



**WOCS' Child Care Forum  
31<sup>st</sup> October 2008  
Wickepin Community Centre**

The opening address at the WOCS' Child Care Forum was presented by Nicole Thompson, Chairperson – Wheatbelt Organisation for Children's Services [WOCS]. Nicole provided a background of WOCS and outlined the organisation's progress and achievements to date.

Full presentation is available from the [WOCS' website: www.wocs.com.au](http://www.wocs.com.au)

**Nola Poland – WOCS' Project Officer**

Nola Poland presented the draft Resource Manual for Wheatbelt Child Care Services.

The "Wheatbelt Child Care Services Resource Manual – Draft" has been produced by the Wheatbelt Organisation for Children's Services [WOCS] in partnership with Child Australia and with funding and support from Lotterywest.

The aim of the Resource Manual is to equip volunteer management committees with an overview of running a child care service.

- Volunteers are often not experienced in undertaking the administrative requirements of a service or dealing with government departments and employer responsibilities
- Isolation is a factor identified by many services as an issue in running a centre.
- Providing guidelines and examples or samples of documents and forms will reassure services they are "doing it the correct way".
- The manual is produced as a tool to assist volunteers to acquire the basic skills to undertake the management of a service and consequently enable them to utilise these skills in other areas of their community.
- The provision of the manual will contribute to the task of managing a child care service being less daunting thereby resulting in more community members potentially being willing to accept roles on the management committees.
- In this manner the manual will contribute to ensuring the ongoing sustainability of child care services in the Wheatbelt and the sustainability of communities.

**Paper: Existing Supports for Wheatbelt Child Care Centre Volunteer Management Committees June 2008**

The Wheatbelt Organisation for Children's Services [WOCS], in partnership with the Child Australia (previously Resource Unit for Children with Special Needs [RUCSN]), has undertaken a project funded by Lotterywest. The broad objectives of the project include identifying and trialling potential supports for Volunteer Management Committees to increase capacity building in the community ensuring the sustainability of the child care service and contributing to the sustainability of the community.

The first stage of the project has been to liaise with services and determine the range of barriers and issues encountered in operating a child care service and identify existing supports for management committees and services. This has been undertaken in order to investigate the potential to implement successful models of support utilised by existing services to child care services in other Wheatbelt communities.

A paper, Existing Supports for Wheatbelt Child Care Centre Volunteer Management Committees June 2008, has produced outlining the results of the liaison with services.

This paper is available from the WOCS Project Officer: Phone 9883 6561 or email [wocsprojectofficer@westnet.com.au](mailto:wocsprojectofficer@westnet.com.au)

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### **Department for Communities (DFC)- Early Years Funding**

Leah Adams presented an overview of the Early Years Funding Program. Leah is the contact person for Early Years Funding.

The purpose of the Early Years activities money is to provide opportunities for communities to support the development of children in the early years through assistance from DFC Offices.

The Early Years Activities money will:

- support Early Years activities identified by local communities
- assist community events and activities through partnerships with other agencies
- support the establishment and development of local Early Years networks.

Early Years activities should benefit children aged 0-8 years (with a priority for children up to 4 years of age), their families, carers and communities.

Community groups, communities of interest and organisations who are interested in undertaking Early Years activities can apply for Early Years Funding. Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse groups are strongly encouraged to participate.

Money can be provided directly to an incorporated group undertaking the Early Years activity. Alternatively, invoices can be submitted for direct payment of the product or service (eg if the group is not incorporated).

The Early Years Activities money is available for initiatives relevant to the Early Years, including:

- activities, such as group activities
- guest speakers
- other initiatives identified by the community
- small, one-off initiatives.

Monies may be used for engaging community members, particularly those who are more socially isolated, increasing community awareness and understanding of the importance of the Early Years.

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### **Lotterywest**

Lee Grmas and Scott Williams outlined the background of, and funding available from, Lotterywest.

#### **Lotterywest desired outcomes for funding**

- Extending the capacity of not-for-profit organizations.
- Strengthening community service delivery.
- Enhancing community development initiatives.
- Valuing our State's heritage.
- Advancing participation in community life.

Lotterywest recommend an initial consultation to run the idea past the staff. Lotterywest staff will tell you if the idea is viable. It takes 3-4 months from receipt of an application to determine if a

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grant is successful. Lotterywest staff are also able to advise which grant might be most appropriate.

#### **Grant assessment considerations**

- The benefits to the community.
- The need is well established.
- Community support for your initiative.
- The organisation's financial management and capacity.
- It is a well considered and realistic budget.

