

**Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council
(RREAC)**



**Early Childhood Education and Care in Rural and
Remote Western Australia**

August 2011



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

BACKGROUND

The Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council (RREAC) was established in 1997 to provide advice to the Minister for Education and the Minister for Training on the education and training needs of rural and remote Western Australian students.

In May 2006, RREAC was restructured and members of parliament were appointed as the Chair and Deputy Chair. The restructured RREAC separated the “voice” of the community and the recipients of education and training services from the “voice” of the providers of those services.

The Council’s members, appointed by Cabinet, include the ministerial endorsed representatives and agents of the community and consumer interests. RREAC secretariat includes a Principal Consultant and an Administrative Assistant, who provide executive and research support to the Council.

In 2010, RREAC was given new terms of reference and directions by the Minister for Education that focus the Council’s attention on three Government priorities.

MINISTER’S TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Provide advice on how the Government should be addressing the emerging need to have more qualified staff available for rural and remote education settings, such as childcare and early education, in order for the state to meet Council of Australian Government’s new national requirements and standards. (Initiatives such as *Welcome to the Bush*).
2. Provide advice about the future uses of technology in the delivery of education in rural and remote education settings.
3. Following the *Review of Regional Loading*, provide advice regarding access to and provision of higher education in rural and remote settings.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Addressing the emerging need to have more qualified staff available for rural and remote child care and early education.

Background

The Early Childhood Education and Care report identifies and provides an overview of some of the issues, concerns and challenges with regard to emerging needs in early childhood education and care in regional and remote areas of Western Australia.

When the restructured Council first met in August 2010, RREAC noted the new terms of reference and directions by the Minister for Education that focus the Council's attention on three Government priorities including the need for more qualified staff for early childhood education and care in regional and remote areas of Western Australia.

Over the last six months RREAC has devoted time to researching and gauging opinions on the issues, challenges and developments associated with early childhood education and care. In doing this RREAC has: drawn on member organisations to provide information; consulted with senior executive at the Department of Education Services; consulted relevant research material; and, consulted various Commonwealth Government Policies and Consultation papers on early childhood education and care.

RREAC understands that regional and remote communities have been disadvantaged in engaging in shaping new directions due to restricted access to various discussions and consultations which have been facilitated to raise awareness and understanding of the proposed reforms, as most of this has occurred in the metropolitan area.

Current Situation

Early Childhood Development agencies recognise that the family is the most important factor in children's lives and development. Supporting families is therefore central to ensuring longer-term educational outcomes for children. Access to high quality early childhood education and care plays an important role in improving educational and developmental outcomes for children. High quality, accessible and affordable child care also enables parents to feel confident to participate in the workforce and the broader community.

The proposed reforms in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) are significant and comprise:

- Establishment of strong national quality standards for ECEC.
- A quality rating system to drive continuous improvement and provide parents with robust and relevant information about learning and care.
- Streamlining or integrating licensing and accreditation arrangements.
- A national Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).

The seven Quality Areas in the *National Quality Standard* in ECEC provision focus on improving quality services, programs and practices and include improved staff-to-child ratios and requirements for educational qualifications for the workforce.

In light of this, RREAC has identified the following issues that impact on early childhood education and care: Attracting, training and retaining quality and qualified children's services staff; fragmentation of children's services; access, equity & sustainability; Indigenous students (especially in remote communities where schools are often sole providers of

kindergarten and care as well as education); 0-3 provision; cost to communities/families including Neighbourhood Model Occasional Care (NMOC) and part time Long Day Care and transport.

Strategic Priorities for the Minister's Consideration

In line with the Terms of Reference and the Minister's Directions RREAC notes the significance of attracting and retaining quality professional children's services staff, including teachers, presents demanding challenges for regional government and remote communities alike. The Council has identified strategic priorities to address the issues arising from the emerging need to have more qualified staff available for regional and remote settings. Other priorities relate to the structure and provision of early childhood education and care.

RREAC recognises the importance of linking the strategic issues identified in this paper to state planning and regional development and the need for fundamentally different solutions to achieve different outcomes.

The following strategic priorities are presented for the Minister's consideration.

Attracting, training and retaining quality and qualified staff

1. That the Government of Western Australia works with education systems and sectors, Deans of Education, TAFE and with community/interagency organisations to create a productive partnership/network for a professional development plan for all staff involved in early childhood education in regional and remote locations.
2. School education systems and sectors encourage new and existing teacher/carer participation in working in regional and remote areas by:
 - providing early access to information/instruction regarding working in rural/remote areas;
 - providing mentoring programs to encourage and advise those who express an interest in working in these areas; and
 - provision of further incentives such as quality housing, professional and community support and creating positive perceptions about working '*in the bush*'.

Fragmentation of children's services

3. Support structures such as the highly successful Wheatbelt Organisation of Children's Services be resourced to ensure a consistent approach to the development and implementation of high quality child care services in the regions.
4. Creation of regionally based collaborative working groups, working across services and trained to mentor/monitor teachers and ECE workers to ensure provision of a continuous delivery of services within the region.
5. Provision of professional learning opportunities and training should be made available locally, within regions, and across agencies, to increase equity and participation in professional learning for all staff (the main issue as identified in Recommendation 1 is upgrading qualifications, not just for teachers but all "educators" involved in ECE (that is, in ECE centres - contact staff – 50% Diploma and above; 50% Certificate III and at least one with First Aid).

Access, Equity & Sustainability

6. Support structures such as the highly successful Wheatbelt Organisation of Children's Services be resourced to ensure a consistent approach to the development and implementation of high quality child care services in the regions.

7. Agencies ensure the continuation of a viable operating service in areas of smaller population, by:
 - the provision of a cohesive collaborative working teams (within regions/across services) to mentor/monitor all staff, to enable the attraction and retention of a continuous flow of professional staff into regions (local governance model);
 - researching and resourcing highly successful support structures as in *recommendation 8*; and
 - building partnerships with family members rather than targeting children alone.
8. That the Government review the school and other transport systems to enable access to long day care / part time day care for all eligible children, including those with disabilities, in regional areas.
9. That the Government strongly support small numbers of children/children with disabilities/part time day care by enabling attendance to ECEC facilities on a regular basis.
10. Review the location of service delivery where there is flexibility for delivery away from schools and child care centres.
11. Promote the implementation of outreach services (e.g. play sessions and parenting programs) to encourage higher participation.

Participation of Indigenous Children in ECEC

12. That as the social and economic planning to improve Aboriginal participation in ECEC is vital, the Government further investigates and researches current facilities with a view to including a “case-management” model (e.g. structures are put in place to ensure that agencies work together - infant health; speech therapy; health; psychology) in all future developments. Individual communities to provide governance for these services and programs delivered to be determined by community – no ‘one size fits all’ approach.

0-3 Provision

13. As part of its education policy, the Government of Western Australia working with education systems, sectors and schools, needs to continue to work to ensure “universal access” to ECEC services by providing adequate resources (teachers, availability, centres, resources).
14. State/Federal commitment to financial support be sought to ensure continued funding for occasional care centres located across Western Australia. Interim measures should be implemented to ensure alternative quality service provision.
15. A review of the implications of removing time-lines regarding exemptions and quality of service?
16. That long term strategies be put in place to overcome the possibility of insufficient teachers or not being able to meet the new qualifications in the required time frame due to inaccessibility of professional learning or other issues, that will impact on continuity of quality children’s services during this period.

