



MEDIA RELEASE

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Local families to suffer if Wingecarribee Shire presses ahead with plan to shut child care services

Local families across the Wingecarribee Shire face an uncertain future following a secretive management review that recommended the closure of the children's services that have been operated by the council for more than three decades.

At a closed-door meeting in September, Councillors were provided with a series of recommendations that included the closure of Family Day Care services, which the council has coordinated for 32 years, along with an end to the Out of School Hours Care program that the council has run for 25 years.

The recommendations are based on a confidential review that council management have refused to provide to staff, their union, or parents. When questioned, management confirmed that there had been no community input during the review, and parents who utilise the services were not consulted.

The United Services Union, which represents staff at Wingecarribee Shire Council, criticised the secretive process being used to try and shut down a much-loved local community service, saying it would result in the loss of seven permanent jobs along with 10 casual positions.

"For more than three decades, local families from across Wingecarribee Shire have benefitted from high-quality and cost-effective children's services, secure in the knowledge that their children were being looked after by highly-qualified, caring staff," USU general secretary Graeme Kelly OAM said.

"Local families will suffer if these services close, forcing them to find alternate care arrangements that will likely cost more and involve lower standards of care.

"For more than three decades, Wingecarribee Shire has taken a leading role in ensuring locals have access to high-quality, affordable child care arrangements, benefiting countless families in the process.

"Best of all, these services do not cost ratepayers a cent to run, with the programs not only covering their own costs but also building up financial reserves of \$310,000 over the years."

Mr Kelly said councillors had thankfully refused to vote on the proposals put to them by management, instead asking why staff, their union, and parents had not been consulted in the process.

"This entire process has been carried out in secret, with a review that didn't involve engaging with staff or parents, followed by a secretive meeting of councillors where the public were excluded," Mr Kelly said.

"Wingecarribee Shire must immediately release a copy of this review, letting the community know what is being proposed and why, before undertaking a genuine consultation process where the views of affected staff, parents, and the broader community are taken on board."

A petition seeking to keep Wingecarribee Shire Council's children's services running can be found here:
<https://www.megaphone.org.au/petitions/our-children-are-precious-keep-children-s-services-with-council>

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