



Productivity Commission Enquiry into Childcare Recommendations

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Introduction

Recommendations based on this report are to be found on the final page of this document.

Wynnum Family Day Care is a relationship based business working to deliver exceptional early years education and care that promotes improved outcomes for children, families and the community. Our short and long term success depends on our ability to deliver these outcomes.

This service is aware of and invested in meeting the needs of the local community. The service remains open to investigating options for families in order to meet their needs without being constricted by current practices and resources. The family's knowledge of their children and what they believe to be the best situation for them is highly valued. Each family that walks through the door or phones in with a request for care is treated on an individual basis and time is taken to find out what their needs are; the service then uses innovative practices and programs to meet these needs. For example, assistance may be provided for couples with young children where mum is going back to work for the first time, single parents who need extended hours of care, parents escaping domestic violence who need extra assistance with housing and financial distress, newly arrived migrants who are looking to make connections in the community, and parents of any age who would like to enroll in a course of study. In these cases, childcare offered by Wynnum FDC is instrumental in increasing workforce participation opportunities.

Families find benefits beyond their direct child care needs when they engage with the coordination unit, for example by being made aware of community links that can be helpful for them. Because the coordination unit interviews each family in the office before the commencement of care, this enables the service to build a relationship and share information about the services and resources available in the local community. Examples of this include the local public health unit including speech pathology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and parenting courses, information about doctors' clinics and child health nurses, library services, food bank services, and more. The value of service that parents receive from WFDC is therefore high and also includes free parent training sessions several times per year with external professionals who are experts currently practicing in their field. By directing families to such services, Wynnum FDC is increasing opportunities for positive child development.

Educators work together with the coordination unit as an extended team. Professionalism is extended through the whole team, with qualified educators supported through continuous professional development in order to maintain current practices and up to date knowledge. This has a direct impact on positive child development for the children in care. When educators commence working with Wynnum FDC, the message is clear that the relationship is expected to be a long one that benefits both parties. Educators' businesses are able to be flexible to reflect the care that is required in the community, including families with diverse circumstances such as both parents working full time, single parents,

students, families with custody arrangements, families who have no car and require children to be picked up and dropped off, grandparents caring for young grandchildren, shift workers, and more.

Retention is exceptionally high, with the majority of educators leaving only to retire or when moving out of the area. Educators enjoy long term relationships with families, often caring for children from birth through to school age, and commonly caring for subsequent siblings. Educators share with families the joys and challenges of family life, from marriages and separations through to new additions and celebrations. Families find that educators offer a friendly ear as well as expertise and helpful information. Importantly, this contributes to child development by providing continuity of care for children who are able to build lifelong attachments with a significant adult outside of the family.

When children are getting ready to go to school, educators collaborate with the family day care service as well as with parents to help make the transition a smooth one, and programs such as the kindergarten program and Child Development Initiative assist with child development and school readiness. In cases where educators provide before and after school care, younger children can become familiar with the school environment when dropping off and picking up school age children and attending events at school. This is particularly important for children who are vulnerable and at risk, increasing their chances of success at school.

To ensure that services provided remain relevant to the changing needs and expectations of educators, families and children, Wynnum FDC commissions a bi-annual service review, conducted by an external party, which results in a report with recommendations that are used to set the strategic direction of the service. The purpose of this review is to develop new practices that go beyond the current model of family day care.

Placements Program

The placements coordinator works full time and is available in the office to take parent enquiries and placements at the time of the request as well as organising relief care when educators are unavailable, to ensure that families are able to maintain work commitments.

Partnerships with families are established from the first phone call and strengthened throughout the numerous phone calls that happen before the face-to-face interview, with the outcome of matching families with educators who best suit their needs. A relationship is established which is holistic and reaches beyond child care needs; the coordinator talks to families about a range of topics in order to build knowledge of their personal situation. Face to face interviews offer an in-depth explanation of how the service works and how we can support the family beyond their child care needs, for example, as mentioned above, offering training around various aspects of child development, advising of the community services available, linking in with community health services, and building parenting skills including successful strategies for minimising separation anxiety (for both parents and children) when leaving children in care for the first time.

This building of partnerships builds opportunities to identify the support needs of families and children; for example sometimes parents share their concerns about their child and sometimes the coordinator can see potential issues that the family may not be aware of. The coordinator, due to many years of experience, has extensive knowledge of the many issues that families face in the context of the local community.

The coordination unit is actively engaged in problem solving when issues arise between educators and parents for example a breakdown in the parent-educator relationship. The coordination unit offers support to assist the family to remain in care or find an alternative placement. A team approach is used to manage any issues with educators to build skills and improve future outcomes.

The placements coordinator liaises with other staff members and the wider community for family/child support; family issues and support needs are discussed with the educational leader and other staff members whose project may be relevant. Coordinators then work with the child and educator to reach positive outcomes. If required the team can also contact a community agency for support as mentioned above, and due to long term relationships with community services WFDC is successful in finding the support that is required.

Child Development Initiative

The Child Development Initiative (CDI) is Wynnum FDC's innovative program implemented in 2012 to provide support for individual children's development. The purpose of the CDI is to ensure that educators, parents, community services, health professionals and Wynnum FDC are working together to ensure quality outcomes for children. As professionals we have high expectations for each child and we are invested in ensuring every child has the opportunity to succeed. We share the responsibility with families to provide services and resources to improve outcomes for children's development. Waiting lists for public health services have proved too lengthy to provide best outcomes for children especially where there is an identified moderate speech and language delay. The CDI is funded by WFDC and is managed by a project leader for 31 hours per week and supported by a coordinator for 14 hours per week. There is no cost to families and educators to be involved in the CDI; this includes where children are assessed by Wynnum FDC's consultant therapists.

