



Canterbury City Community Centre

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To Whom It May Concern

Canterbury City Community Centre Inc is a non government Organisation which has provided services and activities to residents of the Canterbury Local Government Area since 1972. Our Organisation employs 25 staff, 120 volunteers and is governed by a voluntary Board of Directors. We provide a range of Services in the Canterbury Local Government Area and across the Inner West.

We operate from three sites in Canterbury, our main Centre in Railway Pde Lakemba, The Cottage at 28 Croydon St Lakemba and the Canterbury Men's Shed at 109 Clissold Parade Lakemba. We also auspice the Lakemba Community Garden and Lakemba Community Markets in Jubilee Reserve Lakemba and the Canterbury Bike Shed in Campsie. All of these facilities are provided to our Organisation at a peppercorn rental by the City of Canterbury and without this support our Organisation would not be able to provide services within our community. Many of our services are funded by the State and Commonwealth Governments and some are funded through donations or are entirely unfunded. The City of Canterbury is in effect subsidising services funded by other tiers of government based solely on its support of its residents and the Organisations which share a commitment to provide services to them.

The Board of Canterbury City Community Centre has expressed its concern over the proposed amalgamation of local Councils and the potential to see the identity of Canterbury lost in the process. Our Organisation, like many locally based community Organisations, is able to develop innovative and responsive community services relevant to our community due to the practical and timely support of Canterbury City Council.

One example of this can be seen in the establishment of the Canterbury Men's Shed by our Organisation in 2007. We had responded to concerns about social isolation and depression amongst older men and established a Men's Shed one afternoon a week in the wood working room at a local High School. Canterbury City Council listened to our Organisation and its community and worked with us to convert a disused AGL Garage into a functional Mens Shed in 2010. Together we were able to secure funds to convert the premise, obtain donations of tools and equipment and today the Shed has nearly 50 members and is attended by different groups 5 days a week. There is no ongoing source of funding for this vital community service – its recurrent costs are met by members, our Organisation, the Clubgrants Program and of course through the rental subsidy afforded by Council. Without the support of the City of Canterbury the Men's Shed would never have been established and if we were to pay a rental component could not continue to operate.

The community in which we operate is culturally and linguistically diverse with over 150 community and language groups represented. Over our 40 years plus in operation we have worked closely with Canterbury City Council on community harmony and social cohesion projects – such as the popular annual Haldon St Festival. Council's role in working with its community, including with Organisations like ours, is an important role that would be lost in an amalgamation or creation of a larger level of government. Over the years positive working relationships have been facilitated by Council and Council staff which serve to build social cohesion in an area of pivotal importance. This has been notable at times of increased national or international discord when Council has responded with others to promote local harmony and reassurance. The result in Canterbury is a best practice example of multiculturalism and community harmony in action. It is the result of years of work at building relationships and connections at a local level and cannot be achieved through funding one off projects from a remote level of government.

Community Building Community

Canterbury City Council knows this community well. It understands the relationships and has a shared history with many of its Organisations.

The delivery of local services based upon trust, mutual respect and co operation can not be lost to a potential amalgamation into larger more remote systems of government. People live at a local level. It is our experience that they want services which respond to their local needs and part of our work is ensuring that Commonwealth and State funded programmes have local relevance in delivery.

Our concern in a potential merger would of course be to lose the rental assistance provided by Canterbury City Council – if we were to pay a rental component this would impact not only the services we offer but would undermine our viability. We are however more concerned at the impact on the local Canterbury identity and on the close local relationships which have been formed through the work of Canterbury City Council.

Liz Messih

CEO