Infrastructure

17. Review of planning and policy in collaboration with the Department of Transport with regard to transportation of students in the Kindergarten and Pre-primary years of schooling.
18. Support flexible service delivery, including mobile services and the use of technology and support programs to assist ‘at home’ carers and educators.

Recommendations

1. That the state government is urged to continue to consolidate early years services of as a priority.
2. That the unique needs of small rural and remote communities are recognised and that alternative models of early childhood and care provision for 0-3 years be investigated and implemented in partnership with relevant agencies where appropriate.
3. The Minister gives serious consideration to the ideas and suggestions outlined in RREAC's report to overcome and address perceived staff shortages in rural and remote Western Australia.
4. Further active engagement is undertaken with stakeholders in rural and remote areas, as part of workforce planning, in order that well qualified and supported staff are able to deliver quality education and early childhood education and care services.
5. When issues or developments in early childhood education and care come to the Minister's notice, that the Minister consider referring these matters to RREAC for provision of further advice to the Minister.
6. The Minister supports RREAC continuing to pursue the issue of early childhood education and care good practice to provide ongoing feedback to inform the Minister of emerging issues and developments.

Hon Brian Ellis MLC
Chair RREAC
Member for Agricultural Region

Hon Mia Davies
Deputy Chair RREAC
Member for Agricultural Region

INTRODUCTION

This report identifies and provides an overview of some of the issues, concerns and challenges faced with regard to the provision of early childhood education and care in regional and remote communities as a result of the Federal Government initiatives in the area of early childhood including:

- the COAG Agreement of December 2009 (National Partnership Agreement on the Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care);
- the National Quality Framework that will be underpinned by the National law and national regulations, setting new National Quality Standard for long day care, family day care, preschool (kindergarten in some jurisdictions) and out of school hours care;
- the COAG national Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education. Through this Agreement, the Commonwealth and the States and Territories will work together to ensure universal access to quality early childhood education in the year before school (Commonwealth election commitment); and
- the introduction of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).

This report has been prepared to assist RREAC in preparing a briefing for the Minister addressing the first term of reference.

RREAC understands that regional and remote communities have been disadvantaged in engaging in shaping these new directions due to restricted access to various discussions and consultations which have been facilitated to raise awareness and understanding of the proposed changes, as most of this has occurred in the metropolitan area. RREAC however does note that telecasts for consultation occurred with sessions in the Pilbara and Bunbury districts. A road-show on universal access was conducted in 2009 and 2010 for all school principals and community services coordinators from Department for Families and Communities in rural localities that included an outline of NQAEEC changes (as known at that point).

In December 2007, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a partnership between the Commonwealth, State, and Territory governments “*to pursue substantial reform in the areas of education, skills, and early childhood development, to deliver significant improvements in human capital outcomes for all Australians.*”

The intent of the Governments’ policy change is to improve the quality of service provision in the foundation years of learning. This can only be seen as positive. The implementation and monitoring of the NQS is being undertaken by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). This will result in greater consistency and standards across the country in early year’s provision and easier identification of areas where additional focus and support are required.

The proposed reform agenda in early childhood development is comprehensive and covers aspects associated with both early childhood education and care. As in many other parts of the world, the Australian early childhood education and care provision systems have, in the main, been planned for, funded, and delivered separately from education delivery. Research now shows that delineation between early childhood care and education in the broad sense is built on a false distinction as it is well-recognised children in fact start learning from birth. What is new is the recognition that facilitation of learning opportunities for young children can be more effective with the right support and direction. In the context of preparing young children for entry into ‘formal learning’ huge advantages can be provided if learning opportunities, either in the home or through formal care, are more targeted. In a regional context, unless ‘this right support and direction’, either at home or in formal learning is in place, educational disadvantage has the potential to further increase unless the unique

circumstances or rural context is understood and appropriately incorporated in to policy and funding models.

Siraj-Blatchford, 2007, notes that the distinction between care and education is misleading – he states:

“Children are learning constantly, regardless of the setting”

Lally, 2007, states:

“Every moment in which an adult provides care to a young infant is a moment rich in learning.

Furthermore, Elliot, 2006; McCain & Mustard, 1999, note:

“Segregation of the provision of care and education into service ‘types’ therefore has short and long term consequences for children, families and the economy at large ”.

However, while dangers exist in differentiating between *care and education*, within the context of this discussion paper, *childhood education* refers to the formal surroundings such as pre-school; whereas “*childhood care*” refers to the interactions that take place within a home or family situation and/or child care centre.

The early childhood reform agenda is designed to develop a seamless transition between formal care and school. The EYLF will place demands on the formal care industry to be accountable for age and development appropriate learning.

Boundaries between education and care are blurring and this trend will continue as the move towards creating more quality and affordable learning and development environments rather than that focusing just on care, occur.

A second component of the reform agenda is ensuring that services meet the changing needs of families. Some are driven by family arrangements for work and others by the belief that care is a transitional step between home and school. In a discussion paper titled *A National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care* (2008) prepared by the Early Childhood Sub-group of the Productivity Agenda Working Group, the point is made that:

With evidence mounting about the value of early childhood education, traditional childcare settings need to refocus on learning and development. In addition, integrated models of care, such as wrap-around care and co-located services, are emerging to meet the needs of families. As the two sectors come together to service changing community need, families need to be able to expect a consistently high level of quality across all formal early childhood education and care settings (p.8).

For the purpose of this paper the terms Child Care (long day care); Child Care Institutions; School – K-P are used. Given the varying dimensions of rural i.e. regional, rural or remote, within the context of this paper all references are presented as rural.

It is noted that the delineation adopted in this report between *childhood education* (which includes preschool) and *childhood care* (which includes the childcare sector and informal in-home care) is at odds with the delineation adopted in the NQAECEC which draws the line **after** preschool and before full-time schooling. That is, the NQAECEC includes preschool along with the childcare sector as comprising ‘early childhood education and care’ for children from birth to five years.

The RREAC delineation matches the reality of service provision in WA because preschool (called kindergarten) has long been part of the schooling sector.

CURRENT SITUATION

The Early Childhood Development Sub-group (nominees from each State and Territory and the Australia Government, a nominee from of the AHMAC Child Health Wellbeing Sub-Committee and CDSMAC Children's Services Sub-Committee - Refer to Appendix 1, page 16) recognises that the family is the most important factor in children's lives and development. Supporting families is therefore central to ensuring longer-term educational outcomes for children. Access to high quality early childhood education and care plays an important role in improving educational and developmental outcomes for children. A properly integrated service model that supports families will mean a lot more than access to high quality childcare services for their children. Support services such as parenting support, allied health services, information about child development maybe lacking in all communities including rural, regional and remote and need to be addressed.

Clearly connected and underpinning the rationale for the early childhood development agenda are the economic imperatives for the nation to increase Australia's productivity and global competitiveness and the individual citizen's right to pursue economic, professional and social desires.

The economic imperatives for the nation to increase Australia's productivity and global competitiveness and the individual citizens' right to pursue economic, professional and social desires are also on the agenda. Parents with young children should be able to participate in the workforce, education and training and supported in all these objectives. As a result, a significant proportion of children (but certainly not all) will be spending some time in formal care from birth. It is essential, therefore, that this care is of high quality.