Full PowerPoint presentation is available from the [WOCS Website](#).

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#### **Department of Employment and Consumer Protection (DOCEP) - Associations & Charities**

Greg Goad presented an overview of the role of DOCEP in regard to incorporated bodies. DOCEP administers the Associations Incorporation Act 1987 on behalf of the state government. This act enables not for profit community groups to become incorporated associations. Following incorporation the organisation is a legal entity in its own right, separate from the individual members. Greg outlined the responsibilities of incorporated not for profit organisations.

Full PowerPoint presentation available from the [WOCS' website](#)

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#### **Child Care Licensing and Standards Unit (Department for Communities)**

Michelle Jarrett and Jenny Clark provided an overview of child care licensing and information for services.

#### **Purpose of child care licensing**

The purpose of Child Care Licensing and Standards Unit is concerned with protecting the safety, health and wellbeing of children cared for in a child care service setting.

The *Child Care Regulations* set the minimum standards that all licensed child care services in Western Australia must follow for children of below school age and for children of school age.

#### **Function of child care licensing**

The function of child care licensing is to licence and monitor all child care services in Western Australia. We have a Director, Jon Pilkington, and 4 team leaders, one for Investigations and 3 covering north, east and south areas. At present there are 16 licensing officers and 4 assistance licensing officers. We also have an IT person and a senior lawyer.

#### **Licensing officers' role**

Licensing Officers role is to collect and process information with respect to licensing and monitoring.

In particular, Licensing Officers:

- Carry out the day to day work of licensing child care services
  - Monitor child care services for compliance with the Regulations
  - Investigate and manage alleged non-compliance of the Regulations
  - Deal with any concerns about child care service quality raised by parents/guardians or the public
  - Provide information to licensees about their current licences.
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The Regulations set the minimum standards that all licensed child care services in Western Australia must meet.

All licensed child care providers have a legal responsibility to know, understand and comply with the Regulations. This includes supervising officers, persons to act in place of and managerial officers.

The licensee has full responsibility for the licence and compliance with the regulations. When a body corporate, department or authority applies for a licence, they must nominate one individual to be directly responsible for the effective supervision of the child care service (SO). This person must be approved by the CEO. It is also recommended at least one other person be approved as the PAPO to step into the role of SO on occasions when the SO is not available to work at the service eg sickness, annual leave.

#### **The Regulations:**

- Are concerned with the protection of children's health, safety and wellbeing
- Are legally binding
- Reflect the community's expectations for child care.

#### **The Regulations set important standards in areas such as:**

- The suitability of the person who will be looking after the children
- Safety of the child care service environment
- Equipment and toys
- Health and safety
- Programmes and activities for the children
- Child guidance
- Administrative records
- Information for parents

#### **Non Compliance or what has been known as breaches.**

- Fencing below minimum height of 1200 mm
- Gates not self closing or locked
- Smoke detectors not working efficiently.
- Practices and policies not always available
- Exemption approvals need to be displayed.

#### **Notification**

- Closure/surrender of licence
- Change of managerial officers
- Change of SO or PAPO

#### **Renewal of licences**

Renewal reminder letters will be sent out shortly to services with licence expiry dates due in 15 to 19 weeks.

Once you have received your notice, you will need start completing the application, including SO, PAPO and managerial officer statements and gathering the prescribed documents such as police checks, which can be no older than 6 months and also working with children cards if they don't already have one.

Please allow plenty of time for processing.

### **What are exemptions?**

In special circumstances licensees may apply to be exempted from complying with certain minimum standards set out in the Regulations.

An exemption may only be granted for a specified period of time as long as the special circumstances and/or conditions apply. An exemption is considered to be the last available option to the child care service provider. The child care service provider must exhaust all reasonable alternatives to help maintain the minimum standards set in the Regulations, before applying for an exemption.

Regulation 18 of the *Child Care Services (Child Care) Regulations 2006* deals with the conditions of the exemption application, section 199 of the *Child Care Services Act 2007* provides qualitative guides for the person(s) responsible for approving or refusing an exemption application.

Importantly, the child care service provider must show the safety, health and wellbeing of the children in their care will be upheld even whilst the exemption is in place that is the child care service provider has taken all reasonable steps to help minimise the impact of the proposed exemption.

Additionally, the child care service provider must demonstrate that reasonable steps have been considered to help prevent the issue re-occurring or continuing in the future.