Early childhood professionals play a vital part in protecting children. Early identification and management of children at risk is vital in regards to social, emotional and physical development. Educators gather observations of children along with data provided by the family and both parties are encouraged to discuss their observations of children's development with the coordination unit team if they consider a child may need extra support in meeting developmental milestones.

The CDI team reviews the initial observation and determines whether additional support for the child is recommended. Each child observed has a file created for the recording of CDI related observations. In regards to speech and language concerns, these initial observations will determine whether the child should also be observed and assessed by a consultant paediatric speech pathologist. The CDI is the springboard for offering relevant additional services and support for the children, families and educators engaged with WFDC. The overwhelming success for children receiving support in the area of speech and language will be further complemented this year by the addition of an occupational therapist to support children to be independent in their play, self-care, preparedness for school, and social and behavioural skills.

Parent inclusion in the CDI is vital and commitment to fostering positive relationships between all stakeholders is at the forefront of interactions. Parents are phoned by coordinators at the following times; to introduce the CDI program, to highlight the benefits of the program, when being asked to sign permission forms for inclusion in the speech and language assessment process and when the assessment report is ready to be received by the parent. The opportunity for educators to develop their skills and knowledge to improve the learning experiences they offer to children and the chance for educators to then share their skills with families is a life-long learning opportunity.

Regular check-ins between CDI and ISS project workers are held to discuss observations of individual children in the CDI and monitor their progress. An action plan is developed to support both the educator and the child, including details such as contact with parents and referral information. If a diagnosis is received, the child will transition into the ISS program. An Individual Learning Plan will be devised including the aim/goal, short term objectives, strategies/activities, who will implement the strategy, foundation learning areas and indicators of achievement. Family, educator and child actions/outcomes will also be documented. Parents have the opportunity to participate in workshops and 1:1 appointments with the speech pathologist.

Educators receive support from the CDI project coordinators and specialists to ensure that recommendations are implemented with confidence. Ongoing communication between all stakeholders is vital for the continued building of skills for children, parents, educators and team members.

The CDI has already had a positive impact. Educators have responded by observing, documenting and sharing information with coordinators and parents to provide quality outcomes for children. So far over 50 children have benefitted from this program by receiving additional support from their educators and other professionals. Positive outcomes for children have been evidenced in many conversations with families and educators including parents making an informed decision about their child's school readiness, developmental milestones being achieved, support from appropriate services being attained and a general raising of the expectation that children will be supported to reach their full potential.

Wynnum Family Day Care through the Child Development Initiative will minimise the gap in missed opportunities for children to develop fully; minimise the cost impact of long-term therapy and promote early intervention programs as a head start for all children to successful engagement in future learning and development.

Cost Analysis of Child Development Initiative (CDI) Program			
STAFF ROLE	Based on 6 month period		
	Staff Time (based on \$33/hr avg)		
	Breakdown of Hours	Hours	Cost
PROJECT MANAGER	6 months @ 31.25 hrs/week	812.5	\$ 26,812.50
TOTALS:		812.5	\$ 26,812.50
AVERAGE MONTHLY COST:			\$ 2,234.38
COORDINATOR	Breakdown of Hours		
	Hours	Cost	
	Breakdown of Hours	Hours	Cost
COORDINATOR	6 months @ 20 hrs/week	520	\$ 17,160.00
TOTALS:		520	\$ 17,160.00
AVERAGE MONTHLY COST:			\$ 1,430.00
TOTALS:		1333	\$ 43,972.50
AVERAGE MONTHLY COST:			\$ 3,664.38

Inclusion Support Subsidy Program

Children who are diagnosed with a developmental delay/disability or who are under assessment for a developmental delay/disability are eligible for the Inclusion Support Subsidy program. Children enter the ISS program in different ways – some children already have a diagnosis before entering the service, and some children are identified through the Child Development Initiative. For example, currently there are 14 children receiving ISS support. Out of these 14 children, 50% were already in the service before they were recognised as having a developmental delay.

The ISS program provides support for children, families and educators. By providing this program the service is ensuring that parents of a child with a disability have the opportunity to participate in the workforce with the confidence that their child is being included in a childcare setting that meets their needs. Educators are supported on site and via phone and email and are supported to access extra professional development and resources related to the particular needs of the children in care.

The support required is identified in the Service Support Plan which is developed via collaboration with the educator, ISS project leader and Inclusion Support Facilitator, and is reviewed every 3 months and at the end of each approval period. The NISSP funding is received by educators; no funding is given to the coordination unit. The educator spends extra time in undertaking professional development and discussing the child's progress with the coordination unit and other professionals; however the educator is not required to manage the time consuming paperwork involved in the application, review and re-application as this is managed by the ISS project leader in the coordination unit (at a cost to the coordination unit, as no funding is supplied to the coordination unit for this work).

In cases where an educator is unable to attend professional development due to working hours, the ISS project leader may attend on behalf of the educator and then meet with the educator to share the information gained. Through this process the educator receives valuable professional development without interruption to working hours and therefore without interrupting employment commitments of the parents. This support for the educator also benefits the child as it ensures that the child is able to continue to access care with an educator with whom they have built an attachment in an environment that is conducive to the child's sense of belonging and developmental progress. The child receives individualised programming in collaboration with specialists and health professionals which has a positive impact on their development.

