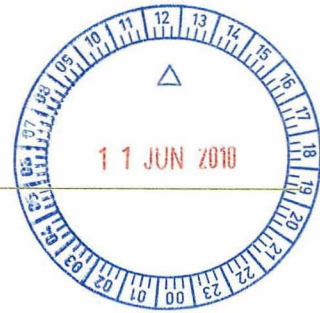


PUBLIC



**Minister for Child Protection; Community Services;
Seniors and Volunteering; Women's Interests**

Our ref: 36-04299

Hon Brian Ellis MLC
Chairman
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Legislative Council Committee Office
18-32 Parliament Place
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Mr Ellis

Thank you for your correspondence dated 10 May 2010 inviting comment on the terms of the above petition and on the submission to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs made by the principal petitioner Mr Paul Miles MLA, Member for Wanneroo.

By way of background, the Department for Child Protection (the Department) purchased the property at 22 Kentia Loop, Wanneroo, as part of its reform of residential care services for children in the care of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Department. The reform process involves the establishment of three tiers of service to best meet the differing needs of children in care.

The Kentia Loop property is part of a Tier 2 Residential Care Program which aims to provide children with privacy, safety and well-being within a space that is identified as their own. This is achieved by creating a home environment that provides a sense of normality and ensures the physical and emotional safety of each child and young person.

In response to the principal petitioner's submission, the Department's purchase of the Kentia Loop property was based on a number of carefully considered requirements including the following:

- The design of the house provides the number of rooms and space required to deliver a quality Tier 2 care environment.
- Enhancements such as a large covered pergola area and large shed offer excellent outdoor alternative activity spaces.
- The location is 'semi-rural' yet relatively close to the Wanneroo township with the amenity and services this provides.
- The large block and being on a corner, affording some distance between the house and neighbours.
- Whilst accommodating a number of trees, the block is reticulated and has extensive gardens and lawns.

While the property was initially intended for three month occupancy, 'interim care centre' is no longer an accurate description of the residential care nature of the use. No more than four children will reside in the house at any time. Their term of residence is intended to be for a period of two years and the children will be under the care of two carers, 24 hours per day (carers to rotate in eight hour shifts). The intent is for the children to view the house as their home, to integrate into the community and participate in a range of local activities (for example, local sporting and recreational activities).

One aspect of the therapeutic care model being developed within the Department's residential care houses aims to support children to feel safe by developing connections and relationships with their carers and the community.

Children in the CEO's care often come from abusive and/or neglectful backgrounds. However, their difficulties do not necessarily translate into criminal or abusive behaviour towards other children and other persons within the community.

The Department takes the risk of fire very seriously. Each house has a fire management plan and the Department has consulted with the Fire and Emergency Services Authority to undertake a risk assessment of its semi-rural properties to inform these plans. A range of strategies have also been developed to further educate staff and children on the risk and danger of fire. For example, contact has been made with Wanneroo's local volunteer fire service, and there are discussions about the service performing an educative role with the children.

It is the Department's view that no development approval pursuant to the *Planning and Development Act 2005* is required. This is because the proposed use is a continuation of an existing approval, namely a 'single residential dwelling'. The proposed use falls within the definition of 'dwelling' as contained in the Residential Design Codes. This view is supported by the Independent Planning Reviewer. The City of Wanneroo is aware of this.

Yours sincerely



8 JUN 2010

Robyn McSweeney MLC
**MINISTER FOR CHILD PROTECTION; COMMUNITY
SERVICES; SENIORS AND VOLUNTEERING; WOMEN'S INTERESTS**