

## **Lotterywest Funding – WOCS Support / WOCS Project Officer**

### **Final Report**

**Date:** 30<sup>th</sup> October 2009  
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#### **Introduction**

Funding for the WOCS Support project was approved in 2007 with Nola Poland appointed as the WOCS Project Officer and commencing employment on the 15<sup>th</sup> October 2007.

The aim of the project was to develop:

- A resource for volunteer committee members to assist in supporting them in managing a high quality childcare service.
- Facilitate and plan 2 forums during the 2 year project period to continue to develop effective networking between communities, local shires and other related agencies.
- Research, develop, trial and then evaluate a proposed method of support for volunteer committees to ensure that quality care is provided on an ongoing basis to the children of the Wheatbelt. This will also help in retaining volunteers and in ensuring new volunteers are prepared to take on the onerous roles expected of them.
- Facilitate interagency and departmental co-operation and community involvement in acknowledging the difference between rural and metro children's services and working to provide supports for these rural services

The project was undertaken in stages, however the stages outlined in the application were adapted to accommodate and suit the needs of the community child care services.

#### **First Stage**

Liaison and consultation was undertaken with Wheatbelt Child Care Services Volunteer Management Committees to establish information required by new volunteers and the individual needs of services.

Liaison continued throughout the project. This resulted in further issues and needs being identified. In addition support provided to services in response to queries / inquiries also identified issues and needs.

#### **Stages Two to Three**

The project involved researching and commencing trials of up to four methods of support for volunteers currently operating child care services. Information gained from this research was reported in the paper “Existing Supports for Wheatbelt Child Care Centre Volunteer Management Committees”.

In addition data collated regarding issues and needs was utilised to draft a resource manual for services.

A forum was held in Trayning in April 2008 to provide communities and services with information regarding models of child care, funding options, support services and ‘how to start a child care centre’.

A second forum was held in Wickiepin in October 2008. The primary goal of this forum was to ensure services were provided information and contacts. In addition both forums contributed to bridging the distance between the government departments / regulatory bodies and the services in the wheatbelt

Information was continuously being provided during the project and the project outcomes were outlined at both the Childcare Accessibility & Support Forum -Trayning April 2008 and the WOCS Child Care Forum – October 2008.

#### **Stage Four**

The project outline indicated the most effective method of support would be trialled over a larger number of services. However a range of supports were identified. Due to the information contained and the types of supports these were trialled across all child care services.

#### Trials of support methods

##### WOCS Website

As this is available as a public website it is available for access by all child care services. Additionally the website was updated as a form of dissemination of information to all child care services.

##### Contact List

To enable measurement of the usefulness of this tool it was essential all child care services were included on the contact list, accordingly the list was provided to all child care services and feedback from all was used to evaluate the value of this type of support.

##### Resource Manual

The draft Resource Manual has been trialled by five child care services and also reviewed by stakeholders. The final Resource Manual will be distributed to all child care services.

### Forums

To evaluate the usefulness of this form of support it was necessary to include all child care services and service types. This allowed issues of distance, day / time and content to be evaluated.

### Other Supports

Services in the Wheatbelt were also provided resources as a result of the WOCS Committee choosing to allocate the major portion of funding received through being a finalist in the Community Service Industry Awards (CSI Awards) in 2007. The Project Officer liaised with services, and proceeded to source and distribute a range of appropriate resources with the aim of increasing capacity or knowledge of volunteers and staff. The resources included, "Back Care in Childcare (training DVD), Louise Porter's "Young Children's Behaviour" (reference resource) and Guiding Children's Behaviour" (DVD), "Wow I'm on the Management Committee" overview for volunteers operating child care. The resources provided professional development for staff, reference materials and guidance for volunteers.

Where possible other supports identified and provided (for example, Volunteer Recruitment Strategies) have been included in the Resource Manual or provided via the WOCS website.