Children in the ISS program who reach school age often continue to attend vacation care and/or before and after school care with their educator, which allows them to maintain the attachment with their educator as well as facilitating a smooth transition to the school environment. Children with a development delay and or disability are vulnerable and at risk of exclusion and therefore continued access to their family daycare educator and the familiar setting of the family daycare environment are

instrumental to the child's wellbeing. Also the child is supported in a stable, small group environment where the other children in care are able to learn about the child's disability and develop an appreciation for diversity.

The benefits for the family include building a strong working partnership with one educator who cares for their child in addition to receiving support from the coordination unit in terms of linking in with other services that can assist them and their child. Families are supported by the project leader via phone contact upon the initial application, as well as at each review and re-application. Parents are able to contact the coordination unit at any time to discuss their child's needs or to seek support.

The coordination unit provides a crucial link between the educator and the NISSP. Without this service educators would be unable to access the funding and resources that the government provides to include children who by nature of their disability or developmental delay are vulnerable and at risk of negative outcomes that may arise from not receiving the support services they need.

Cost Analysis of ISS Program

BASED ON CURRENT REVIEW:

14 ISS Children - 4 are school age and 10 in the 1:4 Ratio

STAGE	Processes	COST and CONSIDERATION					
		Staff Time (based on \$35/hr avg)			Mileage	Phone	Paper & Printing
COORDINATOR		Breakdown of Hours	Hours	Cost	\$0.75/km	\$0.50 per call	Avg \$0.08/pg
Initial Application	Development of Service Support Plan Gathering information about the support needs of the child and the impact on the care environment Mileage: avg 28kms per child (2 x 7km round trips) Phone: 5 per child Paper & Printing: 12 pages per placement	5hrs / placement x 14 children	70	\$ 2,450.00	392	70	168
Reviews	Each Service Support Plan is required to be reviewed quarterly (3x per year, with 4th being a re-application) Mileage: avg 14kms per child per review Phone: 3 per child per review Paper & Printing: 4 pages per child per review	2hrs / placement x 14 children x 3 per year	84	\$ 2,940.00	588	126	168
Re-Application	Can be 6 monthly for children undergoing assessment or 12 monthly for children with a diagnosis Under-school aged children require one application per 6 or 12 month period School age children require 4 applications for a 6 month period or 8 application for a 12 month period (one application for each school term and each vacation care period) Mileage: avg 14kms per child per review Phone: 3 per child per review Paper & Printing: 4 pages per child per review	2hrs / placement Calculated at maximum for current: x2 pa x10 under-school age children x8 pa x4 school age children	104	\$ 3,640.00	728	156	208
Educator Support	The Service Support Plan outlines the educators' needs The coordinator's role: - to assist the educators in accessing resources & training as stated in the SSP, including toys, equipment & training - Provide support such as on-site, via phone and email Mileage: avg 14kms per child per month Phone: 3 per child per month	1hr / placement x 14 children	14	\$ 490.00	2352	504	
Family Support	Provided upon initial assessment, as well as upon each quarterly review and re-application Phone: 5 per child per annum	2hrs / placement x 14 children	28	\$ 980.00		70	
TOTALS:			300	\$ 10,500.00	\$ 3,045.00	\$ 463.00	\$ 43.52
AVERAGE MONTHLY COST:				\$ 1,170.96			
ADMINISTRATION							
Managing ISS Funding Approvals	Summarising and filing approval notices Updating Excel log as per each review and application	1hr / placement / quarter x 14 children	56	\$ 1,960.00			
Claiming ISS Funding	Recording in HubWorks Reconciling hours applicable Submitting weekly claims	1/2 hr / placement / week x 14 children	364	\$ 12,740.00			
Reconciling ISS Funding	Processing payments to educators Reconciling funds received	1 hr / placement / quarter x 14 children	56	\$ 1,960.00			
TOTALS:			476	\$ 17,830.96	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
AVERAGE MONTHLY COST:				\$ 1,485.91			
TOTALS:			776	\$ 28,330.96	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
AVERAGE MONTHLY COST:				\$ 2,360.91			

Kindergarten Program

In January 2014 educators caring for children of Kindergarten age are beginning to implement a Kindergarten Program. The service is aware that children are vulnerable and disadvantaged when making the transition to school if they have not had the opportunity to participate in a Kindergarten Program. By participating in a family daycare Kindergarten Program it is expected that children will enter Prep with more highly developed skills, thereby giving them and their families a better start to school life.

Through the implementation of a high quality Kindergarten Program which supports and promotes social, emotional, physical and cognitive wellbeing, children will have a smooth transition to school as they will have developed the skills needed to integrate into the classroom setting. Both children's and families' needs will be enhanced due to established bonds between educators, children and families. For example, many children have attended care with their educator since they were a baby and have a strong attachment, therefore the benefits for children and families of continued, uninterrupted care will include a smoother transition to school. As Kindergarten age children are supported in this small group learning environment, other children in care will also benefit as they learn with and alongside each other. Children who have unidentified developmental delays become vulnerable and at risk of a variety of negative outcomes including bullying, isolation, behavioural problems and an inability to participate successfully in the classroom. With the increased focus on each child's individual development and school readiness the Kindergarten program will allow for early identification and intervention. Many families cannot participate in traditional Kindergarten settings due to their working hours. Wynnum FDC therefore has the opportunity to contribute to workforce participation by placing children with educators who deliver a Kindergarten Program whilst maintaining flexibility in working hours.