High quality, accessible and affordable child care enables parents to feel confident to participate in the workforce and the broader community. It is essential therefore that this care is of high quality.

The proposed reforms in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) are substantial / significant and comprise:

- Establishment of strong national quality standards for ECEC.
- A quality rating system to drive continuous improvement and provide parents with robust and relevant information about learning and care.
- Streamlining or integrating licensing and accreditation arrangements.
- A national Early Years Learning Framework.

The seven Quality Areas in the *National Quality Standard* in ECEC provision focus on improving quality services, programs and practices and include improved staff-to-child ratios and requirements for educational qualifications for the workforce.

(Refer to Appendix 2, page 17)

'In line with international research showing that better qualified early childhood teaching staff provide better outcomes for children, the Australian Government's, National Quality Framework (NQF) introduces new qualification requirements that children's services staff must meet by January 2014 (or in some cases by January 2020). To support these requirements and to seek to address children's services workforce recruitment and retention

issues, a number of government activities have been instigated including additional university places, removal of TAFE fees and HECS debt relief for some students'¹.

It is acknowledged that “untrained and trained staff of rural children’s services may have limited options available should they wish to pursue further education, beyond relocation to study or distance education approaches. Studies away from work, family and community commitments are often not possible and can be a daunting experience”.

To achieve these standards many services in rural areas are taking up traineeships to assist staff achieve minimum Certificate III. Recognition of prior learning is also being explored. As articulated in the National Quality Framework staff must either have the qualifications or be actively working towards attaining it by 1 January 2014. Services unable to engage suitably qualified staff can apply for a temporary or permanent waiver. While in a transition period, such approaches are positive, enabling employees to gain a recognised qualification in paid employment it is critical to ensure that over time staff come with skills. To do otherwise would put at risk commitments to rural communities that they too receive quality services equivalent to their metropolitan counterparts.

In addition to the educational benefits of quality child care in rural communities, the provision of these services plays a significant role in the sustainability of non-metropolitan areas. For example, the availability of quality child care services can attract and retain professionals and their families in rural communities; provide an increased range of employment opportunities resulting in an increased local workforce; and, build community capacity through enabling individuals/families to engage in community organisations, events, workshops or to undertake further training and/or education.

Due to lower populations in many regional and remote communities the critical mass required to guarantee profit and attract private operators to establish services is less likely. However, this does not necessarily hold true for mining communities where higher incomes may make smaller operations viable. The responsibility can therefore, in many smaller communities, fall on volunteer community members and/or the local government, to establish child care services. Consequently, consistency in the provision of care outside the home is difficult to sustain.

The transition and implementation of the National Quality Standard (NQS) and the *Early Years Learning Framework* has created many issues and significant challenges which are compounded in rural, regional and remote communities. Failure to address those challenges will impact on the success of these new policy directions and further increase the divide between quality provision in metropolitan and non-metropolitan Australia. RREAC has identified the following issues that impact on early childhood education and care:

1. Attracting, training and retaining quality and qualified children’s services staff.
2. Fragmentation of children’s services.
3. Access, equity & sustainability.
4. Aboriginal students (especially in remote communities where schools are often sole providers of kindergarten and care as well as education).
5. 0-3 year old provision.
6. Transport.

¹ Source: Skilling Rural Children’s Services final project report to the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation ; Contact Inc, Sydney ,NSW 2011

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

1. Attracting, training and retaining quality and qualified staff

It is a well-established fact that attracting and retaining quality professional children's services staff, including teachers, presents demanding challenges for regional and remote communities.

A number of factors to be overcome in attending to staffing of Early Childhood Education and Care Centres with quality and qualified staff include:

- isolation (professional and geographical) and distance;
- job security including the part time nature of some roles;
- salary and conditions;
- small pool of appropriate workers with schools and early childhood education and care services competing for the same staff;
- lack of suitable accommodation and/or costs;
- staff operating under exemptions;
- unqualified staff coordinating services; and,
- access and cost associated with professional learning activities.

These challenges in the context of the demands being brought to bear in meeting the national quality agenda objectives may provide the stimulus to develop innovative models regarding delivery of quality early education and childcare.

Within the NQF and EYLF staffing arrangements focus on improved staff-to-child ratios and the educational qualifications of the workforce. It is critical that the focus remains on up-skilling the education workforce (including carers) to ensure rural communities receive quality services, delivered by qualified staff, no matter where they are located comparable to their metropolitan counterparts.

Models for supporting those communities with existing "local" ECE provision to ensure that they can build their capacity to provide quality provision inline with the National Agenda should be promoted. Ensuring quality provision in regional and remote areas remains a priority.

It is important to note that the Hon Peter Garrett MP (Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth) and the Hon Kate Ellis MP (Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and Minister for Childcare) on 10 May 2011 announced more than \$32.4 million to further the early childhood reform agenda. The funding consists of a \$9.2 million Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) package to assist the early childhood workforce to access training and \$23.2 million over four years for the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) to be met from within existing resources.

The Recognition of Prior Learning package will provide early childhood workers with greater access to upgrading their qualifications through a national assessment process that will be of greatest benefit to child care professionals in rural and remote areas, who have difficulty accessing these programs. The RPL package will fund the development of specialist training for 600 RPL assessors in delivery of Certificate III, Diploma and Advanced Diploma in Children's Services; and provide grants of up to \$1125 for 2000 rural and remote child care staff per year, to reimburse them for out of pocket expenses associated with accessing RPL.

As noted previously, it is clear that well trained and qualified early childhood workers are more likely to produce stronger results for children.

Minister Constable ensured that workforce attraction and retention was built in to the scheduled review of the NP NQAECE. WA schooling sector has strategies in place to attract and retain staff to rural and remote localities including financial incentives, provision of housing and professional development. WA has raised these issues on numerous occasions in national negotiations on NQAECEC. It is agreed that innovative solutions will be required and that RREAC could make valuable contributions about what ideas are likely to work in various contexts.

Strategic Priorities

Attracting, training and retaining quality and qualified staff

1. That the Government of Western Australia works with education systems and sectors, Deans of Education, TAFE and with community/interagency organisations to create a productive partnership/network for a professional development plan for all staff involved in early childhood education in regional and remote locations.
2. School education systems and sectors encourage new and existing teacher/carer participation in working in regional and remote areas by:
 - providing early access to information/instruction regarding working in rural/remote areas;
 - providing mentoring programs to encourage and advise those who express an interest in working in these areas; and
 - provision of further incentives such as quality housing, professional and community support and creating positive perceptions about working '*in the bush*'.

2. Fragmentation of children's services

This initiative is focused on reducing fragmentation with consistent standards across all care and education sectors. This was central to the Premier's announcement in December 2010 regarding Integrated Children's Services. Of particular importance will be finding ways to capitalise and strengthen existing place-based grass-roots initiatives and ensuring a child-centred collaboration across government and non-government agencies.

Historically the Federal Government is responsible for the payment and management of the Child Care Benefit payments. Child Care Benefit is funding that is paid to assist families with the cost of child care for long day care, family day care, occasional care, outside school hours care, vacation care and registered care². As part of accountability for this funding the Commonwealth undertakes random spot checks to childcare sites to ensure accountability for Child Care Benefit payments.