The supports and strategies implemented under the project have been evaluated and reported in the paper: "Evaluation of Supports and Strategies Implemented to Increase the Capacity of Wheatbelt Child care Service's Volunteer Management Committees".

### **Goals / Outcomes**

1. Strategies put in place to assist volunteer management committees confidently offer a high quality child care service
  - The Wheatbelt Child Care Services Contact List encouraged networking and support between Wheatbelt service staff and committee members.
  - The expansion of the WOCS Newsletter to incorporate stories and updates from services reduced feelings of isolation.
  - Forums provided information and contacts. In addition they contributed to bridging the distance between the government departments / regulatory bodies and the services in the wheatbelt.
  - Disbursement / provision of information, referrals and linking services increased knowledge, contacts and confidence of staff and committee members working in wheatbelt services.
  
2. People will be more confident and better prepared to take on the management role in their local community due to the practical resources and supports available to them.

- The resource manual will provide an overview of running a child care service in addition to including links to support services and funding bodies.
  - Resources such as grant writing guides, volunteer recruitment strategies and 'Wow I'm on the Management Committee (provided through funds received as a result of WOCS CSI Award) offered practical resources that enabled volunteers to access support or undertake roles now and in the future.
3. Existing services volunteer management committees will have a good working knowledge of committee management and child care service provision.
- Visits and liaison with volunteer management committee members increased the knowledge of management obligations and child care service provision.
  - The resource manual and other publications provided will increase the capacity of volunteers and staff now and in the future.
4. Establishment of an effective method of support for volunteers that is easy to establish and maintain within the community.
- The resource manual in combination with the contact list and WOCS Website provided an effective method of support for volunteers. These are already established and easy to maintain. This has been outlined in the paper: Evaluation of Supports and Strategies Implemented to Increase the Capacity of Wheatbelt Child care Service's Volunteer Management Committees.
5. Tangible resources in place to assist volunteers and enhance their knowledge to assist them in managing their service and all its complex components. These resources would include the "Resource Manual" which will be accessible to all services
- Resources such as grant writing guides, volunteer recruitment strategies and 'Wow I'm on the Management Committee' (provided through funds received as a result of WOCS CSI Award) offer practical resources and support that will contribute to the capacity of volunteers to manage child care services.
  - Other resources provided have been in the form of information disbursement and have been sourced from a range of organisations and individuals (eg Smart Start Newsletter, YIPSU Newsletter).
  - The resource manual is currently being distributed to services and will also be available from the WOCS' website ensuring it is accessible to services. The manual is in a loose leaf form in a ring binder enabling updating of portions and photocopying of sections.
6. Regional local government services will be better informed and better involved in the process of supports for child care services in their communities. Local Governments made more aware of the process involved in setting up and managing child care centres and hopefully will be forthcoming with support if requested

- Local government representatives attended the forum held in Trayning and were also present at a planning session in Darkan and the opening of three new child care services.
- Local Government support of child care services and knowledge of the process was demonstrated in five local governments providing letters of support for Child Australia / WOCS for an application for further funding to expand the WOCS project.

7. Networking processes between relevant agencies, communities and services will be enhanced and further entrenched resulting in better supports for communities and families thus further building the capacity and sustainability of these services and their communities

A strong network has been established including links being formed with:

- Department for Communities (DFC) – Children’s Services Officer
- Department for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) – Senior Regional Program Officer
- Wickepin Volunteer Resource centre
- Eastern Wheatbelt Early Years Network (EWEYN) - Project Coordinator
- Wheatbelt Area Consultative Committee (ACC) Inc
- Wheatbelt Development Commission (WDC)
- C Y O’Connor TAFE – Narrogin and Northam
- Department for Communities – Child Care Licensing and Standards Unit
- Department for Communities policy staff and Early Years Funding officer.
- National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC)
- Lotterywest
- Department of Consumer and Employment Protection (DOCEP)
- Hon Brendon Grylls, Minister for Regional Development
- Hon Mia Davies MLC

The project officer worked closely with the Professional Support Coordinator (PSCWA) and Inclusion Support Coordinators covering the Wheatbelt.