Children in Australian schools are now learning from the new Australian Curriculum which has higher expectations of children's learning and is exposing children to content at a younger age. This makes it even more important for children to have participated in a Kindergarten Program before starting school. The implementation of the learning frameworks has caused some anxiety for educators, requiring them to undertake a significant amount of professional development in order to work successfully with the framework and improve outcomes for children's development. The Wynnum FDC Kindergarten Program has at its core a focus on individualised professional development. Educators will be supported through ongoing professional development opportunities, such as interactive workshops and face to face professional development sessions in the educator's setting discussing children's learning and development and scaffolding them to the next level of learning. Educators will work with the EYLF and the Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guidelines to ensure quality learning outcomes for children. Further and continued support will be readily available and educators and parents alike are able to contact the coordination unit at any time for support. This Kindergarten Program provides an alternative model of care which will meet the needs of children and families and provides a suitable option for families who choose to use family day care up until their child starts school.

Documentation and Planning Program

Research has told us that children learn best when they feel safe, their needs are being met, they have strong attachments and are engaged in relationships with the people within their environment. Research is also showing us that children learn best in a small group setting where they are able to form strong attachments with the people within their environment. It is through these relationships that educators can monitor, support and encourage children's learning and development as they grow.

Wynnum FDC educators, with support from the coordination unit, are able to continually assess children's development within a cycle of programming and planning in order to provide an individualised curriculum for children in care. Family day care allows children to develop strong attachments with educators which assists educators to develop a program that meets each individual child's needs. Educators can observe children at a deeper level and make considered decisions about how to support each child's learning, growth and development.

Educators are assisted by the Documentation and Planning Program project leader to meet requirements and achieve positive outcomes for children in a variety of ways including one on one sessions, phone and email contact, and outside of hours small group training sessions. This support provides greater opportunities for educators to obtain professional development and contribute to children's development. Families and educators are also supported by the service to work in partnership in order to provide consistent care and education for children. Educators are aware of the impact of children's home lives on their development and through this collaborative relationship educators are able to provide a program that encompasses each child's culture and background. Through regular professional development sessions with educators, coordinators are able to discuss children's progress, identify any issues and provide resources that will support children's learning. Educators maintain regular communication with parents in order to provide high quality care for children; parents are encouraged to take an active role in their children's lives through sharing their stories with educators and engaging in discussions about home life. Educators have the flexibility to change routines within the home environment to match the needs of the child and ensure a smooth transition into family day care. By providing a program for educators that focuses on documentation and planning Wynnum FDC supports the provision of a rich learning environment that focuses on children's development and that is conducive to children meeting developmental milestones. This in turn helps children that are in their most vulnerable state and are reliant on the adults around them to provide the conditions required to become healthy, confident and active citizens.

Play Session

Wynnum Family Day Care acknowledges that all children and families arrive at the service as individuals. Families enter our service with specific individual needs, challenges and differences. Wynnum Family Day Care is committed to meeting these needs and embraces the extended communities within which all children exist as a model of acceptance. This acceptance demonstrates appreciation for the richness that diversity brings to the learning environment for children and their families. This acceptance is vital for families with diverse circumstances and acts as an enabler for the parent or guardian to be able to function productively in the workplace, study or participate in training.

The play session program provides an opportunity for this acceptance and inclusion to be experienced and modelled. The play sessions provide an environment and opportunity for children to engage in a practice that is respectful of their family life and culture. Play sessions provide vital links between educators, children and their families by providing a venue where they can all share humour, happiness and satisfaction all whilst showing care and concern for others in a social group. Moments of solitude and respect are modelled in this environment and for the first time, in some instances, are experienced by the child in care. The child is then able to model this behaviour in their own family environment, enriching the relationships with their family members.

The play session environment is an arena where child development can be tracked and monitored with a vision to providing the child with the opportunity to achieve, succeed and gain vital learning support if required. This monitoring and support is possible as it takes place in a central venue for all stakeholders, where skill sets of individual professionals are utilised in a productive and cost effective manner.

The play session environment is set up to allow children to make choices and exhibit a sense of agency in their learning. Play session programming includes resources and experiences reflecting a wide range of abilities for example resources from Braille QLD, equipment including wheelchairs and walking devices such as crutches, learning Key Signs (Makaton) and incorporating these into story time and conversations. Educators from diverse cultures are invited to share their culture with other educators and children at play session, for example through presenting at mat time, reading stories in their home language, giving cooking demonstrations, and sharing celebrations. Celebrations that are shared such as Mothers' Day and Fathers' Day, Christmas and Easter are observed in a manner that is inclusive of the family cultures of the children and educators attending the play session, for example we investigate how to say "Merry Christmas" in different languages and we look at how diverse cultures celebrate differently.

Links are made with local communities i.e. Gundala Kindergarten, Darling Point Special School, aged care facilities, and the fire station for shared experiences. Children are encouraged at play session to feel a sense of belonging by taking ownership of the space.

Play sessions provide an opportunity for relationship building among a larger group of adults and children. The additional benefit of this opportunity is realised when a child transitions to an alternative educator when their regular educator is not available or perhaps when the parents work roster does not allow for the child to attend the regular care. Work and study rosters are much more complex and varied from the ideal 9am – 5pm scenario and access to varied child care hours needs to be flexible for families. The relationships built between children and varied educators at play sessions ensure a comfortable transition to alternative care for children and families alleviates stress and emotional trauma for the child, the family and the educator.

Ultimately play sessions can be a ‘hands on’ training session for new educators and coordination unit staff; an opportunity to work alongside more experienced colleagues and learn about different approaches to providing quality care for children and their families.

Quality care that strives for positive outcomes for children in all areas of development within a framework of sustainability and affordability that is both safe and flexible for children, families and educators is the possibility when all partnerships are valued and respected as they are at play session.

Play sessions are a vital tool for providing quality care for children and a venue for building sustainable relationships between educators and families.

