

# CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL

## MEMORANDUM

3 September 1992

**From:** CITY MANAGER

**To:** MAYOR AND COUNCILLORS  
MS ANGELA TAYLOR

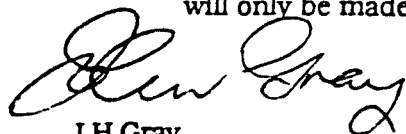
**Copy To:** GROUP MANAGER, METROPOLITAN SERVICES  
LEISURE AND NEIGHBOURHOODS SUPPORT MANAGER

**CONFIDENTIAL**

BY HAND 3.9.92

### **CIVIC CHILDCARE CENTRE CLOSURE**

1. Attached is a copy of a press release being issued this evening.
2. In view of on-going Police inquiries and forthcoming prosecution action I am unfortunately not at liberty to say a great deal more at this time. I can however say that both myself and the Ministry of Education were briefed by NZ Police beforehand, and I am bound to agree with the action taken by the Ministry.  
  
The care or protection of children is topical throughout New Zealand and has a high public profile. Immediate and positive action was necessary in the present instance, and I hope you will appreciate that the situation did not permit a more constitutional and deliberative approach.
3. You may be assured that the action taken has been motivated solely in the interests of the children. The Ministry considers that in terms of their health and safety, they should not continue to attend the Centre.
4. Whereas the Childcare Centre has in latter years been financially self-sufficient in the main, this has not been the case in recent months. There has been a loss of clientele and a consequent financial shortfall compounded by specific additional costs arising from the Peter Ellis prosecution.
5. There will be some one-off costs associated with the closure, notably staff redundancy, (c \$55,000).
6. It is true that the former Christchurch City Council did pioneer day care centres of this type. It is equally true that there is now a wide choice and the raison d'etre of Council involvement no longer exists. We sought to develop a day care centre which could be a model to others, and this was largely achieved. However the tarnishing of this image by the Ellis affair has reduced the credibility of the activity virtually to zero.  
  
That is not to say that the achievements of the preceding 15 years or so should be lost sight of.
7. Our indemnifiers have been kept informed on this matter in order that the Council's interests may be safeguarded. Claims for damages are not an impossibility. This is another reason why this matter has to be handled with the utmost discretion.
8. Please bear with me for having kept you informed as individual councillors, through this series of memoranda. A more formal report will be introduced into the committee process just as soon as NZ Police believe it appropriate to do so. We must do nothing which might interfere with the course of justice, which could happen if there is public speculation from this source.
9. Rob Dally and myself are available to discuss this matter with you individually if you so wish.
10. It has been agreed with NZ Police and Ministry of Education that press statements will only be made by nominated individuals - in our case by the City Manager.



J H Gray  
CITY MANAGER