

ITEM 17 NOTICE OF MOTION - COUNCILLOR CATH BLAKEY - WARRAWONG COMMUNITY CENTRE

Councillor Cath Blakey has submitted the following Notice of Motion –

“I formally move that Wollongong City Council –

- 1 Note the essential social support services provided at Warrawong Community Centre by the Warrawong Residents Forum (WRF). These services see at least 1,000 people fed and engaged with each month. This soft entry approach has increased referral pathways and outcomes for community members. Additionally, WRF hosts specialist services such as Corrections NSW, Services Australia and other support services to offer assistance in mental health, drug and alcohol and legal support.
- 2 Note the importance of continuity of those services when their current premises is demolished to build the new Southern Suburbs Library and Community Centre.
- 3 Appreciates the collaborative efforts of Council and community centre staff undertaken to secure a lease on a premises with excellent proximity to the current and future facility.
- 4 Notes that the interim premises requires a fit-out that is estimated at \$180,000 to ensure that services continue, and that the grant funding application for the move has been unsuccessful.
- 5 Note with disappointment that the Council grant applications for the Southern Suburbs Library and Community Centre for federal funding through the Growing Regions grant program and Regional Precinct and Partnerships Program have been unsuccessful during Round 1 of grants announced on 16 May 2024.
- 6 Note that Warrawong Residents Forum has had their tenancy at Warrawong Community Centre extended from the end of June 2024 to September 2024.
- 7 Supports the Local Community Services Association call for the NSW government to provide core funding for community and neighbourhood associations.”

Background provided by Councillor Blakey:

Warrawong Residents' Forum (WRF) operates the highly popular and busy Warrawong Community Centre which delivers hundreds of meals and life-changing services every week to the areas' most vulnerable residents. The current Warrawong Community Centre on Greene Street was built in 1960 and refurbished in 2017. The Southern Suburbs Library and Community Centre will replace the Warrawong Community Centre, expanding the footprint into one integrated facility that homes the Warrawong Resident's Forum, library and other community services. When construction is underway an interim premises is required to ensure that services provision continues. An interim premises has been secured on King St, chosen for its proximity, centrality, and level access.

Warrawong Residents Forum provide highly confidential and sensitive services such as mental health and drug & alcohol supports, probation and parole reporting, legal assistance, Centrelink, and Housing Support as well as Orange Sky Laundry services, emergency food relief, meals and food rescue. To make the new premises suitable they require the fit out with partitioned rooms for confidential services, shelving for food and seating for meals as well as basic amenities such as air-conditioning, hand washing and security systems. Warrawong Residents Forum have local builders and trades at the ready who have generously offered their time and skills, the \$180,000 is need for materials, compliance and major works.

For further information, including monthly newsletters visit: <https://wrf.org.au>

The Local Community Services Association (LCSA) is the peak body for Neighbourhood and Community Centres (NCCs) in NSW. NSW is one of the only states in Australia to not provide core funding to Neighbourhood and Community Centres.

The Local Community Services Association states that “NCCs in NSW form an essential social infrastructure network, embedded in communities across the state, that facilitate social connection, belonging and community empowerment. They provide physical spaces for community-run activities and

programs, such as daycare or parent groups. They also provide an array of services related to domestic and family violence, homelessness, disability support, aged care, food relief and referrals to specialist services. NCCs often play a central role in the immediate and long-term responses to natural disasters.”

In the media release dated on Thursday, 8 February 2024 the executive officer of LCSA, Can Yasmut, stated “Despite the integral role NCCs play in supporting local communities, there is no dedicated funding from the Government to keep the doors open. Instead, these centres rely on program-based funding, one-off grants, fundraising and donations to cover the cost of core staff. Like schools and hospitals, NCCs are essential social and physical infrastructure across communities in NSW. We wouldn’t expect a school or a hospital to run solely on program funding, and we shouldn’t expect that of NCCs.”