Home Play Sessions

Wynnum Family Day Care strongly values play based learning as the process that enables children to become socially competent, responsible and creative adults. We know that play shapes the architecture of the brain. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child affirms ‘play as a fundamental right of all children’ (Article 31).

The Early Years Learning Framework defines play-based learning as: A context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social worlds, as they engage actively with people, objects and representations. This confirms that play is nationally and internationally valued for its contribution to young children’s lives and learning.

The Home Play Session program was designed to mentor educators in contributing to children’s play in order to maximise positive outcomes for children in care. The Home Play Session project leader promotes play based learning guided by the EYLF, supports educators to network with other educators, assists in setting up play sessions based on specific needs of children and educators, and provides a role model for educators in setting up and maintaining active learning environments. Specific needs include children with special needs, children with a particular interest, children of specific age groups, educators who run particular programs, and children who are getting ready to go to school.

Children benefit from this program through enhanced programming and the opportunity to build social skills in a larger group environment whilst still having a familiar educator present for security. Educators who network together are able to discuss and share ideas that lead to considered decision making about program and pedagogy; this is a form of professional development that builds educators’ capacity to deliver high quality programs. Educators working in an isolated situation benefit from the opportunity to spend time with other educators and children. Families feel secure knowing that their children spend time both in small group and larger group settings.

Another benefit of this program for families and children is that children become familiar with other educators and children, extending on and building new relationships. This is important for continuity of care; when educators are not working families often rely on relief care and they feel more comfortable using relief care with an educator who they or their children know. This contributes to workforce participation by families as it minimises interruptions to work when an educator is unavailable.

Supporting Educator Qualifications

Wynnum Family Day Care has supported educators studying for the past eight years. Following a 2009 report in which educators requested ongoing support for gaining qualifications; a coordinator was employed in January 2010 to fulfil this role.

The coordinator supports educators on site, as well as via phone and email contact, with any aspect of studying for qualifications, including sourcing funded places, assisting with the enrolment process, providing a venue for tutorials, liaising with the RTO, proofreading assignments, assisting with understanding the requirements of assessments, completing workplace supervisor reports, supporting time management skills and developing study schedules, and providing assistance to develop the required IT skills for studying.

Educators in our service value their qualifications and tend to continue with studies beyond the Certificate 111, for example obtaining a Diploma, Advanced Diploma, or Bachelor of Education. Support from the coordination unit is integral to these studies as it helps to streamline the enrolment process and clarify information.

The support offered by this program empowers educators to enter and stay in the workforce and offers career enhancement opportunities. An example of this is a single parent, looking for family day care so she could re-enter the workforce, on being advised about the support offered by the coordination unit, made the decision to start a family day care business and gain further qualifications while working. The flexibility of study and work arrangements along with support offered by the coordination unit for working hours, information gathering, enrolment procedures and study assistance have allowed this educator to study for a succession of qualifications including, currently, studying for a Bachelor degree.

Obtaining qualifications builds educator capacity. This increases support for children and families in a variety of ways including more advanced programs, as well as earlier identification of developmental delays and other issues that could increase children's vulnerability and put them at risk. Earlier identification leads to early intervention which can improve outcomes for children and families, for example earlier identification of speech delay leads to early speech pathology intervention, improving communication, self esteem, and literacy, among other positive outcomes for the child and family.

The importance of lifelong learning is stressed in the Early Years Learning Framework for its contribution to improved practices and better outcomes for children in care. Educators with Wynnum Family Day Care embrace lifelong learning because of the support offered by the coordination unit.

Parent Correspondence

To: Wynnum Family Daycare Administration

Thanks you for the opportunity to express feedback for your wonderful service.

My daughter J has been attending K's Family Daycare for almost 2 years, since she was about 6 months old.

Without the tremendous support, care and hard work from your service, it would not have been possible for me to return to work on a part time basis, which has been really necessary financially for our family.

The service has always been very flexible with drop off and pick up times, I have been so impressed with the flexibility that K, our family daycare educator, has shown. Things have run so smoothly, and there have literally never been any problems whatsoever with the service.

Not only has K been a Godsend in our lives, but on the odd occasions when my daughter has had to attend alternate care with other educators, I have been impressed with the enthusiasm they all demonstrate when it comes to early childhood education.

To put it simply, there is no way that our family could have survived the past couple of years without Wynnum Family Daycare.

Thank you again

M and J

I believe that FDC is the very best environment for children. They get a fantastic opportunity to socialize and play with other children of different ages. I, our Educator, provides invaluable support to our family, eg when our youngest was born, Z was able to stay for a sleep over that night.

Wynnum Family Day Care is a very professional, pro-active organization. They provide fantastic support and resources to the Educators and families eg play groups, evening talks, access to child specialists eg speech pathologist, online billing/accounts etc

I feel very privileged that my children's lives have been greatly enriched by their experiences at FDC.

C T

To whom it may concern

My family has been in the Wynnum Family Day Care system for 6yrs approx which has only ended in mid January 2014. Our youngest has now entered prep. In this time we were extremely lucky enough to have been with the one Day Care Mum a Mrs K. I cannot express enough how much she means to us and always will. She has helped more than I can say in the development of both of our children. The days were filled with fun, education and social skills awareness. The commitment of Mrs K to our children went well above & beyond her duties.

The support from both Mrs K & The Wynnum Family Day Care staff was always evident. This stood out so much when our little family went through a period of unrest. Both parties stood by us & offered & provided support & advice. All without judgement or any form of meddling.