This network ensured services and communities received information relevant to child care and the early years from a range of sources.

8. Raising awareness of issues, establishment processes and volunteer management support needs – Government Departments, Local Government, stakeholders, communities and regions. A better understanding by all agencies and parties highlighting the differences between rural and metro needs for child care will have occurred thus resulting in further capacity building of these rural communities

Awareness of the issues facing child care services in the Wheatbelt and the support needs of volunteer management committees has taken place through several strategies.

## Forums

Trayning April 2008: Three local government representatives attended the child care forum held in Trayning to address child care needs of North Eastern Wheatbelt communities. In addition, representatives from Brendan Grylls' (Leader for the National Party) office, Disability Services Commission and the Wheatbelt Area Consultative Committee Board also attended.

Wickepin October 2008: Representatives from DEEWR, DFC, NCAC, PSCWA, Lotterywest, DOCEP, Child Care Licensing & Standards Unit, YMCA, Childcare Advisory Committee, C Y O'Connor TAFE, Wheatbelt Area Consultative Committee and others attended and presented at this forum.

## Liaison

The WOCS Project Officer raised issues facing child care services with the Wheatbelt Development Commission and also liaised with representatives from local governments. Liaison and sharing of information with the Wheatbelt ACC has been ongoing.

Regulations Review: The project officer was involved in the consultation regarding the report on the child care regulations review.

## Submissions:

The project officer collated and provided feedback representing the Wheatbelt child care services to the following:

- COAG draft Early Years Learning Framework as part of the proposed National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care
- Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee inquiry into the Provision of child care in addition to appearing as a witness before the Senate Inquiry Public Hearing.
- Department for Community's integrated Service Framework

Hon Brendon Grylls, Minister for Regional Development was kept informed about issues encountered by Wheatbelt services and the activities of the Project Officer and WOCS.

Links were formed with Hon Mia Davies' office in regard to issues relating to part-time long day care services.

## WOCS Information

The WOCS information sheet was updated and Committee Reports for 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 tabled at the WOCS AGM. These documents were distributed to local government authorities and stakeholders. A brochure outlining WOCS Profile and Achievements was printed and a banner produced for use at forums and workshops. These initiatives have contributed to raising the profile of WOCS and child care in the Wheatbelt.

### WOCS Website

The release of the WOCS website raised awareness of the role of WOCS and the issues facing child care services. The website provides easier access to information and a more public profile for Wheatbelt child care services.

### Staff Recruitment and Retention Rates

Information regarding staff recruitment and retention rates in Wheatbelt child care services was collated [based on secondary data collected through liaison with services] and provided to Tresna Gale, Executive Officer, Department for Communities, Ministerial Child Care Advisory Committee.

### Family and Children's Services

The WOCS Project Officer met with and accompanied Mark Glasson, Acting Executive Director for Family and Children's Services, on a visit to small rural child care centres aimed at raising the department's awareness of the barriers and issues faced by volunteer management committees.

### Paper – Existing Supports in Child Care Services

A paper outlining the existing supports for Wheatbelt child care services is currently being drafted. The data being used to draft this paper is based on information gathered through liaison with the services. Upon completion the paper will be circulated to government departments, local government, stakeholders and services. This paper will raise awareness of the support needs of child care services and some potential options for support from within communities and government.

10. The creation of a research paper showing the trials of various methods of supports, evaluations of them and final results that can then be utilised to support the development of further supports for volunteers such that capacity building can take place within communities in the Wheatbelt

Trials of supports were documented and the paper "Evaluation of Supports and Strategies Implemented to Increase the Capacity of Wheatbelt Child care Service's Volunteer Management Committees" produced. The research paper and documentation will enable WOCS and Child Australia to work toward solutions to overcome issues that have emerged during the course of the project and to investigate options and develop / implement further supports where required.