Notably, exemptions may apply to any regulation.

- May only be issued to a licensee
- May apply to any regulation that does not have a requirement on the CEO

### **What is a service exemption?**

An exemption that is approved with a workable staffing plan is known as a service exemption. A staffing plan relates to the total child care service, and not to an individual staff member.

### **What is a staff exemption?**

A staff exemption is an exemption that allows an unqualified staff member to be counted as a qualified staff member for specific period of time, as long as special circumstances exist and the conditions of the exemption are met.

It is policy that all exemptions must be made in writing at least two weeks prior to the requested exemption date.

### **Exemption – emergency situation**

Is an emergency situation, where an immediate response is required to an unforeseen and/or unexpected event that could not reasonably be prevented.

When assessing an exemption we consider

- Geographic location
- The norm for the industry at the time of the assessment
- The individual child care service's history
- The special circumstances surrounding the exemption
- The attempts made to avoid the exemption application, ie the exemption application must be the last option.

If you have any issues or queries, please do not hesitate to ring us or email. We are more than happy to be of assistance to you.

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### **Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR)**

Linda Acreman presented information on changes and new initiatives for current services, transitioning to long day care and In Venue Care.

#### **Child Care has moved to DEEWR**

The Child Care section moved from FaCSIA to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) as a result of changes made after the Federal Election last year.

We have now been relocated to the Quadrant building and contact details are:

Linda Acreman  
Child Care Programs  
Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations  
GPO Box 9880, PERTH WA 6848

13<sup>th</sup> Floor  
The Quadrant  
1 William Street  
PERTH WA 6000

Freecall Number: 1300 363 079 (ask for the person you are after in the WA office as this is a nation-wide number). My direct line number is 08 9464 4113 Facsimile: 08 9464 4015

Email: [Linda.Acreman@deewr.gov.au](mailto:Linda.Acreman@deewr.gov.au)

#### **Moving to Long Day Care:**

Services can be approved for Long Day Care Sustainability Assistance and Child Care Benefit (CCB) provided they meet the eligibility criteria as follows:

- Most of the children to be provided with care will be under school age and will attend the service on a regular basis;
- The service will operate on all normal working days in at least 48 weeks of the year;
- The service will be available to provide care for any particular child for at least 8 continuous hours on each normal working day;
- The service will provide child care places for children in accordance with the Priority of Access requirements
- The service will be licensed and will participate in the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System

Service have been approved to operate on less than 5 days of the week, but must open at least 8 hours a day and for at least 48 weeks of the year. If anyone is interested in more detail please call me.

Advantages include:

CCB reduces the cost of care for families and may enable parents to access more hours of care; Families using approved services are eligible for the Child Care Tax Rebate and JET (Jobs Education and Training) Fee Assistance.

**Notifiable Events:**

CCB Approved services are required to advise DEEWR of changes as specified in Chapter 5 of the Child Care Services Handbook.

**Services are required to give at least 30 days written notice before:**

- Entering into a contract for the sale of the child care service premises;
- Terminating the lease of the premises;
- Changing the address of the service; or
- Ceasing to operate the service.

Penalties may apply for failure to comply with these requirements

**Services are required to give written notice within 14 days of any change to the details contained in the service's application for approval:**

For Example: Changes to opening hours, number of places, Supervising Officer, bank account details or contact numbers.

A list is available with the handouts – please let me know if additional copies are needed.

**Compliance**

The Department has a role in monitoring approved services to ensure that they are complying with all applicable requirements relating to child care imposed by laws of the Australian Government and of the state or territory in which the service is located. Compliance Officers may visit services from time to time and inspect records.

They also have an educative role and will provide services with educational materials and advice.

Hand outs of the fact sheets on a number of subjects may be of interest to CCB approved services are available.

**In-Venue Care:**

In-Venue Care is care provided by a family day carer in a community setting – that is, not in the carer's home.

This is only possible in situations where efforts to recruit family day carers have been unsuccessful and no other care is available.

In-Venue Care is provided through the auspices of a family day care scheme and if approved, is reviewed annually. Please contact me if you are interested in more details about In-Venue Care.

**New Government Initiatives**

The government announced a number of initiatives which will be implemented progressively:

- **mychild.gov.au**

A new online portal for information on early learning and care was launched on 22 October 2008. Part of the Australian Government's education revolution, mychild.gov.au provides access to a range of information and other important links that families may need in order to be informed about child care and the options and assistance that may be available to them.

