

**Newcastle Greens Policy on
Childcare and Early Childhood Support
A community-focused and child-friendly Council**



Newcastle Greens believe that Newcastle City Council is the best-placed sphere of government to monitor and address early childhood and childcare needs of the Newcastle community.

We believe that the best way to address Newcastle's childcare needs is to:

- Establish an accessible consultation process whereby parents, childcare workers and professionals, community representatives, and Council can meet regularly to discuss the childcare issues as they arise;
- Ensure that Newcastle City Council provides relevant support to parents, children and childcare providers in identifying and addressing areas of need;
- Promote and support community-based, not-for-profit childcare centres;
- Ensure that the developmental, health and social needs of young children are met through the appropriate provision of Council support and facilities; and,
- Retain children's services and childcare in public ownership as the best guarantee of equitable services to the community.

Newcastle Greens are committed to placing the needs of the community at the centre of Council's policies, strategies and priorities. Local government, as the sphere of government closest to the people it serves, has an obligation to ensure that childcare and other child support activities are well provisioned.

Newcastle Greens will work to:

Establish a childcare/early childhood support process by:

- Conducting a thorough review of the early childhood support needs and provisions in the local government area, especially the needs of disadvantaged children and families.
- Opening a consultation with the community, parents and early childhood professionals about how Council can better support early childhood services.
- Developing a Council childcare/early childhood policy that expresses Newcastle Council's commitment to the support of children and their families.
- Reviewing Council's child services website to provide more thorough information services to families seeking information about children's services available in the local government area.

Improve Newcastle City Council's communication with other providers of early childhood services to provide a one-stop-shop information service to families by:

- Revitalising interagency liaison so that Council's children's services staff are aware of all available services and can provide relevant advice to those services.
- Establishing information and communication systems so that the community has easy access to all relevant children's services.

Establish additional children's services to support children who do not have ready access to appropriate services by:

- Developing, where appropriate to community needs and in conjunction with other government providers, multi-purpose centres that integrate childhood services, childcare, community development, family support and education.
- Facilitating the provision of early childhood education to families who do not currently have access to such services.
- Consult with Aboriginal services and the Aboriginal community to ensure that the highest standards of early childhood services are available to Aboriginal children and their families.
- Support the development of publicly funded 'not for profit' services for children.

Recognise the essential role and value of Council staff with specialist training in the provision of early childhood services

- Ensuring Council provide staff working in early childhood services with comprehensive training in the developmental needs of children.
- Ensuring that Council's recruitment policies for childcare centres include sufficient trained early childhood teachers to meet the educational and developmental needs of children, especially in areas of highest need.