Although not included in the NQF the Commonwealth is also responsible for budget based funding which is a payment to assist non-CCB non-mainstream services with costs associated with operating a child care service such as Mobile Children's Services and Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS)³

The new national **quality assessment and rating system** will see services assessed and rated against each of the seven quality areas of the National Quality Standard, as well as given an overall rating. This will drive continual quality improvement at services and the rating will provide families with better information for making choices about

² Source: Australian Government, Centrelink website
http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/payments/childcare_benefit.htm

³ Source Australian Government DEEWR website
http://www.deewr.gov.au/Earlychildhood/Resources/Handbook/Part1/Pages/3_6.aspx

their children's education and care. Assessment and rating will generally be carried out by Regulatory Authorities.

There will no longer be accreditation assessments by the National Childcare Accreditation Council. A **Regulatory Authority** in each state and territory will be primarily responsible for administering the framework, including granting approvals and monitoring compliance.

A **new national body**—the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority—will coordinate and guide the National Quality Framework and ensure the consistent and effective implementation of the new system.

The State has responsibility for Child Care licensing; standards and safety with the focus being primarily on safety of the child not development or education. Traditionally one visit per year was undertaken at the State level to monitor and assess standards, for example: Early Learning and Child Care standards; qualifications; staff to child ratios; children's service facilities programs and all conditions set by previous state governments.

Three bodies within Western Australia are responsible for Early Learning and Child Care - the Federal Government; State Government (Department of Communities & Department of Education); and Department of Children's Services and a number of non-Government schools registered by Department of Education Services that offer kindergarten.

With the new focus on ECEC and clearer intention to focus on developmental and education outcomes for young children, work must be undertaken in the area of policy development, re-examination of accreditation and licensing practices and attention paid to staffing and recruitment in the context of qualifications and accreditation requirements.

The Western Australian State Government has resolved that the Department for Children and Families will regulate ECEC services in WA which are in scope of the NQF as still covered by the Child Care Services Act. In Victoria and South Australia one agency is responsible for education and child care. (Refer to Appendix 3, page 18).

On the ground, individual communities currently develop their own solutions to child care. Local governments and not for profit organisations utilise immense community social capacity to establish and maintain these centres. Organisations such as the Wheatbelt Organisation of Children's Services have been critical in providing independent advice and support to these groups. Such a model has created a more co-operative and collaborative approach, avoiding duplication of effort and resulting in a more consistent service delivery model. This support service has not been maintained because of lack of resources of these small not for profit facilities to support such a structure.

It is clear that fundamental legislative and policy changes will be most helpful in reducing fragmentation of services.

Strategic Priorities

Fragmentation of children's services

3. Support structures such as the highly successful Wheatbelt Organisation of Children's Services be resourced to ensure a consistent approach to the development and implementation of high quality child care services in the regions.
4. Creation of regionally based collaborative working groups, working across services and trained to mentor/monitor teachers and ECE workers to ensure provision of a continuous delivery of services within the region.
5. Provision of professional learning opportunities and training should be made available locally, within regions, and across agencies, to increase equity and participation in professional learning for all staff (the main issue as identified in Recommendation 1 is

upgrading qualifications, not just for teachers but all “educators” involved in ECE (that is, in ECE centres - contact staff – 50% Diploma and above; 50% Certificate III and at least one with First Aid).

3. Access, Equity & Sustainability

Universal childcare services in rural communities generally include - child care services; playgroups; toy libraries; kindergartens; mobile child care or play session services; pre-primary centres; years 1 and 2 in primary schools; childcare centres and family day care, in home child care; out of school hours care; public libraries; and, parenting programs. Many smaller communities do not have the capacity to maintain or sustain the full range of services available in larger regional centres or the metropolitan area.

The viability of operating services in areas with smaller populations as well as the attraction and retention of appropriately qualified staff and management committee members’ are strong determinants for the provision of childcare services. Services and associated support programs *NOT universally available* include: child development services; early intervention services; culturally appropriate services for Indigenous children and families; and family and community centres. Kindergartens as part of schools are also covered by the EYLF and the National Quality Framework.⁴

Localised and flexible solutions will be critical to issues relating to access, equity and sustainability.

Strategic Priorities

Access, Equity & Sustainability

6. Support structures such as the highly successful Wheatbelt Organisation of Children’s Services be resourced to ensure a consistent approach to the development and implementation of high quality child care services in the regions.
7. Agencies ensure the continuation of a viable operating service in areas of smaller population, by:
 - the provision of a cohesive collaborative working teams (within regions/across services) to mentor/monitor all staff, to enable the attraction and retention of a continuous flow of professional staff into regions (local governance model);
 - researching and resourcing highly successful support structures as in *strategic Priority 6*; and
 - building partnerships with family members rather than targeting children alone.
8. That the Government review the school and other transport systems to enable access to long day care / part time day care for all eligible children, including those with disabilities, in regional areas.
9. That the Government strongly support small numbers of children/children with disabilities/part time day care by enabling attendance to ECEC facilities on a regular basis.
10. Review the location of service delivery where there is flexibility for delivery away from schools and child care centres.
11. Promote the implementation of outreach services (e.g. play sessions and parenting programs) to encourage higher participation.

⁴ Information obtained from *FACTSHEET No. 2 – 2010* - Provided by the Council of Australian Governments *Closing the Gap* initiative and The Government of Western Australia Department of Education

4. Improved participation of Aboriginal Children in ECEC?

Improving the participation of Aboriginal children in rural and remote locations requires a multi-faceted approach which the Children and Family Centres are just one potential solution for only four regional/remote locations.

The National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education (2009) concentrates on reforming the delivery of early childhood education and care services through the delivery of universal access to early childhood education.

The universal access commitment is that by 2013 every child will have access to a preschool program in the 12 months prior to full-time schooling. The preschool program is to be delivered by a four year university qualified early childhood teacher, in accordance with a national early years learning framework, for 15 hours a week, 40 weeks a year. It will be accessible across a diversity of settings, in a form that meets the needs of parents and in a manner that ensures cost does not present a barrier to access. Reasonable transitional arrangements—including potentially beyond 2013—are needed to implement the commitment to preschool program delivery by four year university qualified early childhood teachers, as agreed in the bilateral agreements.

Especially for the first two years of implementing universal access (2009 and 2010), national priorities include: increasing participation rates, particularly for Indigenous and disadvantaged children; increasing program hours; ensuring cost is not a barrier to access; strengthening program quality and consistency; and fostering service integration and coordination across stand-alone preschool and child care. The strategies for addressing these priorities may differ on a state-by-state basis.

Children living in remote Indigenous communities have been identified as a specific focus for universal access, with the Prime Minister announcing as part of his Sorry Day address that by 2013 every Indigenous four year old in a remote community be enrolled and attending a preschool program. This reflects the significant under-representation of Indigenous children in preschool programs.

The following information was provided by the Executive Director, *The Office of Early Childhood Development and Learning, The Department of Education during a meeting on the 10 November 2010.*

The Indigenous Early Childhood Development National Partnership (IECDNP) frames a commitment by the Federal and State Governments to combine efforts to improve outcomes for Aboriginal children.