In closing may I say that my children's lives are richer as are my wife's and mine because of our time with Wynnum Family Day Care and Mrs K

Sincerely
B K

I would like to offer some feedback about the services provided by Wynnum Family Day Care (WFDC). I never thought I would be so picky and difficult when I came to finding the right childcare. The reality is that my daughter spends more waking time in childcare than she does at home - so I researched my options extensively and was very picky with my interviews. WFDC offered far superior programs and the best service in our area.

My daughter A is nearly 4 and has been in care with S since she was 4 months old. Both my husband and I work full time, with my husband working away in the mines on a 2:1 roster. Having a reliable and flexible childcare arrangement is very important to the whole family. I purposely chose Family Day Care over centre based care as I wanted A to be in a family environment, something that would be similar to being with me if I wasn't working. I also liked the ratio of Educator to child - 1:4.

There have been times when I have had to travel for work while my husband is at work. It has been wonderful to be able to leave my daughter in an environment that she is so comfortable in. The flexibility and peace of mind for me, is tremendous. I love the relationship A has with S's kids also - they are like siblings who provide a positive role model to A.

We have been blessed to have S caring for A. S has developed a fantastic program for the kids, which caters for each child's age and development. She also has a fantastic rapport with all the kids and treats them lovingly and fairly, while letting each child develop their own personalities. With A turning 4 this year, we are pleased that S has developed a Kindergarten program, so we are able to keep our current childcare arrangements for this extra year.

I know there will be tears shed at the end of this year when we leave Ss. I also know A will be well prepared for school with the right level of aptitude, social, emotional development. WFDC services and support for Educators is the key to providing this superior level of care.

Regards
S H

Family daycare has been truly wonderful for our family. My son, who has now moved on to 'little school', benefited tremendously from the one on one attention provided by family daycare. My daughter has just started family daycare and she has taken to it straight away. In the intimate setting of family daycare my children have blossomed due to the comfort they've found by building an attachment with just one carer. Because they are comfortable and feel safe they are able to learn, develop and explore. My children care about the person looking after them and the carer really cares about my children.

In a long day care service a child may be looked after by no fewer than four people throughout the day. Whilst I am sure there are many devoted long daycare service workers, I have personally witnessed (I'm an early childhood teacher) carers more concerned about their next cigarette break than the educational outcomes and emotional well being of the children. Also in a long daycare setting I don't have as much discretion about who handles my child. Supply staff are not picked by parents or even introduced prior to resuming care. I understand the realities of long daycare and why all these things happen and this leads me to believing that family daycare is definitely right for my family.

I am sincerely thankful for family daycare. It has allowed me to return to work while leaving my children in loving, caring hands. My working is a necessity for my family, but even were it not, I would hope I could offer family daycare to my children. The resilience they develop being away from me, but still safe and loved just can't be underestimated. Thank you.

Kind regards
T S

I have had such a positive experience with Wynnum Family Day Care on so many levels.

My son commenced with his carer one day per week from the age of 14 months.

At that time he was a very shy boy, intimidated and anxious by large groups and people he didn't know. We commenced full time day care(5 days per week)

12 months ago, to enable me to return to work full time. Initially we were running a combination of 3 days family day care and 2 days long day care centre. I noticed such a difference in behavior in my little boy. He was very unhappy to be left at the long day care centre, he didn't eat on the days he was there and was upset when I dropped him off and upset when I picked him up. As a late walker he was put into the babies room and while he was late to walk, his mental development was high and the babies room didn't offer him a lot of stimulation on a daily basis. In contrast, he was very happy to go to his family day care home - happily waving me off and experiencing such a wonderful array of activities throughout his day that he was always happy (and more settled) when I picked him up. As a new parent returning to work and leaving my precious child behind, it was a difficult transition for me, however B has always kept me informed of T's progress throughout each day, with photos and updates - so much more details than the long day care centre generic newsletter.

When I had the opportunity to transition T to 5 days a week with her, I jumped at the chance! His physical development is now up to all the kids his age, and he has access to a lot of stimulation via activities, day trips, organized play groups and so many new experiences. His confidence and ability to adapt to large groups, new people and new experiences has improved enormously.

B and I have worked closely together to ensure that we are following the same programs at day care and at home in relation to discipline and manners, and I have been able to access additional services that I would otherwise been oblivious to (Eg Triple P parenting program).

I am very pleased with our family choice to continue with family day care and have recommended WFDC to many of my friends returning to work. The comfort of knowing your child is in a home environment with professional educators is priceless.

Kind regards

M R

Hi There

Our experiences to date have been great, Family Daycare provided us with an option that enable our children to have a stable, secure environment at a time when I personally were struggling with Post Natal depression and my husband with adjustment anxiety, having to leave our then 12 week old baby in care was adding to the anxiety for both of us, we also had been struggling to deal with the continued illness that our older daughter had been battling from for 8 months. Having the ability to utilise the services of Family Daycare and remove our elder daughter from a Daycare facility into a home environment with a single carer, who focused on her needs was such a relief, also knowing that our baby girl would be able to go to the same environment and be cared for by the same person in the same way and would still be interacting with her older sister gave us peace of mind. Our eldest daughters illness cleared completely within 2 weeks of being in Family Daycare and has had just common cold and viruses since. The other thing I have enjoyed about Family Daycare is that we form a relationship and friendship with our carer mum, that means we could be completely open and honest, we felt that we could ask questions, make

comments and have a laugh without feeling judged. It is a friendship that will remain for years to come. Our carer mum worked with the kids to learn social skills, interact with others and the community. As the main income earner in our family and in a high intensity, high stress job, that involved long hours at times, the ability to contact the carer and ask if she would look after the children a little later, due to a delay or have them on a day that was not normally their day, was truly beneficial in our families development, the flexibility gave us the ability to achieve some things that we wouldn't have normally been able to do due to no extended family in Australia.

