



Yvette Berry MLA

Deputy Chief Minister

Minister for Education and Early Childhood

Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs

Minister for Sport and Recreation

Member for Ginninderra

Mr Tom Duncan
Clerk
Office of the Legislative Assembly for the ACT
Tom.duncan@parliament.act.gov.au

Our ref: ECF25/43

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter about *E-PET-051025* and *PET-075-25 Closure of SDN Bluebell*. I am writing to provide the Government response to the petition.

The ACT Government values and prioritises our not-for-profit early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector and is committed to enhancing partnerships with these organisations, including in relation to the prioritisation and effective utilisation of government owned premises. I recognise the importance of ensuring planning mechanisms can support the long-term sustainability and accessibility of the not-for-profit sector.

In August 2025 the ACT regulator, Children's Education and Care Assurance (CECA) received notification that SDN Children's Services would be closing SDN Bluebell on 19 December 2025 due to the sale of the site to a commercial buyer. Following this notification, the Education Directorate, City Renewal Authority and Infrastructure Canberra (iCBR) investigated the matter and I advocated for a suitable solution to be identified including by writing to the developer to seek their support with ensuring the service could continue to operate. Whilst a suitable alternative government owned premises was not able to be identified, an agreement was reached between the site owner and SDN Bluebell to extend the private sub-lease of the premises to December 2026.

The Development Application (DA) 202543884 for Block 16 Section 45 has been lodged with the Territory Planning Authority (the Authority) and is being assessed in accordance with the *Planning Act 2023* and the *Territory Plan*. The inclusion of conditions to the DA cannot occur until a Crown Lease variation has been approved to remove its primary use as a childcare.

The Authority operates independently and does not have any legal ability to unilaterally impose a requirement for large developments to provide early learning facilities as part of their Crown Lease, or to provide reduced rates for commercial properties leased to not-for-profit organisations.

While these actions fall outside the Authority's remit, the ACT Government is exploring alternative avenues to support not-for-profit ECEC services. A new Community Facilities Allocations Policy will be finalised by iCBR in 2025 to reflect this commitment.

CECA is responsible for ensuring premises comply with the National Law. While CECA provided advice to SDN Bluebell on the suitability of the potential alternative site at Westfield Belconnen, they made no

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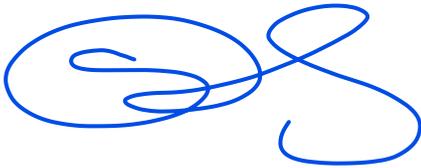
formal decision about the premises as they are unable to do so until an application for approval in principle is received.

Fortunately, in December 2025, SDN Children's Services confirmed that SDN Bluebell will relocate to new premises in Gold Creek, Nicholls. This move, scheduled for mid-2026, provides long term certainty for the children, families and educators of SDN Bluebell and ensures the continuation of high-quality early childhood education and care for the community and region. CECA will continue to engage with providers on matters relating to the utilisation of government owned premises and community facilities for the purpose of ECEC.

I would like to acknowledge SDN Bluebell's commitment to delivering quality early learning in the ACT community over the past three decades. The ACT Government is working to ensure equitable access to high-quality early learning services, including through not-for-profit providers who play a vital role in our communities.

I trust this information provides the petitioners with assurance that their concerns are understood and have been acknowledged by the ACT Government.

Yours sincerely



Yvette Berry MLA
Minister for Education and Early Childhood
13 January 2026