11. Inclusion of supports for community management volunteers in not only government department policies but in local government and other key stakeholders in the Wheatbelt

The Wheatbelt Development Commission has funded a further project to develop planning tools for communities looking at establishing child care services and existing services. The

project also involves mapping existing services and identifying areas of need. This represents recognition of the need for communities to be able to plan for sustainable child care and that volunteers may not have the skills to undertake this process.

The Wheatbelt ACC already offers support to volunteer run organisations and is aware of issues through liaison and partnering with WOCS.

Local governments in the Wheatbelt are the primary source of support for existing child care services. Local governments often provide in kind or financial support and some child care services operate under the local government. Local government representatives have attend forum and planning meetings during the project. The project has raised the awareness of the issues encountered in operating a community child care service and the burden these place on volunteers.

Local Government support of child care services and knowledge of the process was demonstrated in five local governments providing letters of support for Child Australia / WOCS for an application for further funding to expand the WOCS project.

Liaison with the Child Care Licensing and Standards Unit has resulted in some recognition of the issues encountered by volunteer management committees.

The inclusion of WOCS in consultations regarding the Regulations Review and drafting appears to have resulted in the needs of volunteers being accommodated where possible (for example; simplifying / clarifying wording in regulations, sequence of the regulations, accommodating non purpose built buildings and the development of a supervising officer's guide). However this is not able to be confirmed until the final regulations are released.

12. The development of a model of support for volunteers such that it enables the sustainability of these vital services in rural WA.

As outlined in the paper "Evaluation of Supports and Strategies Implemented to Increase the Capacity of Wheatbelt Child Care Service's Volunteer Management Committees", a combination of several supports / strategies including the resource manual will contribute to the knowledge and capacity of volunteers and staff operating child care services which will contribute to the sustainability of services.

## **Conclusion**

Feedback from services and stakeholders regarding the WOCS Support Project and the Project Officer's role has been very positive. Services have indicated the strategies and supports implemented have increased their committee and organisations knowledge, capacity and networks.

A strong network has been established incorporating support organisations, government representatives, regulatory bodies and services. This network will ensure disbursement of information relevant to services and communities will continue.

Awareness of the issues facing child care services and the support needs of volunteer management committees has increased. Raising the profile of WOCS through the establishment of a website and development of a professional information flyer for use at forums etc has also raised awareness of these issues. In addition representation of the services via responding to inquiries, taking part in consultations and lodging submissions has also contributed. Service feedback indicated advocacy and representation to be of benefit to their service and stakeholders refer to WOCS as a “peak body” for Wheatbelt Child Care Services

The documenting of the project in the papers, “Existing Supports for Wheatbelt Child Care Centre Volunteer Management Committees” and “Evaluation of Supports and Strategies Implemented to Increase the Capacity of Wheatbelt Child care Service’s Volunteer Management Committees”, will assist Child Australia and WOCS to work toward addressing issues identified during this project. In addition these papers and documentation will provide current and future WOCS Committee Members with an increased and more specific knowledge of issues and add to the evidence base supporting consultations and liaisons in the future. The documentation will also enable WOCS and Child Australia to work towards implementing the recommendations contained in the evaluation paper or investigating alternatives to ensure the support are maintained or updated as required.

Based on liaison and feedback from services and stakeholders, increased awareness of information noted during visits / conversations and evaluations of supports developed, the project has successfully implemented models of support that have increased the knowledge, capacity and networks of the child care services, staff and management committees operating in the Wheatbelt.

The success of this project is evidenced in the letters received from local governments supporting the need for development of further community / service tools and the Wheatbelt Development Commission in funding the WOCS Project for a further twelve months. This will enable some of the additional needs that emerged during the course of the project to be addressed. This will also ensure the WOCS Project Officer can continue to support services and work with the WOCS Committee within the parameters and projected outcomes of the new project.

Overall the project has successfully achieved the outcomes outlined and in some areas exceeded expectations.