

WHEATBELT ORGANISATION FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES (WOCS)

*An Outline of Children's Services
Throughout the Wheatbelt*

Updated March 2006

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WHEATBELT



The Wheatbelt Region covers 155,256 square kilometers of the State and comprises of 44 local government authorities. The majority of the State's grain growing areas are found within this region.

"The wheatbelt region is a dominant agricultural region in both the state and nation. Broadacre cereal crops, wool and livestock are still the major commodities of the region. Economic links between primary industry and other sectors such as manufacturing which service agriculture remain strong." (Hon Kim Chance, Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries)

The Wheatbelt's Gross Regional Product was estimated to be \$2.8 billion in 2001/2002 by the Department of Local Government and Regional Development. This is about 45.5% of that States total production. There are 4,811 agricultural holdings in the Wheatbelt and this covers 11.4.million hectares. The manufacturing sector that supports the agriculture sector employs 4.8% of the regions workforce. As the population increases the building and construction industry will also prosper.

A strong retail and wholesale trade industry services the agricultural sector.

The tourism industry in the Wheatbelt has grown with 775200 visitors arriving in 2002.

The Wheatbelts population consists of 72,282 people (3.8% of the states population) and the Department for Planning and Infrastructure are projecting this to grow to 118000 by 2031.

30% of Wheatbelt residents are under six years of age, 17% are 6-10 years and 40% are 21 and over.

This information was gained from: "Living in the Regions" "The Wheatbelt Report" completed by Patterson Market Research for Department of Commerce and Trade, Regional Development Council, Ministry for Planning and Regional Development Commissions.

WOCS – Who Are We? - Wheatbelt Organisation for Children's Services

Achieving Access, Equity and Sustainability for Children's Services in the Wheatbelt

WOCS was established in July 2005 due to ongoing concerns raised by the different communities in the Wheatbelt regarding the managing of and obtaining child care services.

During 2004 and 2005 constituents brought these matters to the attention of their parliamentary representatives. This resulted in Brendan Grylls MLA, facilitating a forum on Children's Services in the Wheatbelt held at Parliament House on 9 June 2005. The Minister for Community Development, Sheila McHale, kindly attended. Issues and concerns faced by Wheatbelt communities regarding child care were discussed.

Communities involved cover the area from Southern Cross to Jurien to Hyden to Wagin to Williams to Wundowie. This covers 42 Shires and numerous small country towns. The consistent theme that arose from all communities involved in the forum was the fact that child care services in rural areas are :

- a service to their community not a business; and
- that there needed to be an acknowledgement that child care services in rural and remote areas of WA were very different from child care services in metropolitan WA.

Key areas of concern were in relation to funding, the need for flexibility in the models of child care, expectations placed on volunteer management committees and issues raised regarding the Child Care Regulation Review.

Wheatbelt communities are all committed to quality child care for their children.

Our goal as stated above is to:-

“Achieve access, equity and sustainability for children's services in the Wheatbelt” by looking to the future to ensure:

1. Recognition of specific requirements within the Wheatbelt
 - Comprehensive consultation regarding the Child Care Regulation Review
 - Tailoring Licensing regulations to eliminate disadvantages to Wheatbelt services
2. Flexibility of child care models to reflect individual community needs
 - Full Child Care rebate for all
 - Access to sustainability allowance or similar for all Wheatbelt services

Contact Information

Should you wish to contact a member of WOCS please email:

Georgina Mackintosh (Wongan Hills):- georginamac@wn.com.au

Summary of Issues

The purpose of this document is to bring together the backgrounds and experiences of Wheatbelt communities in establishing (or trying to establish) some form of child care to their areas. Each community and service is different but all have experienced predominately the same hurdles in maintaining such a valuable service in their respective towns.