The focus of the IECDNP is:

- *Element 1:* Integration of early childhood services through Children and Family Centres;
- *Element 2:* Increased access to Antenatal care, Pre-pregnancy and Teenage Sexual and Reproductive health;
- *Element 3:* Increased access to and use of Maternal and Child Health Services by Aboriginal families.

One strategy being implemented includes the establishment of Children and Family Centres or “hubs” (commonly referred to as “wrap around service models”). They are designed to improve health and well-being, education and care for young children by supporting parents and increasing access to existing services and programs within the local community. Specifically, the Centres are:

- A site where an integrated suite of high quality and holistic support services and programs are provided for children from birth to five years and their families.
- A welcoming place with a child-care centre, community meeting place/s and health consulting room/s.
- Designed and delivery-dependent on local needs and existing resources and services.

While the Centres focus on addressing the needs of Aboriginal families and their young children they also provide services to all families in the local community.

The Office of Early Childhood Development and Learning, in the Department of Education (DoE) is the lead agency responsible for overseeing the development and establishment of these Centres.

Under the Closing the Gap: National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development, \$42.35 million has been allocated by the Federal Government for the establishment of five Children and Family Centres in Western Australia over five years. These are to be located at Halls Creek, Fitzroy Crossing, Kununurra, Roebourne and one in the metropolitan region with the first centre at Halls Creek to be built by November 2011. Fitzroy Crossing and Kununurra will be established in January 2012 and December 2012 respectively. Roebourne and the metropolitan Centre will be completed in December 2013.

Evidence to support site locations was obtained from a review of the number and needs of Aboriginal children located in each area, the availability, or lack of existing services, the degree of disadvantage, and the likelihood of the Centres being fully utilized in these locations.

These centres will be located on or close to local schools as the school site is considered to be the best platform for integrating early learning and childcare, child and maternal health, parenting and family support. Co-location will be convenient for families with children already attending school and enable a smooth and successful family and child transition into Kindergarten and beyond.

Centres will support an integrated approach to early childhood and family services that could include:

- child care;
- playgroups and programs;
- family education such as parenting and nutrition workshops;
- community child and family health; and
- culture and language programs.

Community engagement with the Centres is recognised as vital to their success. The Department of Education will work with and through local Aboriginal communities, local agencies and educational institutions, from project proposal through to service operation, including site location, building design, local governance arrangements, and service and program provision.

A Service Agreement outlining the *guidelines of operation* will be negotiated between the Department of Education and the Centre Operator. A Centre Manager will be appointed by each Centre Operator to oversee the day-to-day operations of the Centre and broker and coordinate the most appropriate services and programs for each location based on significant

community input. The Centre Manager will work closely with a local Governance Group to ensure that the highest standards and quality of service delivery is maintained at each site.

The *community will benefit from additional employment opportunities* that the building of the Centres and ongoing delivery of services will generate. When operational, the Centres will provide opportunities for families to enter the workforce and/or further their learning, comfortable in the knowledge that their children are participating in caring and safe childcare and programs.

More information

www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/

On 13 May 2011 the Minister for Education, the Hon Elizabeth Constance, announced a new initiative that would allow schools with high proportions of Aboriginal students to break away from traditional schooling constraints. The initiative would free-up principals and teachers to do things “differently and in the best interests of their students and communities”.

A small number of schools representing a range of school types and sizes across remote, regional and metropolitan communities would initially participate in the program. The program will commence in 2012 and work with other organisations to co-ordinate health services, child care support, parenting advice, breakfast programs, attendance initiatives and extra curricula activities.

Each Aboriginal Network School will have access to new curriculum materials and high quality professional learning.

Strategic Priorities

Participation of Indigenous Children in ECEC

12. That as the social and economic planning to improve Aboriginal participation in ECEC is vital, the Government further investigates and researches current facilities with a view to including a “case-management” model (e.g. structures are put in place to ensure that agencies work together - infant health; speech therapy; health; psychology) in all future developments. Individual communities to provide governance for these services and programs delivered to be determined by community – no ‘one size fits all’ approach.

5. 0-3 Year Old Provision

In Western Australia the provision of education and child care services for 0-3 years is varied incorporating both funded and unfunded programs that impact significantly on the quality of provision in rural and remote locations. Unequal provision in early years between metropolitan and rural and remote communities is evident. In rural areas in particular a variety of service providers operate to meet community needs for programs for 0-3. Whilst 3 year old education programs are not routinely provided in the government sector, the non-government sectors have increasingly included provision for pre-kindergarten in the year before formal entry to kindergarten.

Although three-year-old kindergarten provision lies outside the government education system, in recent times the Catholic and Independent school sectors have moved to implementing pre-kindergarten programs in schools. Historically, Montessori Schools in the Independent sector have provided 3 – 6 year olds with education in the ‘children’s house’. Montessori education is in three year cycles 3 – 6; 6 – 9 and 9 – 12 and this has been the structure in Montessori schools since each school’s establishment. 0-3 year programs provide integration opportunities for child development and high quality parenting services/advice, support for

mothers, health services and achievement of good outcomes for children, parents and communities.

Improving health and development outcomes for young children is the combined responsibility of parents, carers and government on behalf of the community (Victorian Government, 2007). While parents/carers have primary responsibility for raising children, child carers also play a significant role.

With the growing realisation of the importance of the 0-3 years in child development, opportunities for children and families must be identified to realise a full range of supports to enable 'universal access' to be realised. Policy must be developed, the role of community development explored, integration and / or links between health (intervention programs; access; assessment); care; parenting; community networks; playgroups must be established.

As documented within the discussion paper – *A national quality framework for early childhood education and care* (August 2008) early childhood education and care in Australia encompasses two sectors – childcare and pre-school which have been planned, funded and delivered separately.

The boundaries between childcare and pre-school are blurring and we see in some jurisdictions, pre-school programs introduced into long day care including pre-school programs. With evidence mounting about the value of early childhood education, traditional (formal) child-care settings are required to focus more explicitly on learning and development. In addition, integrated models of care, such as wrap-around care and co-located services are emerging to meet the needs of families. As the two sectors come together to service changing community needs, families need to be able to expect a consistently high level of quality across all *formal* early childhood education and care settings.

Focus on this area was identified by Premier through Integrated Children's Services commitment (announcement December 2010). Consideration of existing legislative barriers and agency funding arrangements across universal providers will need to be included in planning changes in this area. Initiatives will need to capitalise and strengthen existing grass-roots programs/efforts and seek to fill gaps that are identified. The key will be collaboration and partnerships.

A number of initiatives have emerged in Western Australia that use an integrated model. (Refer to Appendix 4 page 19 – Case Studies 1 & 2)

Some specific initiatives have emerged including:

a) *Early Learning and Child Care Centre on school sites.*

The Federal Government has committed to establish 38 Early Learning and Care Centres (ELCC) in areas of unmet demand for child-care on school grounds or other community land across Australia. ELCC will be long day care centres located on school grounds and managed by experienced third party operators selected through a competitive tendering process. A board of management that will include the centre's director and the principal of the school will be established. The Board will oversee the implementation of strategies to increase integration over time.

