



ORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL

MINUTE ITEM ATTACHMENTS

Tuesday 19 May 2026

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19 MAY 2026**

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01 - Fiona Phillips to Councillor McDonald - 2026-27 draft budget + Emma McBride Assistant Minister for Mental Health letter regarding youth



Councillor Cameron McDonald
Mayor
Kiama Municipal Council

Via email: cameron.mcdonald@kiama.nsw.gov.au & council@kiama.nsw.gov.au

4 May 2026

Dear Mayor McDonald *cameron*

I am writing to you about Kiama Municipal Council's Draft Budget 2026-27 and associated documents. Please also consider this response, a submission, to the draft plans - reference number SC5254.

As I'm sure you are aware, I understand that the Kiama community are concerned about future and potential changes to council services and operations in light of the 2026-2027 council budget. I do wish to convey those concerns to you and council.

I also understand that council is required to satisfy and complete the NSW Government's Performance Improvement Order (PIO).

As the local Federal MP, I am committed to working with Kiama Municipal Council and its elected body, to ensure that the Australian Government and council can work together in the best interests of the Kiama community.

For your information, I have written to the Federal Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, the Hon Emma McBride MP, regarding Kiama's SENTRAL Youth Services that are provided by council. I have attached a response from the Assistant Minister for you.

The Australian Government's Department of Health, Disability and Ageing will work with COORDINARE (South Eastern NSW Primary Health Network) to ensure that regional mental health and suicide prevention services in Kiama and the surrounding communities are best supported for our community.

As you are also aware, the Federal Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories, the Hon Kristy McBain MP, requested an inquiry into local government funding and fiscal sustainability on 6 November 2025.

As chair of the committee, I have been working on a future report that will be handed down into local government financial sustainability. I thank Kiama Municipal Council for providing a submission to this inquiry. Should council or anyone wish to seek updates and the inquiry process, the information can be found at aph.gov.au/LocalGovernmentFunding

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I trust this response is helpful and you are welcome to table this letter and the
Assistant Minister's response in a council meeting, should you wish to do so.

If I can be of any further help, please contact me on 4423 1782 or email me at
Fiona.Phillips.MP@aph.gov.au.

Yours sincerely,

Fiona Phillips MP
Member for Gilmore

Cc: Ms Jane Stroud, Chief Executive Officer - Kiama Municipal Council

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The Hon Emma McBride MP
Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention
Assistant Minister for Rural and Regional Health

Ref No: MC26-007643

Fiona Phillips MP
Member for Gilmore
PO Box 1009
NOWRA NSW 2541
Fiona.Phillips.MP@aph.gov.au

Dear Mrs Phillips

Thank you for your correspondence regarding youth mental health services in Kiama.

The Australian Government is making sure that young Australians get the mental health support they need, wherever they live. Our government is delivering youth mental health care in your local area, through the Medicare Mental Health Kids Hub in Fair Meadow (Illawarra), headspace Kiama and Bateman's Bay, the Shoalhaven Medicare Mental Health Centre and the newly launched free digital service Medicare Mental Health Check In.

I was proud to join you to open headspace Kiama, delivering on your 2022 election commitment, and I am pleased to advise that since opening in August 2024, headspace Kiama has provided more than 1,100 occasions of service. Our government is also delivering on your 2025 election commitment, upgrading the existing Shoalhaven Mental Health Hub to a new Medicare Mental Health Centre.

We have also established a Medicare Mental Health Kids Hub (Kids Hub) in Fairy Meadow (Illawarra), which I had the pleasure of officially launching earlier this month. The Kids Hub provides early intervention for children aged 0 to 12 years, along with their families, carers and kin, who are experiencing emotional, behavioural or emerging mental health challenges. Importantly, the Kids Hub also delivers outreach services through Community Health Centres to Kiama and Nowra.

These local investments reflect the Australian Government's expectation that all young Australians have access to mental health support, close to home. It is part of Government's \$1.1 billion commitment to expand access to free mental health services.

To boost access, our Government has also launched a new digital service, Medicare Mental Health Check In. This is a free, confidential service that does not require a referral or diagnosis. Medicare Mental Health Check-In provides support for people aged 16 years and over who are experiencing, or at risk of, mental health challenges. Further information on this new digital service is at www.medicarementalhealthcheckin.gov.au.

I appreciate that you are concerned about the impact of the closure of SENTRAL Youth Services, provided by the Kiama Municipal Council. I understand that a working partnership is already in place between headspace Kiama and SENTRAL Youth Services and I have been advised that headspace Kiama is well positioned to welcome referrals. The existing relationship between headspace and SENTRAL provides a strong foundation to support continuity of care for young people, in the event of changes to locally delivered youth services.

Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600

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As you are aware, the Australian Government funds COORDINARE (South Eastern NSW
Primary Health Network) to plan and commission regional mental health and suicide
prevention services in Kiama and surrounding communities.

In addition to headspace Kiama and Bateman's Bay, COORDINARE has also commissioned
MyRecovery which provides support for people aged 12 years and over with complex and
severe mental health challenges.

I have asked the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing to continue to engage with
COORDINARE to monitor local service capacity and respond to emerging community needs.

Yours sincerely



Emma McBride

29 April 2026

cc: The Hon Mark Butler MP, Minister for Health and Ageing, Minister for Disability and the
National Disability Insurance Scheme

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