



WOCS HAPPENING?

*"Achieving Access, Equity and Sustainability
for Children's Services in the Wheatbelt"*

Issue 3 - July 2007

WHAT'S WOCS?

Wheatbelt Organisation for Children's Services (WOCS) is a not-for-profit organisation interested in the long term sustainability of childcare in the rural sector. Through forging partnerships and networks with industry and government bodies WOCS common goal is to create a strong network throughout rural Western Australia to support the long term sustainability of childcare in the rural sector.

MISSION STATEMENT:

*To achieve access, equity
and sustainability for
children's services in the
Wheatbelt.*

Committee Report

Welcome to our latest edition of WOCS Happening ? Since our last edition there has been a flurry of activities happening for WOCS committee members, as well as some changes.

May I begin by introducing you to the office bearers, which were elected at our recent AGM.

Secretary: Deborah Clune
Treasurer: Nicole Thompson
Admin Assistant: Andrea Folkard
Spokesperson: Nicole Thompson

WOCS continues to be **'your voice'** on all matters 'childcare', and has been working tirelessly on various agendas to secure access and equity for rural childcare services in Wheatbelt communities. Among these agendas are:

- ◆ Appointment of Jackie Murray as WOCS' representative on Ministerial Child Care Advisory Committee (MCCAC)
- ◆ Appointment of Deborah Clune as WOCS' representative on Childcare Regulations Consultative Committee (CRCC)

◆ Appointment of support person for 9 hours per week to WOCS courtesy of Rural Unit for Children with Special Needs (RUCSN) (Andrea Folkard)

◆ Proposal for new small rural models being negotiated in meetings with DCD and FACSIA.

It is with pleasure that I have been given the chance to welcome one and all to our newsletter, and take this opportunity to invite you to catch up on our news, and provide WOCS with valuable feedback, so that we may continue to support our communities in all matters 'childcare'. I would encourage you all to be involved in providing feedback on the Child Care Regulations Consultative Committee's Discussion Paper (see article on page 2).

If you have any issues you would like WOCS to pursue, please contact us via email at the address below, or myself on 0417 741471.

Regards
Deborah Clune
Secretary
Email: wocs@bordnet.com.au

Toodyay Conference

*WOCS celebrated its official launch
as part of their inaugural Conference
held at the Toodyay Community Centre
on Friday 20th October 2006.*

Many of the seventy guests travelled long distances to attend the Conference, among those attending were Members of Parliament, representatives from DCD, FACSIA and RUCSN.

Following the opening address by WOCS Chairman Scott McKenzie, the Patron, Brendan Grylls MLA, Member for Merredin officially opened the Conference with the launch of WOCS as an incorporated body. Mr Grylls paid tribute to WOCS members congratulating them on their achievements. He described how their dedication to reach

positive outcomes by identifying and addressing the many issues regarding rural childcare, and then taking these issues to the relevant government departments, has earned them respect.

A variety of guest speakers addressed the Conference, including Stephanie Jackiewicz Telethon Institute of Research, Hon Kate Doust MLC, Kerry Adams Department Community Development (DCD), Shelley McQueen Wongan Hills, Jackie Murray Ministerial Child Care Advisory Committee (MCCAC), Evyn Webster "Hey Dad WA" Ngala and Ruth Young from the Wyening Mission Farm.

A major highlight of the Conference was the presentation by Kerrie Adams (DCD) regarding the proposal for 2 new small rural

models of Childcare. The success WOCS had was reiterated by the discussion on the new models of child care being developed for rural WA. WOCS has spent the last 12 months working with DCD and FACSIA to develop these 2 new models of child care.

A forum was held during the Conference titled "Expectations Placed On Volunteer Management Committees". Guests were given an overview of the many difficulties facing voluntary committee members.

Thanks must go to Brendan Grylls for his patronage and support, and also to the many sponsors throughout the Wheatbelt who made the conference possible. The major sponsor was the Office for Women, who funded WOCS through the Western Australian Grants for Women Program 2006.