Kind regards

A R

Hi,

regarding the Wynnum Family Day Care service I would like to say that my husband and I could not be happier. The opportunities our children have for learning and developing life skills are excellent. The activities the children are involved with meet all their growing needs such as their physical and sensory development, their cognitive development, and their social skills development in particular I find are fantastic. As parents we both feel our children are being well looked after, nurtured in a very safe, secure, warm and friendly environment and therefore we have our minds at ease when we are at work. I have found our educator to be flexible with times too, sometimes I have needed to drop off my toddler early due to a training course or an earlier work start than usual and our educator has always been accomodating. Each time I have visited the office or called on the phone I am always greeted by very friendly and welcoming staff, I would recommend WFDC to anybody with small children looking for childcare options.

Thank you for your continued excellent standard of care that is clearly provided to many children, as reflected in your well deserved recent excellence rating.

Regards

L and A

As my husband and I could only afford that I could take 12 months maternity leave, I needed to place our little boy in childcare so I could return to work. When C was two months old, I visited the dozen or so childcare centres in my area to be old that either a) they do not cater for children under 15 months or b) did not have any places available.

So after reading Steve Biddulph's "Raising Boys" and understanding the importance for stable, caring environments for boys and (let's be honest) not having any other alternative as C's grandparents were not available, I enrolled him in Family Day Care. All I can say is that it has been the best choice for C and his development. It is a smaller, caring environment in a family setting. The educator really knows C and can talk to me about his progress. C has delayed speech and language; the educator is able to dedicate time and effort in helping to improve this. I feel like we work as a team in helping C meet his milestones. C's educator has also modified some phsyical activities to help meet other milestones - things I cannot do early in the morning or in the evening. I love my boy very much but I am not a childcare professional so highly value her thoughts and efforts.

Last year, I worked as a National Supply Chain Manager for an international company. My husband also works full-time. Without the flexible working hours that our educator provides us, I would not have been able to perform this role in a male-dominated industry that does not normally cater for mothers in upper management.

The Family Co-ordination Office has also been of great help in putting me in touch with outside professionals such as speech therapists. Not many of my local friends or family have children so without this additional source of knowledge, I would be a bit lost.

Please do not change the current arrangement as it works so well.

B G

I returned back to work with a heavy heart. My mum, who had cared for my three older children prior to attending school, had recently died and financial circumstances prevented me from being able to care for my youngest, A, at home. I felt sick and full of worry and laid awake nights on end. Then I met D. My first sight of D was her backside in the air as she played on her hands and knees in the sandpit with these little children. Instantly, i felt at ease and, two years later, she has become the greatest gift in my life as a mother to A. I can go to work without worrying about her and knowing that she is cared for by someone as special and dedicated as D and I feel so blessed. I remember my mum telling me before she died that she would be of more use to be 'from there than here'. I thought she was delirious from the medication, but when I drop A off to D I often think of mum and wonder if she didn't have a hand in sending this wonderful lady into our lives.

M C

To whom it may concern

Due to ordinary financial pressures we are a two working parent family with two children. Our eldest is school aged and our youngest a toddler.

Our toddler has, within the last year, left childcare and commenced family day care. Our son suffers from a congenital respiratory condition which has resulted in him contracting various and serious viruses, including but not limited to viral meningitis. As a result, our baby boy has been hospitalised a number of times, including over the period of his first birthday during which he was lumbar punctured. It was at our toddler's specialists insistence that we remove him from childcare and placed him into family daycare.

Since he has been in family day care we has not been sick once, his specialists are extremely happy with his progress and in addition he has thrived in a loving, caring and supportive home environment with a smaller ratio of children to carer. His carer is an amazing educator and human being who has a commendable hands on involvement in his formal learning and in milestone training like toileting. We see our carer and her family as part of our own and hope to have a life long connection to her.

We also have a great more deal of flexibility with dropping off and picking up, which is critical as we are both professional workers.

In addition our school aged child can spend some of her vacation time with her brother.

Simply put without family daycare and its absolutely positive impact on our toddler's health and lifestyle one of us would have to have stopped working, due to his ongoing health concerns, and we would have lost our family home. Now our son enjoys and thrives in a family environment while we work. We cannot begin to thank the family day care system enough!

Sincerely

E H

Subject: Family day care feedback

I have had nothing but positive experiences with Wynnum Family Day Care.

After having my first child I found it overwhelming when I considered going back to work. My son was 12 months old and I wasn't comfortable with sending him to a day care centre as I felt he was too young. As well as this, many had huge waiting lists.

A friend recommended K's family day care. I went for a visit and immediately felt the warm and calm environment that K had created. A huge weight had been lifted of my shoulders as I knew now I could go to work and my son would get a very similar environment and model of care that I give him at home. The transition of me going back to work was suddenly made a lot easier for both of us.

Family day care has given O the opportunity to socialise with other children from a mixed age group, which has helped him learn from the older children and show consideration for the younger ones. K provides a stimulating and varied environment for him with a range of activities and regular visits to parks.

On a professional level I have worked with WFDC in my role as early years advisor for N A R C. They have been a great support in giving feedback on the resources we provide and helping to guide us on new needs for future resource development.

Congratulations on your excellent results!

Kind regards

H J

Wynnum Family Day Care

I have found the family day care model to be the best fit for my family, you can go to work knowing that your child is in a safe home environment and getting more care and attention than if they were in a big centre. Wynnum family day care have been particularly amazing at accommodating my family.