Western Australia has been allocated funding to build four ELCCs as announced in the 2007 Federal election campaign. One has been built in Karratha with others to be built in Hedland, Ashdale and Warriapendi in 2011 and 2012. All ELCCs are/will be located on the local primary school sites (Refer to Appendix 5 page 20 - Case Study 3. An autism specific ELCC has been built in Warwick in the Perth Metropolitan area.)

The opportunity to establish integrated service centres services in schools is a strategy that communities are being encouraged to investigate. The integration with school facilities would enable the sharing of resources, collegial support, and convenience for families with school-age children, smoother transition, and grounding childcare with Early Childhood Education.

b) Neighbourhood Mobile Occasional Care

Five NMOC's are currently operating in the Wheatbelt. Since the Federal Government cut funds to the NMOC, two are transitioning to long day care. A further three were investigating this as a possible option.

On 25th February 2011 Brendon Grylls Minister for Regional Development; Lands; Minister Assisting the Minister for State Development and Robyn McSweeney, Minister for Child Protection; Community Services; Seniors and Volunteering; Women's Interests; Youth announced that 21 Neighbourhood Model occasional child care centres could continue to operate as a result of \$687,329 funding from the State Government's Royalties for Regions program. Seventeen of these services are located in a town or community where no other child-care options existed. The centres, which were previously part-funded by the Federal Government, were under threat of closure following cuts in the 2010 Federal Government Budget.

The new funding commitment covers 100 per cent service of provider costs to 31 December, 2012, providing certainty to occasional care centres located across Western Australia. Centres affected are located in the Wheatbelt, Kimberley, Great Southern, South-West, Mid-West, Pilbara and Peel regions. Options for funding are required to ensure the sustainable operation of these centres beyond December 2012.

Opportunity cost to communities/families

Within regional and remote communities provision of pre-kindergarten care usually function as a community based service with low fees and operate without funding and with volunteer support. Child Australia will provide subsidies for children with disabilities.

In rural areas playgroups are often associated with schools and are usually run by mothers' groups. Increasingly, schools are stepping in to organise such educational opportunities as they see enormous opportunities to support families and establish strong and positive relationships.

Recognition of the value of such provision requires further interrogation as to how schools could be supported and provided with the capacity to move more systematically into this area.

Commonwealth funded, budget based programs provide some support for child/day care. The Uniting Church organisation Frontier Services coordinates a limited number of in home carers for isolated families.

Part Time Long Day Care

While long day care is the norm, recently, flexibility has emerged particularly in rural and remote areas enabling part time long day care to be introduced. Due to this demand an on-going advocacy and media strategy eventuated in DEEWR removing a time limit from exemptions for services to operate part time. *Exemptions provide for circumstances where a licensed children's service is having genuine difficulty meeting certain requirements of the Children's Services Act 1996 (Act) or the Children's Services regulations 2009 (Regulations). Exemptions are granted in exceptional circumstances for a time limited period and enable*

services to continue to operate while working towards meeting the requirements of the Act and Regulations (Exemptions: Fact Sheet, March 2011). (Refer to Appendix 6, page 21)

Strategic Priorities; 0-3 Provision

13. As part of its education policy, the Government of Western Australia working with education systems, sectors and schools, needs to continue to work to ensure “universal access” to ECEC services by providing adequate resources (teachers, availability, centres, resources).
14. State/Federal commitment to financial support be sought to ensure continued funding for occasional care centres located across Western Australia. Interim measures should be implemented to ensure alternative quality service provision.
15. A review of the implications of removing time-lines regarding exemptions and quality of service?
16. That long term strategies be put in place to overcome the possibility of insufficient teachers or not being able to meet the new qualifications in the required time frame due to inaccessibility of professional learning or other issues, that will impact on continuity of quality children’s services during this period.

6. Infrastructure

In rural areas transport of primary students is available through the ‘orange bus’ public transport system. Even though some rural schools usually conduct the Kindergarten program over full days rather than the traditional half days there is no transport provision for children prior to Year One (It should be noted that on average, children are now six months older than they were when the ‘transport policy was established). In addition, in rural localities, older siblings and/or known family friends often share the bus with the kindergarten children. Students in the pre-primary year may be allowed on ‘orange buses’ if room is available.

Mobile Children’s Services have been an effective model of children’s service provision where a stand-alone children’s service may not be viable and responds to the lack of transport issues by bringing children’s services to communities.

Focusing on the needs of families with children, Mobile Children’s Services have a long history in Australia. The very first known Mobile Children’s Service established was the Canberra Mobile Kindergarten in 1949 (Australian Capital Territory) which was followed by the development of other services in each state and territory in NSW (1958); Tasmania (1969), Victoria (1971), South Australia and Western Australia (1975); Queensland (1980) and the Northern Territory (1987).

Mobile Children’s Services have been defined as:

A Mobile Children’s Service provides an itinerant educational and support Service for isolated children and families living in isolated communities or disadvantaged localities, or where a stand-alone service is not viable. A vehicle (car, bus, plane or train) is used to transport staff, equipment and appropriate materials to these localities as an integral part of the educational programs being provided.
Contact Inc. 1993

Mobiles provide a flexible, responsive and innovative service, reaching out, responding to needs and being capable of moving to where the service is required all of which having kept Mobiles at the forefront as they adapt to the varied and complex community changes in Australia. As a consequence mobiles are as varied as the Australian community, offering

services to children, parents and adults. Professional support mediated by on-line services for at home carers and educators, especially family day care providers' warrants attention

Each state or territory tells a different story ranging from Mobiles that link up with the children and families on a regular weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis through to outback areas so vast that the Mobile may visit a family only three or four times a year.⁵

Western Australia has a range of Mobile Children's Services including the following two case studies showcasing two Mobiles: Gnowangerup Family Support Associations Inc, of Greater Southern region and the Jalygurr-Guwan Aboriginal Corporation based in Broome.

Gnowangerup Family Support Association Inc

This Association has two Mobile Child Care services, which provide seven hours of occasional day -care for one day each week at eight venues throughout the Great Southern Region; involved with the care of some 180 families in the Great Southern region and covering an area of 450sq km.

Jalygurr-Guwan Aboriginal Corporation

This regional Mobile provides mobile playgroup, toy library and support for communities running their own child care services, consultations with communities addressing needs regarding child care, providing resources and information on parenting, healthcare, training, and childcare funding. This program travels approximately 500-1000kms per week, visiting communities such as Millya Rumurra, Bidyadanga, Lombadina, Djaridjin, One Arm Point, Beagle Bay, Jarndi Yuwaru, Ngamakoon and other communities which show interest in this service These remote Aboriginal communities and are only accessible via 4WD and during the wet season some of them are inaccessible⁶

Strategic Priorities

Infrastructure

7. Review of planning and policy in collaboration with the Department of Transport with regard to transportation of students in the Kindergarten and Pre-primary years of schooling.
8. Support flexible service delivery, including mobile services and the use of technology and support programs to assist '*at home*' carers and educators.

