



Port Augusta

CITY COUNCIL

MEDIA RELEASE

Council to investigate options for new aged care provider

Last night Port Augusta City Council voted to seek a new operator for its two aged care facilities, AM Ramsay Village and Nerrilda Nursing Home, to ensure quality aged care services will be provided into the future.

Following extensive consultation with staff, residents and their families, fundraising groups for the facilities and the community in 2013, Council sought expressions of interest for a quality aged care provider to operate the facilities. This call resulted in five organisations expressing interest and after initial conversations, detailed discussions were held with one organisation. This organisation subsequently withdrew interest in August 2015.

Prior to the EOI process in 2013, Port Augusta City Council's Ageing Strategy 2007-2012 was developed after extensive community consultation, with one of the key recommendations stating the need to initiate discussions with aged care providers to develop and manage additional aged care places to meet future demand.

In March this year, specialist aged care consultant *G88 Consulting* presented a report to Council, outlining options for future operations of its residential aged care facilities. Included in its recommendations was that Council continue with its original decision to sell Nerrilda Nursing Home and AM Ramsay Village.

Port Augusta Mayor Sam Johnson said this has not been an easy decision for Elected Members but having looked at all options, they made a decision based on the best option for the future provision of aged care in Port Augusta.

"Elected Members had to weigh up the benefit of delaying the matter for a number of months while a further consultation period occurred, when in all likelihood there wouldn't have been a change in the decision," Mayor Johnson said.

Mayor Johnson stated that Residential Aged Care is changing, both through the increase in residents with complex care needs, and through the impact of Federal Government aged care reforms. And he said Council as a provider is finding it increasingly difficult to manage the complexities that being an aged care provider brings.

"Aged Care is a changing industry with increasing complexity of legislation around the provision of aged care and is better suited to large, specialist aged care organisations which can attract higher funding levels and invest in capital upgrades."

"As a Council, the only way we can attract increased funding is by increasing rates. The majority of Council's that historically provided aged care have moved out of the industry, with Port Augusta just one of three Councils of 68 in South Australia that still operate aged care facilities," Mayor Johnson said.

"Our aim is to ensure that the community continues to receive a high standard of aged care services and we will be seeking an experienced, reputable organisation to operate services in Port Augusta, with the intent to expand services to meet the growing demand. This is something that Council is not able to do."

Residents, their families and staff at both facilities are of paramount importance in this process, Mayor Johnson said, and they will be kept informed as the process to seek a new owner commences.

"As we have done over the past three years, we will keep residents, their families and staff informed of the process, with Council staff available to address any of their questions or concerns at any time," Mayor Johnson said.

"We will also keep the community informed, as we have previously done, through our website, Facebook, community newsletter and the media as part of a comprehensive communication strategy."

Details on background on Council's investigation of aged care options is on its website <http://www.portaugusta.sa.gov.au/page.aspx?u=1265>

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For further information please contact Port Augusta City Council Manager of Media and Communications, Cherie Gerlach, on 0427 413345 or email cherie.gerlach@portaugusta.sa.gov.au

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