

# Submission

We are a Family Day Care Scheme located in Coorparoo, Brisbane and we currently support and monitor 52 Educators in the southern suburbs of Brisbane.

Our service is in a very high demand area and our Educators rarely have vacancies available. The waiting list for care can fluctuate from approximately 100 – 200 children depending on demand

Our Educators are in high demand for a number of reasons:

- We have a limited number of Educators in the location of 6 hospitals. This means we have a continuing waiting list of shift workers who seek overnight, weekend and rotating roster care for their children with our Educators
- We have developed strong relationships with hospital support staff and our Educators are often called upon to provide care for children whose parents are undergoing medical treatment or have had an unexpected event happen that has meant they are unable to care for the children. The very nature of this care has meant that Educators have been asked to collect and care for children on weekends and at night on very short notice.
- Our Educators service families who travel from outer suburbs into the city for work. With the 'urban sprawl' in full flight in Brisbane, more and more families are moving to the outer suburbs to find affordable housing. These families often require the flexibility that FDC provides as they may have varying start and finish times due to meetings, transport issues, etc.
- Families who move here from overseas often find themselves with no family support and culturally, Family Day Care is an excellent 'fit' with their beliefs regarding the importance of a 'family like' environment and attachment care giving
- Brisbane has become a major settlement area for refugees from other countries. As part of the settlement process, the refugees are offered English classes to assist with their transition to their new life. Our service has been instrumental in working with these communities to provide childcare in a small environment so that parents and family members are able to fulfil their obligations. As many of these families do not have cars or drivers licences, our Educators are able to assist by collecting the children and returning them to their homes at suitable times arranged with the families. Obviously the affordability of FDC is paramount to these families who initially have limited incomes.
- We have developed strong relationships with the Department of Child Safety and our Educators are often called upon to care for children who are considered to be 'at risk of harm or neglect' in their home environment. Once again, these are situations that may mean that care is required at short notice and at odd hours. The officers from the Department of Child Safety greatly appreciate and value the service our Educators are able to provide as it means they can place the child/ren in a safe, stable and predictable environment where hygienic practices, good nutrition and quality interactions are role modelled consistently.
- Our Educators who provide before and after school care are always in high demand. Parents often need the flexibility in hours that FDC can provide and also the fact that the Educator can transport the children to school and collect them at the end of the day. In Brisbane, school children are forced to use public transport (buses, trains) if they do not have an adult to transport them to and from school.
- The FDC Educator often becomes an extension of the family unit – having the flexibility to take the children to sporting events, school events, medical appointments, etc. if the parent is not available.

- The smaller group size of FDC means that children with special needs or children who have behavioural issues or mobility disabilities can quite often be accommodated more readily

We have noticed a large percentage of families who are applying for our waiting list are looking to transfer from other care environments (LDC, OSHC, etc). It is obvious that as families become more informed about the development of children through information being available about the National Quality Framework, they are choosing FDC as their preferred childcare choice due to smaller numbers, flexibility, affordability, more intense relationships, improved supervision and the opportunity to experience a home like environment with real life meaningful experiences.

We have faced some significant obstacles in recruiting high quality Educators to our service for a number of reasons:

- Legislative requirements around glass and fencing have been financially difficult to manage.
- The loss of the 'Start Up Grant' has meant that we have lost good quality prospective Educators as they do not have the funds to meet the above requirements as well as their First Aid certifications and enrolment in the Certificate III in Children's Services
- Educators are resistant to provide care on weekends and overnight as they try to maintain a work/life balance

To sum up, our research tells us that Family Day Care plays a pivotal role in the future of our nation. Parents need affordable, flexible and supportive education and care for their children and children need safe, stimulating and predictable environments in which to thrive.

Also I have included a statement from a parent who recently left our service regarding the benefits of the care she received with her FDC Educator – these sentiments are repeated consistently from families who use family day care as their preferred childcare choice