The following points highlight the main concerns held by Wheatbelt communities who are operating or trying to set up child care facilities in their towns:-

✦ Regulations

- Buildings
 - lack of availability
 - costs required to comply with Regulations
 - no purpose built child care centers available in country
- Staffing
 - lack of qualified staff for permanent or relief work
- Recognition needed for specific country situations

✦ Funding

- Lack of appropriate models for country services
- Lack of collaboration between State & Federal Governments

✦ Volunteers

- Limited knowledge and limited training available
- A few people doing all of the work on all of the committees within the community – *overworked!*

It should be noted however that the enormous workloads placed on volunteers (as outlined in all community profiles) to establish, sustain and keep their services operating, is a task these people take on board and shoulder the responsibility for, with the typical “can do” mentality of country people who simply do what needs to be done to ensure they have access to high quality childcare.

Issues Faced by Country Children's Services

- Personal Experience of a Coordinator

Over the last twelve years I have worked in several child care services, located both in the city and the country. It is apparent that there is a major difference between the operational management of these services. While all services are bound by the Regulations, the location of the service has a major bearing upon the services ability to interpret, manage and sustain their observance of these regulations.

Personal Experience

Most children's services whether located in the city or the country have their main aim as to deliver high quality care to their clients, that is, the children and their families.

Overall the issues faced by city services are fairly well known. There is a higher volume of services and so they have a stronger voice.

My most recent experience has been as Coordinator of the Kulin Child Care Centre.

Some Issues Facing City Services

- High staff turn over (low wages, high burn out rate, parental leave)
- Costs (profit margins)
- Competition with other services

Some Issues Facing Country Services

- Impractical Regulations
- Inability to attract qualified staff to rural/remote areas
- Costs, fundraising (small pool with which to draw from)
- Service structure is often required to be multifunctional ie. Occasional, LDC, OSHC
- Volunteer shortage and high expectations from volunteers
- Lack of training opportunities for staff and volunteers
- Lack of support when required, CSO's are unable to keep up with demand
- Single service communities reliance upon service
- Shortage of suitable buildings within communities which comply with Regulation requirements.

These issues are merely scratching the surface.

Rural children's services are fully aware of the need to comply with the Regulations and to deliver a high quality service but are faced with major staffing and building requirement issues everyday. The Regulations are ambiguous and inflexible. It cannot be expected that a person who is not child care experienced or who is qualified in other areas (ie. Teaching, nursing) will be able to completely interpret the Regulations as is expected. Volunteers are the mainstay for the survival of country child care services but are not equipped to deal with these areas and are rarely well informed about where to seek help.

Given that many country services run with their only qualified worker under exemption, how are these services expected to comply with the Regulations, which are seemingly written for well funded city services. One might suggest that the answer is to shut down these services if they cannot correctly interpret and comply with the Regulations and cannot find valid assistance. However, these are the main respite and intervention services, which serve a major portion of their community. Without these services it is likely that unregulated, ill equipped and most likely, dangerous places for the care of young children would replace them. It is necessary for country families to have access to high quality child care just as they would if they lived within the metro area.

The alternative is to ensure the continuance of country children's services by offering flexibility within the Regulations to meet the needs of the country areas. It is also necessary to offer ongoing practical assistance in the interpretation and enactment of any Regulations which are put in place. It is important that the volunteers, who are the mainstay of these services, are offered practical support to fulfill their role appropriately.

In Conclusion...

It cannot be expected that city and country services will have the same needs and issues. It is important that the quality of care available to all children whether located in urban or rural areas is maintained to the highest possible standard. The Regulations are essential for ensuring this occurs but it is unreasonable to expect all services to be able to comply in the same way.

Jackie Murray

B Soc Sci (Children Studies) Dip Ed

TAFE WA CY O'CONNOR COLLEGE - PERSPECTIVE

My name is Deborah Clune. I am currently working in Children's Services as a lecturer at C.Y.O'Connor College of TAFE in Northam. Prior to my position at TAFE, I was employed as the Coordinator of the York Child Care Centre.

Northam is located 100 kilometres east of Perth, on the Great Eastern Highway. In my position as a lecturer in Children's Services, I deliver Certificate III in Children's Services, Certificate IV in Out of School Hours Care and the Diploma of Children's Services. These studies are delivered flexibly to students in a radius from Jurien Bay down to Armadale, and includes country towns such as Moora, Merredin, Kellerberrin and Goomalling to name a few.