⁵ Source: National Association of Mobile Services for rural and remote families and children inc (NAMS) visual diary: <http://www.nationalmobiles.org.au/docs/VisualDiary.pdf>

⁶ Source: National Association of Mobile Services for rural and remote families and children inc (NAMS) visual diary: <http://www.nationalmobiles.org.au/docs/VisualDiary.pdf>

Reference List

Australian Government, Centrelink website

http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/payments/childcare_benefit.htm

Australian Government DEEWR website

http://www.deewr.gov.au/Earlychildhood/Resources/Handbook/Part1/Pages/3_6.aspx

Australian Government. (2009). National Quality Framework; Draft National Quality Framework Regulations Documentation. Accessed: 10 May 2011;

http://www.deewr.gov.au/earlychildhood/Policy_Agenda/Pages/DraftNQFregDocs

Children's Services Act 1996 (Act) or the Children's Services regulations 2009 (Regulations).

Council of Australian Governments. (2009). *Early Years Learning Framework*. Canberra ACT.

Council of Australian Governments. (2009). National Partnership Agreement of Early Childhood Education. Canberra, ACT.

Council of Australian Governments. (2009). National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care. Canberra.

COAG (2010) FACTSHEET No. 2 – 2010 - Provided by the Council of Australian Governments *Closing the Gap* initiative and The Government of Western Australia Department of Education.

Early Childhood Sub-group of the Productivity Agenda Working Group *Care (2008) A National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education*.

Elliot, A. (2006). Early Childhood Education: pathways to quality and equity for all children. **Australian Education Review**, No 50. Melbourne, VIC: Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) Press.

McCain, M., & Mustard, F. (1999). **Reversing the real brain-drain. The early years study**. Final Report, Toronto, Canada: Ontario's Children's Secretariat. <http://wwwFOUNDERS.net/ey/home.nsf/>

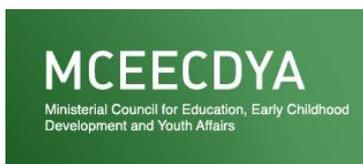
National Association of Mobile Services for rural and remote families and children inc (NAMS) visual diary: <http://www.nationalmobiles.org.au/docs/VisualDiary.pdf>

Siraj-Blatchford, I. (2007). **Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education 3-14 Project: Do Quality and Effectiveness matter?** Presentation at Municipal Association of Victoria Conferences 16/17th July 2007 Melbourne.

Skilling Rural Children's Services final project report to the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation; Contact Inc, Sydney, NSW, 2011.

Lally, J. R. (2007). Teaching and caring: Responding to both the vulnerability and competence of infants and toddlers. **Childcare and Children's Health**. Melbourne, VIC: Centre for Community Child Health.

APPENDIX 1: Early Childhood Development Working Group



Early Childhood Development Working Group

Terms of reference

The AEEYSOC Early Childhood Development Working Group has responsibility for providing advice to AEEYSOC, and through AEEYSOC, to Ministers on early childhood development issues. It undertakes its work in close cooperation with relevant advisory bodies to other Ministerial Councils on matters of mutual interest in early childhood development.

The Early Childhood Development Working Group will:

- 1 Undertake work referred to MCEECDYA from COAG on the Early Childhood Reform Agenda, in particular the implementation of the:
 - i National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education
 - ii National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care; and
 - iii Early Years Learning Framework.
- 2 Provide timely advice to senior officials and Ministers on the ongoing development of the COAG Early Childhood Reform Agenda being managed under the auspices of the National Early Childhood Development Steering Committee (established by the COAG Senior Officials Meeting (SOM)), in particular:
 - i the Early Childhood Development Strategy agreed by COAG on 2 July 2009;
 - ii the development of a National Agreement for Early Childhood Development to be considered by COAG in 2011; and
 - iii the Early Years Development Workforce Strategy to be considered by COAG in 2010.
- 3 Undertake work on early childhood development issues referred to it by Ministers.
- 4 Identify issues related to early childhood development, for consideration by Ministers, with a view to enhancing the development of a coordinated national approach to improving the learning, development, health and wellbeing of children from birth to eight.

Revised: January 2010

Membership

Membership will comprise nominees from each State and Territory and the Australian Government, a nominee of the AHMAC Child Health and Wellbeing Sub-Committee and the CDSMAC Children's Services Sub-Committee.

Chair

South Australian CEO

APPENDIX 2: National Quality Standard

National Quality Standard

The new National Quality Standard will help services to provide the best possible level of early childhood education and care by being clear about the factors that best support a child's development.

It will also give services and families confidence in understanding what distinguishes high quality or excellent services.

The new National Quality Standard is divided into seven areas that contribute to the quality of early childhood education and care. These areas have been identified by research and are:

1. Educational program and practice
2. Children's health and safety
3. Physical environment
4. Staffing arrangements (including the number of staff looking after children)
5. Relationships with children
6. Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
7. Leadership and service management

Under each of these areas more detail is provided about what a service can do to provide the highest quality early childhood education and care for a child.

The full Standard is detailed in the [National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care](#).

Further information on the National Quality Standard, including fact sheets, is available from the [National Quality Framework](#) main page.

APPENDIX 3: Models: Victoria and South Australia

1. In **Victoria** (Department of Education & Early Childhood Development) in 2009 the amended Children's Services Act 1996 (Act) and the new Children's Services Regulations 2009 (Regulations) commenced.

The Act amendments are part of the Victorian Government's five-year agenda for learning and development from birth to adulthood, set out in the Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development. The Blueprint advocates that all children should have access to high quality learning experiences integrated with care wherever they are, including for the first time, in outside school hours care and family day care services.

The Act and Regulations prescribe a number of changes including requirements for teaching staff members, staff training, child/staff ratios, and minimum ages of staff. Transitional provisions relating to changes will enable licensed children's services time to comply with the new requirements

2. In **South Australia** (Department of Education and Children's Services) early childhood education and care services are provided, licensed, or sponsored by the Department of Education and Children's Services. These services are available for young children from birth, to before starting school, plus childcare for children attending school. Early Childhood Services include non-compulsory early education and childcare services such as

Preschools; Child Care Centres; Children's Centres for Early Childhood Development & Parenting; Early Learning Programs; Family Day Care (Home Based Care); Out of School Hours Care; Playcentres; Playgroups; Rural Care; Rural Integrated Services

APPENDIX 4: Case Studies 1 and 2:

Case Study 1

Broomehill Primary School – The school hosts an excellent early childhood support program called ‘*Better Beginnings*’ which was designed, implemented and originated from the school. This program is highly successful and caters for the parents and carers of children aged 0 to 12. This program’s success is evident by its growing implementation into many schools and shires across W.A.

Case Study 2

Tambellup Primary School – The Executive Director, Early Childhood and Development, Department of Education Western Australia referred to a highly successful program operating at Tambellup Primary School – the following information was provided by the Principal.

Tambellup Primary School is an extremely good example of success working with Indigenous children and mothers. The school’s Indigenous students make up to 40% of those attending.

The Principal, together with other staff have been very successful in building relationships with Indigenous groups. This has involved taking a lot of time and patience, being prepared to listen and discuss issues, always being available to talk/work with various Indigenous groups to ensure their feeling included e.g. an open door policy.

The **Noongar Play group (0-3)** that was established and successfully obtained funding through to June 2012, has been very successful. It is open to everybody and places stress on the importance of attendance, language, and behaviour, whilst providing workshops that mothers have requested. One of the key messages is through a special oral program called “Code Switching” (language and behaviour) for K to Year 2 (*funded until June 2012*). Teaching children that it is appropriate to use certain language in given situations, whilst teaching those attending that this is how you will speak and behave at school. An important message that has been accepted by all is that “*what occurs out of school, stays out of school.*” Teaching the importance of everyone having the right to a safe environment is also critical to the success of the program.