Amendments to Child Care Regulations

Child Care Regulations Consultative Committee - Overview provided by Mike Heath

In March 2006 new regulations for child care came into effect under the *Children and Community Services Act 2004* as part of the stage one process. Amendments to the new regulations were made in March, August and December 2006 to correct some unintended consequences of the new regulations, to simplify licensing processes, and to provide greater flexibility in caring for small groups of children in centre-based care. With completion of these amendments a more detailed review of the regulations is commencing and is referred to as stage two.

Terms of reference

The Minister for Community Development established the Child Care Regulations Consultative Committee (CCRCC) in late 2006 to oversee stage two, with the following terms of reference:

- Advise the Minister for Community Development and the Department for Community Development on further development of regulations for child care under the *Children and Community Services Act 2004*
- Advise on, and contribute to, the process of consultation with the community and the child care sector on further development of regulations for child care under the *Children and Community Services Act 2004*
- Provide advice and support on any other matters pertaining to the further development of the regulations.

Information on the Child Care Regulations Consultative Committee (CCRCC) is available on the departments web site at:-

www.community.wa.gov.au under 'Child Care' > Child Care Regulations Consultative Committee'.

Ms Deborah Clune is a member of the Committee representing WOCS.

Role of the Committee

The role of the Committee includes assisting with a broader process of consultation with the child care sector and the community. A broad consultative plan is being developed.

Priority issues for the committee

Some priority areas have already been identified and will be raised in a Discussion Paper to be released in mid July 2007:

- Staffing
- Qualifications
- Staff : Child ratios
- Group sizes
- In-service training
- Staff working conditions (eg maximum shift duration without a break)
- Supervisory Officer
- Programming
- Buildings and environment
- Restraint

The Child Care Regulations Consultative Committee will release a **Discussion Paper** in mid July 2007. This paper will not contain recommendations but is a paper to canvas a range of issues.

A three month consultation period will then be available where the committee is interested to receive feedback for the committee's consideration in preparing recommendations to the Minister.

Copies of the Discussion Paper will be posted to all licensed child care services. If you are not a licensed child care service and would like a copy posted to you, please contact Emma McWaters (details below). The Committee looks forward to receiving feedback on the Discussion Paper during the public consultation period July – October 2007.

Contact the committee

A list of Committee members is available for download or the following Department for Community Development staff:

- Andrew Lee, Principal Policy Officer – Children's Services
Andrew.Lee@dcd.wa.gov.au
- Doreen Blyth, Senior Project Officer,
Doreen.Blyth@dcd.wa.gov.au
- Mike Heath, Senior Project Officer
Mike.Heath@dcd.wa.gov.au
- Emma McWaters, Project Assistant
Emma.McWaters@dcd.wa.gov.au
Telephone 08 9222 2555 (Metro)
1800 622 258 (Freecall STD)

Please note that your rural representative is Deborah Clune and you are urged to contact Deborah and raise any issues you may have regarding the impact of regulations on your service. All issues are regarded important, no matter how small you may feel they are, your input is invaluable to WOCS being able to bring the plight of rural childcare to the relevant departments.

Contact details for Deborah:

Email: frenchee@westnet.com.au
Mobile: 0417741471

Update on the Ministerial Child Care Advisory Committee (by Jackie Murray)

The committee has this year developed their own website where news on the committee can be accessed as well as summaries of their meetings. The website address is: www.mccacwa.com

The committee is currently developing its new priorities for 2007. The priorities which were the focus for the committee in 2006 were:

1. Rural, remote and indigenous child care
2. State strategy for Child Care
3. Child Care Regulations and Consultation

Some of these priorities are now being addressed by government.

The committee has recently met with Minister Sue Ellery and discussed various issues they hope to address this year. Minister Ellery will also regularly attend committee meetings and other meetings with the committee as necessary. If you have issues that you would like to bring to the attention of the committee, please contact WOCS.

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If you are not currently a member of WOCS and would like to apply to join, please contact Nicole Thompson at nthompson@bordnet.com.au

to request a membership application form. Renewal forms have been sent to all current members.

WOCS is a not-for-profit organisation which depends upon your support.