The critical shortage of qualified caregivers in the Childcare industry is an issue, with many country centres applying for exemptions for unqualified workers to coordinate small country childcare centres. **(Country people have to utilise what employment is available to them, what qualified from the city is going to relocate to a small country town!)**

York is situated 100 kilometres east of Perth, (Brookton Highway). During my position as Coordinator of York Child Care Centre, I worked extensively with families in rural areas, and identified that the needs of country families differed greatly from our city counterparts. The mere fact that the city has more childcare centres established throughout the metro area in comparison to country childcare centres clearly identifies the need for the Childcare Regulations to be more flexible as regards rural and remote.

As a lecturer, I acknowledge the importance of 'bridging this gap' in the regulations. The impact on individuals, families and all concerned is being felt now, and as a lecturer I am in a position to see this situation from all aspects due to my involvement with students and Coordinators/Directors of Childcare Centres in the city and the rural areas.

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Resource Unit for Children with Special Needs (RUCSN)

Regional Issues for Children's Services:-

- Staff shortages and young inexperienced staff working under exemptions
- Staff retention and high turnover are exacerbated by the employment conditions and perceived status of child care workers
- Inclusion Support Team's main issue is time, distance and financial constraints in physically attending services - particularly in outlying areas
- SNSS, resources and support from Inclusion Support Teams are only available for Commonwealth funded services
- SNSS - unfortunately the funding does not cover the full wage component and some services cannot afford the gap
- Limited services in some towns can get "overloaded" with SNSS eligible children
- SNSS funding - hourly rate and limit of five hours per day
- Service viability in small town and closures/threats of closure
- Limited utilization of child care by ATSI/CALD priority groups
- More CALD families are relocating to rural towns, child care services will require ongoing advice and information to support cultural inclusion
- No access to bi-cultural workers
- Difficulty in accessing indigenous community support networks
- 7 State Funded Occasional Child Care Centres and 2 Mobile Services servicing 9 towns not able to access CCB funding, support and resources from Inclusion Support Team and SNSS funding.

Fiona Garland

Manager

Great Southern Inclusion Support Team

RUCSN (Resource Unit for Children with Special Needs)

BROOKTON COMMUNITY PROFILE

Brookton is a community situated on the edge of the Great Southern, 160km from Perth. The Brookton Shire has a population of 1180. The town is situated 33km from Beverley and 20km from Pingelly. The nearest town of size Narrogin (70km) also offers a childcare centre. Brookton is a rural community with predominantly agricultural based industry. The establishment of two export hay plants and a 40 bed aged residential facility in the last five years has substantially boosted the economic security of the community and has increased employment in the region. The increase in employment opportunities in the region has attracted families to the town. Many of those families indicate that the availability of a child care service is paramount in their decision to move to the town.

Future projections suggest that the town population will continue to grow: Great Southern Olive Farms has just purchased a large property and hope to produce 12,000 tones of olives per year. This will require a reasonable sized labour force to support it. It has been suggested that this may lead to the development of an olive crushing factory.

Despite the growth in the town the population size is still reasonably small from which to draw child care clients and therefore we are subject to yearly fluctuations due to child age cohort variation. For example, last year we suffered low enrolment numbers as a large group of 4 year olds moved onto Kindy.

MILLY MOLLY MANDY'S CHILDCARE PROFILE

Milly Molly Mandy's is a small childcare centre with a license for 19 places. The breakdown is 4 (0-2); 6 (2-3); 9 (3-6); Due to our size we enjoy a family atmosphere with all children integrated throughout stages of the day. Age specific activities are also facilitated to provide programming at every individual's point of need. Parents appreciate the intimacy of the centre, and comment on how much they value that siblings have the opportunity to integrate during the day. The staff numbers are small and therefore consistency of care is achieved. Funding has been successfully sort to provide specific one on one support for individuals with specific needs.

The centre is owned and operated by an incorporated body, the committee comprising of parents, who are encouraged to get involved in all aspects of running the centre from busy bees, licensing, financial management to parent involvement in accreditation. The incorporated body has taken out a significant loan to purchase the building the centre is housed in and therefore relies on the Sustainability Assistance provided by the Government to ensure the centre runs at a profit. Much of the maintenance of the building and site is performed by volunteers to save costs and in pervious years all the book keeping has been performed by volunteers as well.