As part of its 2020 vision for early childhood education and child care the Australian Government has committed \$2.4 billion over five years to achieving positive early childhood learning and child care outcomes for all Australian families.

Plans are in place with the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to provide parents and carers with access to integrated health, early learning and care services and other parent support services.

For further information please visit [www.mychild.gov.au](http://www.mychild.gov.au).

- **260 New Early Learning and Care Centres**

The Australian Government has committed to establishing up to 260 additional Early Learning and Care Centres across Australia by June 2014. Where possible, the additional centres will be located on school, TAFE, university or other community land. More information and a registration form can be found on the [Office of Early Childhood Education and Child Care website](#).

38 locations have been identified for the first round to be completed by 2010, with a further 222 to be rolled out by 2014 as part of the Council of Australian Government (COAG) National Partnerships arrangements.

Sites identified in WA for the first round were Mirrabooka, Darch, Karratha and Port Hedland. An autism centre will be sited in North Perth.

Expressions of interest can be registered on the website but it is likely that sites selected will be in the more populous areas.

- **Long Day Care Capital Funding**

Two rounds have been conducted for services eligible to apply for this funding.

In the first round, services needed to identify a matching contribution from State or Local Government. In the second round, which is closed, this requirement was broadened to take account of other types of contributions.

The outcome of the second round isn't known yet.

- **Child Care Tax Rebate**

This has been increased from 30% to 50% for eligible families.

### **National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC)**

Debra Finlay provided an overview of the functions of the NCAC and quality assurance.

#### **Areas where services fall down in the validation process**

- Hand washing practices
- Nappy changing practices
- Make sure your practice is the same as your policy or procedure

#### **Tips for Validation**

- Welcome the validator and show her around.
- Let the validator know they can approach you if they have question.
- Ask to have a look at the validation report half way through to see how you are going.
- Usually 1 hour to look at validation report and 1 hour to discuss with Validator.
- Discuss unsatisfactory indicators first. (the Validator will write a comment for these)
- You can argue your point/explain things during the discussion.
- Put your points of view across clearly when writing your comments
- Get validation evaluation form. Can attach 4 pages. The evaluation form is the last opportunity for you to argue your case.
- Moderators read your comments in the validation evaluation form and in the validation report and may agree with you, and not the validator, so do take this opportunity.
- You will not be "Not Accredited" if you get just one unsatisfactory principle in a quality area. It is common for this to occur.
- Source policies correctly. VERY IMPORTANT. Date the policy when it is formed.

#### **Resources**

- Fact sheets
- Newsletters – Putting Children First.

- Website: [www.ncac.gov.au](http://www.ncac.gov.au)
- Childcare advisers for the cost of a local call.(1300 136 554)

### **Spot checks**

Validator is there for 2 hours looking at practices. They only look at policies if something is not happening.

**Change in spot checks** - Validator will write comments on satisfactory as well as unsatisfactory principles. They may also ask about continuous improvement ie what strategies you use to improve a practice.

*NCAC may liaise with licensing department if practices are identified as possible licensing issues. NCAC may contact licensing if there is a written complaint with possible licensing concerns included. NCAC will ask for a "please explain" from the service and ask for documents relating to the incident eg policies.*

There will be a change to Quality Assurance but not sure what changes will be yet. Information should be available in July 2009.

Note: Spot checks are only conducted at accredited services.

### **Professional Support Program**

Sara Hinchley, Manager PSCWA and Michelle Lott, Manager Great Southern Inclusion Support Agency (GSISA) outlined the role of, and support services offered under, the professional support program.

#### **PSCWA**

- Identify gaps and trends in supports for childcare centres. Support childcare industry as a whole. Mainly service delivery and co-ordination of professional support network.
- National priorities.
- 1800 help line.
- Can e-mail requests.
- Made up of a team of 4 people.
- Have completed calendars for 2009 and they are updating the information booklet.
- Can request a training to be adapted to your service.

#### **GSISA**

- Inclusion support.
- Links with other agencies and services.
- Childcare network group that meets monthly. E-mail buddy list to share ideas/questions.

Services are able to become members of the Resource Centre based in Malaga.

Full information available from the [WOCS'](http://www.wocs.com.au) website

### **Children's Services Officer (CSO) – Department for Communities**

Deborah Clune introduced herself as the new CSO for the Wheatbelt and provided an overview of the CSO role.

A full copy of the Minutes of The WOCS Forum and PowerPoint presentations are available from the WOCS' Website: [www.wocs.com.au](http://www.wocs.com.au)