



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

31 May 2023

WHY IS THE MCINTYRE CENTRE CLOSING?

After six years of providing equine therapy for people with disabilities, HELP Enterprises has had to make the difficult decision to cease operations at the McIntyre Centre. This was a very carefully considered decision that was driven by the significant gap between NDIS fees for service and the Centre's operating costs.

Everyone involved in this change understands the connection that our riders and families have with the Centre, and the life-changing impact it has had on the lives of many. This made the decision even harder. We will now be refocusing on our strengths and the service streams that are financially sustainable.

WHEN WILL THE MCINTYRE CENTRE OFFICIALLY CEASE OPERATIONS?

HELP will keep operating the McIntyre Centre until the end of current 'term' of service, and after the conclusion of our June/July school holiday program. All riding and therapy activities will cease at the site on Friday, 7 July.

Between now and the date we hand over the keys, we will be celebrating the centre, our community, the riders, and anyone who has contributed over the years.

WHO WILL TAKE OVER THE MCINTYRE CENTRE?

HELP would like to see McIntyre Centre services continue and is committed to working with any interested parties that come forward before 31 July. Over the past 6 years we have invested considerable funds into improving site infrastructure and facilities.

We're hopeful that we can find someone else to take it on. We have started reaching out to providers of similar equine services to see if we can find a new operator for the McIntyre site. If there's anyone out there, please get in touch.

HOW WILL HELP SUPPORT MCC PARTICIPANTS, RIDERS AND THEIR FAMILIES THROUGHOUT THIS TRANSITION?

We would like to thank our MCC participants, riders and families for their patience and understanding during this difficult time. We are doing everything we can to make this transition as smooth as possible.

We will have dedicated team members assisting riders, participants, and their families with inquiries and transition arrangements. You can contact them via phone on 1800 437 345.

WHEN WILL SESSIONS END AT MCC?

HELP will continue to provide equine activities and therapies until the current program term and schedule of supports ends on June 22. Current participants have a schedule of supports that concludes on June 22.

WILL THE JUNE/JULY SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAM STILL GO AHEAD?

The June/July school holiday program will go ahead and conclude on July 7.

WHAT ALTERNATIVE EQUINE THERAPIES/SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE FOR PARTICIPANTS?

HELP will provide participants and their families with a list of similar services they can consider transferring to.

WILL THERE STILL BE STAFF AVAILABLE TO RUN CENTRE ACTIVITIES AND THERAPIES?

A small number of McIntyre Centre staff will be retained until 31 July so that they can finalise operations and care for the property and horses.

WILL PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES STILL BE AVAILABLE AT THE MCINTYRE CENTRE?

HELP is looking at ways to continue offering physiotherapy using the Miracolt mechanical horse from another location, and will be consulting with clients, families and all team members involved during this time.

HOW WILL THIS CHANGE EFFECT HELP'S PINJARRA HILLS HUB?

Unfortunately, our Pinjarra Hills Hub will not be able to operate independently on the site. Our Hub service will be taken into consideration in any discussions with parties interested in operating the McIntyre Centre component.

At this stage, HELP is committed to providing onsite support at the Pinjarra hub until 28 July. HELP will liaise directly with Hub participants and their families to keep them informed of progress. We will also be offering alternative support options for Pinjarra Hub participants via our community support service and other Help Hubs.

HOW WILL HELP SUPPORT MCC STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS DURING THIS TRANSITION?

We are so thankful for our wonderful team of staff and volunteers. To ensure they are supported during this difficult transition we will be working to identify suitable redeployment opportunities within HELP, or with a new provider if a suitable arrangement is found.

We will also be providing additional support via HELP's Employee Assistance Program provider, Converge International, and a therapist we work closely with will be available to all team members.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE MCC HERD?

Our MCC herd is a much loved and valued part of our team. HELP will continue to care for our four legged friends through this transition. If a new provider takes over the site we will organise to transfer the ownership of our herd, or, if we do not find an alternative provider, HELP and MCC's Centre Manager will re-home the horses to individuals or other interested parties, including equine activity centres.

WHAT IS HELP'S HISTORY WITH THE MCINTYRE CENTRE?

For over 50 years McIntyre Centre has provided equine-assisted activities and therapies to support people with disability. HELP took on McIntyre in 2017 when the Centre needed a financial lifeline to continue operating.

During this period, HELP has made significant improvements to the facilities at the site and utilised multiple options to improve McIntyre's financial position but has not been able to close the gap between NDIS fees for service and the costs of operating a safe, high quality and well-staffed operation.

HOW WILL THIS IMPACT THE LOCAL COMMUNITY?

We would like to say a big thank you to our local community; and the many individuals and organisations that have provided support or helped us, especially during times of crisis like the 2022 floods. We will be working throughout the transition to ensure there are minimal impacts to our local community.

We will be sad to say farewell and hope that we can continue to connect in the future through our wide range of HELP services.

WHAT IS HELP'S STANCE ON THE NDIS FUNDING OF EQUINE-ASSISTED ACTIVITIES/THERAPIES?

Equine-assisted activities and therapies help people with disability and other health conditions to learn new skills, practice communication techniques, and improve their mental and physical wellbeing. We've seen over the years the sheer joy in the faces of riders and families and the examples of 'breakthrough' moments that the activities can achieve.

For this reason, HELP believes that it should continue to be offered as an NDIS support – the challenge though, is how providers fund the significant gap between the NDIS fee and the cost to provide a safe and well-staffed service that meets all the NDIS standards and important safeguards. HELP was not able to bridge the gap, despite trying a range of strategies.