As a result the school has had few problems with years 5/6/7 as expectations continue to be the same.

In 2011 the school will initiate a forum on bullying as this has been identified as an issue to be addressed.

The key requirements to succeed are time, patience, exclusivity, availability to listen and hear, and, an open door policy.

APPENDIX 5: Case study 3

Tambrey ELCC

is the result of collaboration between the Department of Education, the Commonwealth and Woodside Energy. The Western Australian Government, through the Department of Education, provided the land for the facility; project managed the construction of the building and will provide ongoing operational support to the centre and the school. Woodside Energy provided additional funding to enable the centre to respond to the local demand for more child-care places. When at capacity, the centre will be able to offer 120 places. The YMCA Perth won the tender to manage the centre and is now the child-care provider.

It was noted that the Minister for Education has no jurisdiction over children under school age and thus the Department of Child Protection has the delegated authority to sign off on the Operating Agreements for childcare facilities on school sites.

The Premier officially opened this Centre on the 25 October 2010 and the enrolments to date are at capacity.

Ashdale and Mirrabooka: The tender for builders for these Centres has been awarded and building is likely to commence in June/July 2011.

Port Hedland: This Centre is project managed directly by the Commonwealth and the Department of Education is awaiting information on the outcome of the tender for the builder of the Centre.

APPENDIX 6: Exemptions



Department of Education and
Early Childhood Development

Exemptions

Fact Sheet | March 2011

What is an exemption?

Exemptions provide for circumstances where a licensed children's service is having genuine difficulty meeting certain requirements of the *Children's Services Act 1996* (Act) or the *Children's Services Regulations 2009* (Regulations). Exemptions are granted in exceptional circumstances for a time limited period and enable services to continue to operate while working towards meeting the requirements of the Act and Regulations.

The Act allows both the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development (section 6) and the Secretary of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Secretary) (section 29A) to grant particular types of exemptions. All exemption notices must be published in the Government Gazette before a licensed children's service can operate with the exemption.

If a service is experiencing difficulties meeting the requirements of the Act and Regulations they should discuss this matter with a regional Children's Services Adviser (CSA) from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD). The CSA will assist the service to work through all possible options to achieve compliance with the Act and Regulations.

What exemptions are available?

Ministerial exemptions

The Minister can grant an exemption from any or all provisions of the Act and Regulations. The Minister has granted some general exemptions to assist in the provision of children's services. These exemptions are available to the children's services or people identified in the table below. The exemption notices can be found in the Government Gazette at www.gazette.vic.gov.au.

Current Ministerial exemptions

Applies to	Exemption description
Provisionally licensed Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) services applying for a full licence	<p>Child/qualified staff ratios – by application only. Contact your regional DEECD office for further information (expires 31 December 2011).</p> <p>A staff member undertaking a course specified in the exemption notice can be counted in the child/qualified staff ratios.</p>



Exemptions Fact Sheet

1

Applies to	Exemption description
<p>First integrated licence application comprising an OSHC Type 1 service and OSHC Type 2 service only</p>	<p>Integrated licence fee - no application required. Contact your regional DEECD office for further information.</p> <p>An applicant for an integrated OSHC licence will pay the prescribed fee for a standard licence with an equivalent number of places for the same licence period. The exemption applies to the first licence application only.</p>
<p>All licensed children's services</p>	<p>Approval of new nominee fee – a service will pay only \$35.90* per licence period for the fit and proper person determination of an approved nominee or primary nominee.</p> <p>*Children's services licensing fees are automatically indexed on 1 July each year and can be found at: www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/earlychildhood/childrensservices/licensingfees.pdf</p> <p>Qualified staff member (emergency primary teacher) - a staff member with a primary teaching qualification can act as a qualified staff member for five consecutive working days in the event of the sudden, unplanned or unexpected absence of a qualified staff member.</p> <p>Qualified staff member (lunch break – expires 31 December 2011) - an unqualified staff member can replace a qualified staff member during their lunch break providing the qualified staff member remains on the premises and is available to immediately care for and educate children as the need arises.</p> <p>From 1 January 2011, services with a licence capacity of 45 places or less that offer sessions of more than four hours duration can continue to use the lunch break exemption. No application is required.</p> <p>Any other service must apply for the qualified lunch break exemption and be able to demonstrate genuine difficulty in meeting the child/qualified staff ratios over the lunch break period.</p> <p>A Qualified Staff Lunch Break Exemption Fact Sheet is available on the DEECD website at http://www.education.vic.gov.au/ecsmanagement/licensedchildservices/resources/factsheets.htm</p>
<p>Limited hours type 1 services and services licensed after 25 May 2009</p>	<p>Minimum training (emergency) - a staff member without minimum training can be counted in the child/staff ratios for five consecutive working days in the event of the sudden, unplanned or unexpected absence of a staff member with minimum training.</p>

<p>Particular staff members</p>	<p>Qualified staff member (window of opportunity) - a staff member who meets all of the following provisions can be employed in a qualified staff member position:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. possess a qualification prescribed in Schedule I to the 1988 Regulations or a comparable qualification recognised by the Secretary under regulation 30 of the 1988 Regulations; and 2. was employed as a qualified staff member at a children's service registered or exempted from registration under the <i>Health Act 1958</i> between 1 January 1997 and 1 June 1998; and 3. was employed as a qualified staff member on 25 May 2009. <p>Process - If a staff member holds a qualification listed in Schedule I to the <i>Children's Services Centres Regulations 1988</i>:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Check the list of approved qualifications at website at http://www.education.vic.gov.au/ecsmanagement/licensedchildservices/training/staff.htm to confirm if the Schedule I qualification is an approved qualification. 2. If the Schedule I qualification is not on the list the staff member must apply to Early Childhood Australia (Victorian Branch) for assessment on (03) 9427 8474. <p>A copy of the letter from ECA confirming eligibility must be kept on a staff member's record.</p>
--	---

Secretarial exemptions

The Secretary can grant an exemption from the child/staff ratios and child/qualified staff ratios. Applications will only be considered in exceptional circumstances where the service can demonstrate it has made every effort to recruit the required staff.

Exemptions from the child/staff ratios are available to rural and remote services, limited hours type 2 services, family day care services and outside school hours care services who are experiencing genuine difficulty in recruiting qualified staff.

These exemptions allow a staff member who is enrolled and attending an approved course to be counted in the child/qualified staff ratios. A current list of approved qualifications can be found on the Department website at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/ecsmanagement/licensedchildservices/training/staff.htm>.

How do I apply for an exemption?

When there is agreement that an exemption is necessary the service must forward a written request to their DEECD regional office. The region will forward to the licensee the documentation that must be completed and returned to the regional office before the exemption request can be considered.

The service will be advised of the outcome of the exemption request in writing. If an exemption is granted a notice will be published in the Government Gazette and the service will receive an updated licence that details the conditions of the exemption. The Regulations require these documents to be displayed conspicuously at the main entrance to the service (section 33).

Where can I find more information?

More information can be found on the DEECD website at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/ecsmanagement/licensedchildservices> or by contacting a CSA at your regional DEECD office. Regional offices are listed on the DEECD website.