

STATEMENT on Yurnguai Closure

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This statement is a personal comment from the CEO of Counterpoint and not necessarily a reflection of the Counterpoint Management Committee.

Barnardo's' Closure of Waterloo Learning Centre: A Betrayal of Community Trust

First, we want to acknowledge and express our gratitude for an excellent 20-year partnership with Barnardo's. Together, we have delivered vital services, shared staff and premises and supported countless families in Waterloo. That history makes this moment even more disappointing.

Counterpoint expresses deep shock and disappointment at Barnardo's decision to close the learning centre within our community hub — and at the way this decision has been handled. After 20 years of partnership, there has been no direct contact from Barnardo's' CEO or Board; only middle-management messengers with no authority to act.

Initially, we were told the centre would be relocated. Now, without consultation or warning, it is a complete closure. This is not just poor communication — it is a breach of trust and a devastating blow to families who rely on this service.


Barnardo's stated reason? "We can't afford it." The reality is, they can't afford *not* to. According to their own ACNC reports, Barnardo's has \$110 million in annual income and \$12.4 million in net assets, while running this program costs about \$350,000 — less than 0.3% of their yearly revenue. They could easily afford to keep this program going. Walking away from Waterloo at this critical moment isn't cost-saving — it's cost-shifting, and vulnerable families will bear the brunt.

In response to any rumours or excuses suggesting Counterpoint was "overcharging rent," let us be clear: we did not charge rent. We charged a contribution towards building running costs at a heavily discounted rate of \$25 per hour (\$24,000 a year), which gave Barnardo's 50% use of our centre. This was far below market rates and/or actual costs and even lower in previous years. This arrangement was fair, transparent, and designed to support partnership, not profit.

The learning centre is a core part of our hub, and its removal rips out essential support for education and community connection. At a time when Waterloo faces significant challenges, this decision abandons the very people Barnardo's claims to serve.

Counterpoint stands proudly with our community. We are inspired by their ability to self-organise and self-express, and we fully support the message shared in the video created by parents themselves. It captures their heartbreak and frustration in their own words.

We urge everyone to watch and share this video widely:

 <https://vimeo.com/reviews/3d2d24ff-432c-494b-9884-fda51deae152/videos/1143310916>

Barnardo's must explain this reversal, engage with us immediately, and work toward a solution that honours their responsibility to the community.

Signed:

Mike

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