Staffing is integral to the success of the centre and we have been fortunate to enjoy a highly professional and dynamic staff over the years. However, we constantly battle maintaining enough qualified staff to provide relief (both short and long term). Due to the nature of the profession we have a constant procession of young employees who train, get married and start their own families and therefore leave the centre for an extended period of time.

Child Care in Corrigin

- There is a definite need for more Day Care in Corrigin.
- This is both in terms of children in care for all day, just a few hours so Mum or Dad can have respite or in event of a funeral, Field Day or other function.
- We have a wonderful Family Day Care run by Nicole Squires. This is open 8:30am to 4:30pm five days a week.
- This is located behind the Child Health Clinic rather than in a family home so we are always being threatened with closure.
- This only caters for 4 children at a time. This will also be less next year when the new licensee will have her own child with her (reduced to 3 positions each day).
- We have debated the idea of trying to establish a Long Hours Day Care or Occasional Day Care in Corrigin.
- The major stumbling block to this seems to be a lack of a committee to steer this. We are all busy working mums who need the Day Care and don't have much time for other extra community volunteer committees. We already are committed to other projects such as the Toy Library, etc
- A lot of volunteer hours are required to firstly establish the facility then to continue its operation.
- The other problem is attracting a registered Child Care worker to Corrigin.
- We have a venue that would be suitable with some modification (needing extra funding). This is the old Kindergarten building that currently hosts Play Group once a week for 2 hours.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES PROFILE - DOWERIN

Community Profile:

Dowerin is a small town 156 kilometres from Perth with a population of approx 500. The main industry is broad acre agriculture. Dowerin is best known for the Dowerin Field Days. Dowerin has a District High School, Police and Medical services.

Childcare Services:

- No existing childcare services. Family Day Care was established several years ago but has not been operational for 4 years.
- Community feels that a Occasional Care service would be beneficial as there are many farmers wives with professional careers (teachers, nurses, 2 OT's) who would return to work, possibly in Northam, if childcare was available.
- Utilisation of Goomalling Child care for those working in Northam (75kms).
- One working mother from a farm at Ejanding, utilises the Goomalling Childcare Centre. This involves travelling to Goomalling (50kms) back to Dowerin (25kms) and then the return in the afternoon, to access this twice a week.

Playgroup – operates 2 sessions a week with 15 families and 27 children attending. They use the uniting church building at minimal rent. Have fundraised to purchase play equipment.

Problems:

No formal child care service but the demand is there. Dowerin has a growing population with many young families. Many young professional women would work if childcare was available. Suitability of building would be a concern and employment of qualified staff unlikely.



GOOMALLING GUMNUTS INCORPORATED

PROFILE

Goomalling is a small rural community located in the heart of the Avon Valley, 48kms inland from both Toodyay and Northam. It currently has a population of approximately 1100 residents with 600 living in the town itself and 500 primary producers.

Goomalling Gumnuts is an occasional childcare centre that opened its doors for business on 1 December 2004. It is a not-for-profit organisation that is run by a Management Committee, currently comprising of 7 members.

The Centre is licensed to provide childcare for 19 children aged 0-6. We employ 3 staff (one qualified and two unqualified) who all have extensive experience of working with children. We are currently open two days a week, Wednesdays and Fridays, from 8.30am to 5.30pm.

Our current fees are \$36 per day (9 hours), \$24 for a half day (4.5 hours) or \$6 per hour. Fees are reduced for more children from the same family attending the Centre at the same time. Fees are payable by parents on the day that the service is provided and places may be booked on a term by term basis.

The Shire of Goomalling kindly provide and have refurbished the Lesser Hall for our use and are generally very supportive towards this valuable community initiative.