Last year I returned from living in China for a year. I contacted WFDC when I had to return to work unexpectedly and they couldn't have been more helpful. A big centre was not an option at short notice as the wait lists are quite long and I had previously used WFDC before and had really liked the service. Also the reason for our return from China was my son had been showing signs of Autism and we were undergoing diagnosis. When I rang WFDC I explained our situation I needed care for two of my children, 9 month old daughter H and 2.5 year old S who was currently being assessed for ASD, I also explained that if S did get the diagnosis he would be going on a waitlist for early intervention so I wasn't sure how long he would need a family day care placement. Marie showed nothing but concern and compassion for my situation and asked me to give her a couple of days to work out some options we talked about S and his needs and behaviours that might impact on a placement.

I really didn't think it would be possible to accommodate my request especially at short notice but Marie called me back after a day and had not one but two options for care. We could either put the children with separate carers close to my home or there was an educator K that could take both children together but was an extra five minutes' drive from home. I was pretty amazed that there any options let alone two and one where I could keep the kids together. When discussing the options Marie also presented to me that in light of S's developmental issues she recommended that I go with the second educator K as she was a registered teacher who had previously worked with special needs children and she also lived on an acreage perfect for my outdoors loving kids.

I met with K and was so impressed, she was kind and caring and put myself and my children right at ease. She had a lovely family of her own and I knew straight away that she was the carer for us. I cannot express how much of a relief it was to find an educator of her calibre for my children and the care and attention she showed both of them is exceptional. Every week she would go to the Noah's Ark Special Needs Toy Library and get new activities and toys to stimulate S, she would organise lots of sensory activities and games that would capture S's attention. Her whole family were incredibly thoughtful to both my children and really accepting of S's quiriness and would often try and engage him even when there was little reciprocation of attention. When S received his diagnosis of Autism WFDC and K organised for education services to come out and assess if there were any further things they could do for S while he was in their service. K also attended a therapy session for S with disability services to work on communication strategies for him.

S has now started at AEIOU an early intervention centre. WFDC rang me at the end of 2013 to touch base and find out my day care needs for 2014 and to ask how S was doing at AEIOU. I was asked if I wanted a placement closer to home for H however there is no way I would give up a place with K as H is so happy there and is very much in love with K and her family and I'm pretty sure it's mutual. However that is one of the things about WFDC that I love, they are very flexible and can adapt to changes in family's needs and give you options. I cannot recommend this service highly enough, I have only really discussed my current educator however I have also had amazing experiences with other carers, C who looked after my eldest daughter L rang L on her first day of prep to wish her luck and send her love. WFDC is staffed with such wonderful, caring and intelligent women and it makes it so much easier on families that have to work when you know they are in such good hands.

Regards B

“As a Child protection expert who provides training around Australia to the Early Education Sector I am consistently providing services advise and direction on how to provide not only a safe environment for children but also how to implement prevention and early intervention strategies around child protection. Over the past five years I have had the pleasure of working closely with Wynnum Family Day Care Scheme. I have been extremely impressed with the entire team lead by Cathy on their commitment on a continued learning path of understanding child protection and abuse prevention. They have implemented some fabulous programs and activities that provide not only the children great protective skills, but parents and the community awareness tips around child protection. Without hesitation, if I was looking for a scheme to enrol my child into that provides the highest quality safety and protection initiatives, I would choose Wynnum Family Day Care!

Michael Pecic, Churchill Fellow and Owner of In Safe Hands Educators In Safety Pty Ltd

Recommendations

Wynnum Family Day Care recommends the Australian Government:

1. Maintain the current legislative framework as it has resulted in better outcomes for children, a benchmark for quality, improved opportunities for children to reach developmental milestones and for early intervention where necessary.

On a recent visit to New Zealand in January 2014, it became evident that the model implemented there (PORSE) is similar to the family day care model in Australia prior to the current legislation.

The Australian Government has been forward thinking in adopting legislation with high expectations of services to provide the best outcomes for children and enables families to access flexible, high quality childcare options. Reducing or removing these high expectations would be detrimental to the children of Australia, their families and the early childhood sector generally.

2. Investigate existing family day care services within Australia offering innovative, flexible, specialised, individualised care. The current family day care model is the appropriate vehicle for equitable access and individualised matching of families and educators, to provide the best quality care and outcomes for children and families, as well as expertise and experience that can contribute to the sector.

The Australian Government must regard family day care as a vehicle to develop new programs harnessing the opportunity for flexibility, expertise and experience. Wynnum Family Day Care has demonstrated that an early intervention model can provide cost-effective (short term/high cost; long-term/low cost) intervention with the long term goal of children successfully entering the primary school setting.

3. Recognise the diverse and creative opportunities that could be undertaken via the family day care coordination units. Family day care coordination units are organisations centrally and purposefully located within communities that are readily accessible to families and community members. These units have the capacity to provide leadership and direction to empower women to engage in or re-enter the workforce or to retrain. An example of this could be evidenced by offering traineeships within family day care. This opportunity would play a significant role in enabling positive workforce participation for women.

4. Introduce a pilot scheme to encompass the 'nanny' childcare model for diverse and non-regular care needs of families, offering quality care and flexibility of hours within the constraints of the current legislation.

5. Support the diverse nature of participation in the workforce by harnessing the opportunities family day care can already provide for non-regular types of childcare. By redefining the 'standard' hours of care in relation to the Child Care Benefit funding model, better support would be offered for family's changing work patterns including the 24/7 work environment.

6. Reconsider the provision of the 'enrolment advance' paid per placement and redirect the funds involved in managing this program into exploring innovative projects as suggested in above-listed recommendations.