

Community panel statements

Option 1

Option 1 means that Council retains greater control of maintaining high service quality and delivering services that meet the expectations and changing needs of the local community. It provides communities with a strong, continuing involvement in how resources and costs are being allocated for the benefit of the wider community. It strengthens connections and engagement at a more local level. Maintaining a balance between council-run and private providers provides choice and flexibility for local communities, including supporting vulnerable children.

Option 2 and 3

Options 2 and 3 provide the community with less certainty about being able to locally access high-quality services and facilities. There are higher risks that new providers have less focus on creating community benefit and value. There are higher risks that the existing knowledge and expertise within Council in providing kindergarten for the Knox community is lost. There are opportunities for Council to take on new roles. Such as increased community engagement, centralised enrolment, educating families, establishing networks between providers and staff, and looking at new ways to build community connection for the kindergarten community. Specifically for option 2, the remaining Council-run sessional kindergarten can help benchmark service excellence and the benefits of co-locating services.

Overarching statement

Kinders are where children play, make friends, learn to share, discover and explore. They offer a unique life experience.

The Community Panel is very aware that we are advocating for the voice of the child, and we want to make clear that children are our future. Investment in social interaction, education, and opportunities to thrive from birth to 5 years old is a crucial time for development and gives children a head start in life. Council can play a role in advocating for the needs of vulnerable children. The child and families should always drive decision-making regardless of profit.

Children are more engaged in sessional kindergarten as it is a more structured program when compared to long day care. Council can play a role in communicating the benefits of these kindergartens. For families and children, the benefits include building connections and relationships from early childhood onwards.

Sessional kindergartens are the birthplace of communities. Council understands our community and our local children. Independent providers may not have the same knowledge and motivation. Therefore, community connection may be lost, which concerns us. We want to make sure there is a grassroots commitment to kindergarten that still applies regardless of Council's role in service provision.

It's not just about the child. It's also about a parent's connection to kinder, education and community. Council has the ability to empower communities to be more hands-on and play an active role in kindergartens. Regardless of the outcome, we want Council to continue to engage with parents and enable opportunities for them to connect.

There's been a lot of historical work to get kindergartens in Knox to the point they are now, it would be devastating to lose this given the community advocacy that has occurred. The quality this has led to is felt by our community.

Knox community takes pride in the fact that our kindergartens run by Council are exceeding the quality standards. We need to celebrate and communicate this fact. It's not just a tick box exercise. Community sees and feels the difference.

We recognise that with change comes opportunity. We want community facilities that may be no longer used for kinder to sustain their value for the community based on current needs. Choice of opportunities and consistency should remain regardless of the approach or who is in Government. We are asking Council to be transparent around any further changes and involve community as a key voice in decision making.

Our panel deliberations began and ended with the benefits to the child, and we should not lose sight of this as a community.

We want to make sure that the wider community know that the Community Panel did not have final decision-making power.