

Enhance Management and Leadership | *inspiring leadership*

Enhance Management and Leadership has been engaged by Family Day Care Association of QLD as the approved provider to provide management and leadership for 17 services throughout QLD. This consists of 15 Family Day Care Services in metropolitan, regional and remote communities; 2 Inclusion Support Agencies funded under the Inclusion Professional Support Program (IPSP); 1 In Home Care (IHC) & 1 Outside School Hours Care (OSHS).

Our program supports a large range of diverse services with over 100 Educators through to small community support networks with 4 educators. Regardless of the size of the services or its geographical locations our management and leadership, is personalised for each service type as each service is so unique.

Our program not only supports the day to day operations of each service, it goes beyond that. With a high focus on meeting the needs of its community we see firsthand the amazing work that is achieved through the Early Childhood Education and Care Services as well as its challenges. It is the challenges that drive us to maintain a stronger presence.

One of our core values is *shaping the way forward*. We look to the future, anticipating change. We recognize that the strength of our unity and common sense of purpose can positively influence the broader environment for children and families. Hence why we feel compelled to provide a response to the commission which also comes from a multiple service/site management perspective.

1. **The existing model of Family Day Care in Australia is able to assist Government to meet the priorities of flexible, affordable, accessible and quality service delivery by;**

- Care is offered 24/7 which is meeting the demands of the following; child at risk, working parents, studying parents, emergency care, and rostered parents non-standard hours – overnight, weekend, crisis care etc.
- Each Early Childhood services has an individual service profiles that captures their geographic area and community needs with considerations of **affordability, flexibility and viability**.
- Services of high quality also engage in good **business practices** that include informed and inclusive decision making processes which is reflective of internal and external community needs.
- Critical **reflective practices** are engaged to gauge the quality service delivery as well as systems and processes in place for stakeholder feedback
- **Cultural** aspects of families – the ability to access an educator that caters to individual cultures
- The **flexibility** that is available for shift workers and the reassurance of consistency and predictability for the child.
- The service not only supports the **community needs**, but it ensures that the money stays within its own community. We have seen many towns suffer due to large business leaving local community's with no community support plan which will ensure the community continues the thrive once left.
- There continues to be strong evidence that community based services are the core of the community which keeps the community together. The generation of **community hubs** are more common with Family Day Care the central point.

2. The importance of a strong quality and regulatory framework to ensure the wellbeing, education and care of children and families. That Government has a responsibility in ensuring that a system is available to support the needs of children, family and community.

- The new National Framework has had a positive influence in service delivery - Multiple services have experienced the **New Quality Assessment** and have been rated meeting or exceeding Quality outcomes. It is evident that Family Day Care is performing well in the assessment and rating process and statistics deliverable to date
- A strong quality and regulatory framework that links education to care of children is a positive step for our programs. It recognises the expectations and standard of education and care to early childhood settings to promote best outcomes for children and shows value of educator's quality service delivery and expertise.

3. That the investment in a quality system in the early years delivers economic benefits in the long term.

- Quality systems in the early childhood services should ensure accessibility of information to families and services.
- The system needs to be reliable and user friendly to support services and families access in a timely manner
- Departments of systems need to communicate to each other to prevent timely processing in accessing information, especially to families
- IT incentive programs to be subsidised or rebated to ensure quality systems in place and sustained with all non- profit education and care services and services on sustainability funding
- Systems that promote vacancies of each service need to collate true and accurate information that reflects actual vacancies - developed for each service type

4. When families are confident on the quality of the education and care being delivered, it supports a more effective and productive entry back into the workforce. Including parent's expectation that whilst child care is required for workforce participation, education and care are inextricably interwoven.

- The quality education and care program offered needs to reflect the need of the child and is documented for further planning and programming
- Flexibility in methods of programming and documenting is essential which supports the diversity of service delivery and need.
- Professional development opportunities regarding to education and care need to be accessible and affordable.

5. The investment in ECEC sector must represent the diverse nature of community needs, that funding models and reporting structures are able to support the ECEC sector in meeting these needs. For example- allowing families to choose the ECEC service type they wish for their child/ren to attend preschool/kindergarten.

- Preschool/kindergarten in FDC needs to be an option – further exploration of model needs to occur
- Rural services – consideration around technology that could be utilised in offering preschool/kindergarten program from a distance

6. Inclusion support approaches that build on initiatives already delivered in communities, non-stigmatization and accessibility, minimizing the paperwork associated with supporting inclusive practices, which creates barriers for children and families.

- Currently all ISA staff are responsible for the application and development of the service support plans. As a result of this, staff's capacity to engage and connect and build the capacity of others is limited. The change to the funding application process needs to be considered to ensure that the focus remains on the environment for all not just focused on the child. This approach will continue to build on inclusive practice for everyone involved.

In addition to the above some of the fundamental considerations we see as priority from the perspective of the diverse service delivery from Early Childhood Education and Care are as follows; but not limited to:

Connectedness: From very early on the relationship with the (FDC) Educator and Family are matched and a cohesive partnership is formed. Families personally select an educator who matches their values which results in a united partnership in the care and education of the child. This is evident in Family Day Care and is fundamental in its commitment in supporting outcomes for all children.

Proven workforce: Becoming an Educator is a career. Women and men. Many educators hold full qualifications and continue to study to support their own professional development and learning outcomes for children in their care. The evidence of this shift is easily identifiable with the success of many Family Day Care Services achieving Exceeding with the Assessment and Ratings process.

Funding: As we support services in many regional locations we are now challenged with the changes to the funding allocation. Services who support rural Educators have now been classified as inner regional which is grossly going to impact their current service delivery model and potential impact on outcomes for children. In addition to this the loss of RTAG (Travel assistance) which assisted coordination units who travel long distance to support, mentor Educators. Family Day Care will remain committed with its support in disadvantaged communities.

The Family Day Care sector is fundamentally strong and committed to work that we do, therefore even when challenged with a decrease in funding the service delivery is not only maintained but continued to build. This is driven by committed educators and coordination units who value the work that they do as it is their career.

Start-up grants: for new educators to cover costs associated prior to actually commencing care. This is evident in rural/regional locations with the limitations of supplies and resources. The cost associated with employing builders and delivery of equipment to these locations, and basic start up is taxing on any new educator.

The ability for services to strengthen networks that connects directly to the need of the community – increase visibility in community services that may require a range of flexibility in education and care – Health services, community rescue services, RTO's, disability sector etc.

In-home care – capped EFT: a waiver of an amount of EFT when there is a community crisis that impacts the need for child care – application process for approval with an agreed timeframe for further review. There is evidence of increased waiting lists for families requiring the services of In-Home-Care, however current capped EFT approvals are not providing the flexibility to meeting the ever changing needs of the very remote and rural locations.

We would like to thank the government for providing this opportunity for our service to provide feedback pertaining to ECEC services.