

A impact that is concerning for Blue river family day care is the process our families have in receiving their child care benefits. Our families have troubles being able to access their information online due to needing certain levels of access authorization. The families spend on average 40min to 2 and half hours waiting on the Centrelink access line to ask for Customer reference numbers and their CCB percentages.

Below is the feedback we have received from families who are trying to return to the workforce:

- Centrelink telling our families that all they need is date of birth and CCMS i.d number to start. Where in fact we need the customer reference numbers to be able to link this to the families Child care benefit percentage; this is so our educators are able to give accurate fee pricing for their families.
- Families being informed they need level 3 access to be able to log in online to view their own CRN numbers and CCB percentages; but not being granted this access.
- Informing families they don't need a CRN number at all for childcare
- Informing families it will take 2-3weeks to activate the CCB or CCR. This then puts families into panic about not being able to return to their place of employment.
- Families frustrated with the wait time on the phone just to receive this information, then having the informant on the other end not having enough knowledge, or they get cut off.

Due to these delays, some families need to extend their starting time for care for their children as the activation of their child's CRN is a lengthy process. This then impacts our educators who are unable to fill their vacancies immediately, incorrect estimations of fees given to families and families having to hold off from re-entering the workforce, due to the governing delays. The families' workplace environment then puts pressure onto them to return as quickly as possible resulting in seeking 'low quality' care for their children. This does not benefit the children; as they do not have the access to high quality programs, equipment that can enhance and challenge their current developmental ability, the rich and resourceful environments available to the children, and the strong collaborative relationship building.

The impact on the educators is a financial liability as they lose the income from not being able to fill the vacancies. The educators also lose quality time with their children as they spend more time having to focus on administration duties to either recover or refund monies from late CCB/CCR percentages coming through.

This process is also challenging in regards to receiving information about any changes on families CCB%'s or eligibility for the CCR. Even though this is a live system, there is no real clear clarification that a change has been made. Our service does not receive information regularly and it isn't until the end of the processing period that this information is updated to us electronically. When this information does come through it is then time consuming to relay the updates back to our educators and again more time is taken away from the quality of care to the children as they assess the financial side of their families for correction in fees. It impacts our service as our administration person is then spending lengthy amounts of time deciphering the updates, which removes her from her daily tasks. This then places pressure onto the service as the staffing hours are reduced due to the loss of funding towards our service. A process for informing services of updated family information is needed so that we can ensure correct information is being passed onto our educators. This will reduce time wasting and allow for more productivity within the workplace and greater time spent with the children for our educators and families.

Impact on losing funding towards our service:

In late June, we were informed that there were changes being made within the Community Support Program (CSP) including a proposed new funding agreement.

Within the information provided, it was brought to our attention that the geographical areas would change for the program (**Blue River Family Day Care**) from classification **Outer Regional** to **Inner Regional**. This decision had been informed by the changes to the ARIA + classification. This decision will have a significant impact on the service delivery to the outer lying communities that the service currently supports.

Over the past 4 years Blue River FDC has been supporting the outlying communities that are experiencing high demand quality education and care programs, where the local community has not been able to meet the demands due to lack of availability. Areas included are Mirani, Moranbah, Nebo, Dysart also outlying area of Mackay.

The changes to CSP rate for Blue River FDC, it will impact these communities as it will no longer be affordable for Blue River FDC to support service provision and again will cause issues for the workforce and access to suitable quality education and care in these areas.

The service has worked closely with local councils, community services and mining company BMA in working on strategies to engage in supporting the education and care needs of the Bowen Basin. Through this process, the service has built strong networks and was successful in receiving grant money from BMA to purchase a vehicle to support regular travel to deliver a service in the areas of high need. BMA and Blue River Family Day Care's commitment represents the outcome of an extensive partnership approach to community development and the identification and pursuit of priority projects that will make a difference for the community of Moranbah and Dysart.

Blue River Family Day Care was approached by the local council in Mirani offering the use of a small office space so that a coordinator had the capacity to spend 38hours per fortnight in the local area to support families, children and educators. The local council had growing concerns regarding the lack of high quality education and care options for families within this community. With the PCYC closing down and the community kindy closing, the urgency to ensure quality outcomes for children were heightened. The space offered now is utilized for interviews, meetings, networking, training and resources storage. With the current classification of Outer Regional, the financial situation of the service allowed the regular contact and support to occur.

As you can see from the examples above, our approach has not been to rely solely on CSP funding, which even at the Outer Regional rate would not be able to support the delivery in rural and remote areas, we engaged with local communities and businesses to assist in the first instance a further reduction of funding makes it impossible to respond to these needs. See Table 1. Below for information on waiting lists in these communities.

Table 1: Waiting list for education and care in outlying areas of the Mackay

Region/Location	#	Distance	#	of	Comment
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	families on waitlist	from service	Educators	
Moranbah/Dysart/Eton	38	194km	3	Only 2 are working due to 1 educator on holidays until mid march 2014. Moranbah currently supporting 22 families
Marian	7	32.4	Nil	
Mirani	6	41.1	1	
St Lawrence *		164		
Armstrong beach/Grasstree beach/Sarina	8	42	nil	
Campwin beach	2	40.9	nil	

Like many early childhood education and care providers in the Mackay and outer regions, we experience regular turnover of staff and educator which requires additional funds to support the ongoing recruitment and induction. This is a typical experience of most local businesses operating in mining communities.

The need in Moranbah district is high due to this being a mining town as well as its local childcare services closing (PCYC). In addition to this the St Lawrence area is in high need due to the local childcare service closing down which is leaving families without care options. Blue River Family Day Care can extend its service delivery and support to this community as long as we maintain our current funding approval.

If we are unable to maintain our current funding agreement Blue River Family Day Care will be unable to sustain and cover the full costs of providing the current high standard of quality support, coaching and mentoring to the educators and families of Dysart, Mirani, Moranbah communities and potentially St Lawrence. This will impact greatly on the already strained communities and as a result, will no doubt force families to place their children into "informal care" arrangement which operate with no regulatory guidance or frameworks and potential place children at risk.

The federal government has highlighted a focus on Accessibility, Flexibility and Affordability for the education and care sector, the reduction of funding will minimize the ability to meet these three areas and impact families in communities that already struggle to access education and care to support the workforce.

We ask that you reconsider your recent decision to change our funding classification back to Outer Regional as of the 1st January 2014 so that positive outcomes for children and families can be maintained at all times and that Blue River Family Day Care can continue to maintain its current service delivery to the outer regional communities.

Thank you for your careful considerations