centre.

However, the lack of a centrally located community facility that is accessible to young people and other members of the Ashwood and Chadstone community beyond program times continues to provide a significant barrier to effective local service delivery.

#### **MonashLink Community Health Service**

MonashLink Community Health Service currently has four clinics offering health and counselling services, plus administrative services located at the Ashwood site on High St Rd. MonashLink Community Health Service has expressed that the current facility does not meet the needs of the organisation and those of the community and therefore exploration of local alternatives has begun. The State Government has allocated \$1.25 million for the relocation of MonashLink's Ashwood site into the proposed social housing complex in Power and Elliot Avenues, Ashwood.

### **Amaroo Neighbourhood Centre**

Amaroo Neighbourhood Centre is a vibrant community centre that provides a range of programs and services to the local community including social and educational activities. Amaroo Neighbourhood Centre offers a wide range of day and evening art, craft, language and living skills. The Centre has two large and two smaller rooms – one is a classroom in constant use by Waverley Adult Literacy program. In addition, larger programs, including Ballroom Dancing and Tai Chi, are operated from Jordanville Community Centre.

Waverley Adult Literacy is permanently located at Amaroo Neighbourhood Centre. This service offers English classes to the community. There is increased demand on this service.

Amaroo Neighbourhood Centre has reached its capacity with what services and activities that it can offer the community due to the size of the building. Amaroo Neighbourhood Centre's programs are increasing and the Centre is being accessed by increasing number of people.

### ***DISCUSSION***

An examination of local facilities in the Ashwood and Chadstone area suggests that the proposed service hub would be best placed adjacent to the existing Jordanville Community Centre, in Batesford Reserve. A community hub would greatly enhance the Centre's profile and its central location, short distance to public transport, existing parking facilities, and its proximity to Amaroo Neighbourhood Centre and the Neighbourhood Renewal Office make the space an ideal location for consideration. Additionally, the existing facilities of the Jordanville Community Centre would allow the maximum community usage of the space and complement any additional service facility.

Whilst the size and number of additional spaces would be dependant upon the preferred options and service mix, it is envisaged that any redevelopment would need to include the following considerations:

- Counselling /consulting rooms
- Group spaces
- Meeting rooms
- Reception
- Optional Community enterprise space (e.g café)
- Viability of an occasional care space

There is a range of service combinations that may be explored. Each combination provides a mix of services to meet the needs of the community of Ashwood and Chadstone. All proposed options are consistent with Council's recent move towards multi-purpose, shared community activity centres.

The agencies/services that could contribute to the Youth and Community Hub include:

### **Monash Youth and Family Services**

Local residents have identified that many young people would utilise such a facility, with the additional benefit of allowing greater access to support and referral service for young people, particularly those who are disengaged from school and at-risk.

Additional youth workers would allow youth programs such as Activate to operate at hours extended beyond the current service level. The capacity of MYFS to expand current services would be contingent upon additional recurrent financial resources.

MYFS has recently commissioned the University of Melbourne to conduct a research project to examine the extent and availability of crisis services for young people in the City of Monash. Initial findings have concluded that there are currently extremely limited crisis services located in Monash. Young people are forced to leave the municipality to get access to the services that they require. The current proposal would allow the capacity for crisis services to be outposted in Chadstone and Ashwood.

### **MonashLink Community Health Service**

MonashLink inclusion would greatly enhance any potential development. The inclusion of Monashlink has the additional advantage of potentially providing a means for the development of a combined reception services and enhance general accessibility for the wider community, during business hours.

Operational requirements of this option mean that the development would need to consider the inclusion of 5 additional clinic spaces, as well as additional group and meeting rooms. Currently podiatry, counselling, physiotherapy, and community nursing services are provided at MonashLink's Ashwood site.

### **Amaroo Neighbourhood Centre**

This additional space would enable an increased capacity for Amaroo Neighbourhood Centre to offer a wider range of support and group programs in addition to the current activities at the Jordanville Community Centre.

Amaroo has developed a pilot Community VCAL program in conjunction with Gateway LLEN and Holmesglen TAFE. The long-term viability of such a program will be greatly enhanced by the development of such a Community space.

### Additional service profiles

It is planned to undertake discussions with Power Neighbourhood House to identify what their needs in relation to a Youth and Community Hub may be.

Additional consideration is the inclusion of a Neighbourhood Community Enterprise such as a café. In addition to providing an affordable and accessible training option for residents and young people, a café offers a significant benefit by maximising community engagement, social and economic inclusion with the community facility, similar to that experienced at the Clayton Community Centre.

### ***POLICY IMPLICATIONS***

The Council Plan (2006-2010) identifies 'An Inclusive And Connected Community' and 'A Supportive Community' as key objectives, with a specific focus on community participation (1.1), equitable access (1.3) and services for Children, Youth and Families (2.2).

The development of the Batesford Reserve Youth and Community hub is also consistent with recent Council infrastructure developments, which have brought together a mix of co-located community services in the one central location.

### ***FINANCIAL***

This proposal would be dependent on the sourcing of external funding. Additional financial support for the development of the project would be sought through the Department of Planning and Community Development's Community Support Fund, Department of Human Services and other relevant government funding.

### ***CONCLUSION***

Consultation with the outlined key service providers indicates an in principle level of support. However the service profile, funding mix and design parameters requires further investigation. Therefore a community planning process including the development of a costed concept plan is required to explore the options to further shape and inform the Batesford Reserve Youth and Community Hub proposal for Council's future consideration.