CURRENT ISSUES FACING GUMNUTS

- Lack of qualified staff in area to fill in for qualified staff member during periods of sickness, absence, etc.
- Lack of training available locally for staff wishing to train – courses fully booked until next year.
- Assistance towards cost of childcare – parents have to pay Gumnuts the full cost of childcare and then submit claims for assistance to Family Assistance Office. The amount received by parents from the Family Assistance Office is *minimal*. Some parents wishing to use our Centre cannot afford to use it on this basis and as a result we have fewer children enrolled.
- Inadequate funding from Government and antiquated and unfair assessment methods to determine funding allocated to each Centre. Too confusing to understand!

- We have managed to raise several thousand dollars this year through fund raising initiatives. This has been necessary JUST TO KEEP OUR DOORS OPEN FOR BUSINESS. We are not yet 'breaking even' financially. Goomalling is a small town and we are asking for community support on a continual basis. There are also other local community groups who are also fundraising in the town so there is a limit to how much people are able or prepared to give.
- No flexibility with licensing with age groupings. We have several children currently requiring care in the 2-3 age group but are only licensed for 5 places. We are licensed for 10 children in the 3-6 age group but only 3 or 4 children in this age group attend on a regular basis. We could apply to Licensing for more places in the 2-3 age group if we had another qualified staff member. However, we are unable to afford another qualified member of staff and there are none available locally anyway.
- We need 15/16 children each day to 'break even' but like several new businesses we are still building our client base and have spare places available each day (particularly in the 3-6 age group). Currently, we don't receive enough fees income to pay the net wages. Our grant from the DCD is solely used to pay the PAYG and Superannuation each quarter. More financial assistance is needed for new and growing businesses that benefit rural communities.
- The current process of applying for exemptions from Licensing is too rigid and complex.

Karen McGill
Tel. (08) 96291343
Committee Member



27 McPherson Street, Hyden WA 6359
PO Box 112 Hyden WA 6359
Phone/Fax 9880 5135

Hyden Occasional Child Care

Hyden is in the Shire of Kondinin, a small but stable rural town situated in the central-south wheatbelt area 365 kilometres east of Perth. Hyden town has a population of 200 people. Farming families expand our community population. Our community is mostly involved in the broad acre agricultural industry of farming, but as more tourists are visiting 'Wave Rock', the hospitality industry is increasing. Farming families have long distances to travel to town, mostly on dirt roads. Some travel 160km each round trip. Our nearest towns who operate child care services are Kondinin (64 km west), Narembeen (91 km north), Kulin (90km south east) and Lake Grace (110 km south). Hyden Occasional Child Care is an isolated service. We have parents utilising this service from Woolacutty, Lake Varley, Mt Walker, Karlgarin, and Hyden. There are no other licensed and regulated child care services available to our communities.

HOCCA is operating as an Occasional Child Care Service, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday each week within the hours of 9am to 4pm for 46 weeks per year, but want to extend our hours of operation to 8.30am to 5pm each Tuesday, Thursday and Friday at the commencement of Term 2 2006. Many of the community's families regularly utilise this service, with 66 children, 6 years and under, being enrolled during 2005. The calculated average showed an average of 9 children per care session during that year. 2006 began quietly with children enrolments below 2005 figures, as it does each year. Children attendances are expected to increase during the year as previous records show. HOCCA has enrolled at present for 2006 - 31 children, made up of:-

- 0 to 2 years = 10 children
- 2 to 3 years = 8 children
- 3 to 6 years = 13 children

The average number of children attending during operation for 2006 in 3 weeks of operation are;

- Tuesdays - an average of 8
- Thursdays - an average of 10
- Fridays - an average of 7.5 children.

The average daily utilisation is 8.5 children per day.

HOCCA has observed as more parents are involved within the workplace, children are being cared for by the child caring service on a regular basis. Often the parents work only on days when the service is operating, as parents have no other means of children being cared for in a professional manner (and they do not have any relatives living nearby to rely on).

HOCCA has an exempted Co-ordinator, who is also the exempted qualified carer, an exempted E qualified worker, and an unqualified carer working regularly in its service. Some days of operation need only a qualified co-ordinator, (Regulation 23 (3), but most days 2 staff members are needed to supervise up to 9 children, [pending exemption application approval of Regulation 81(1)(a) (b)]. HOCCA has insurer's written approval of acceptance of service to operate whilst application of exemption is pending. When the number of children is more than 9, the additional unqualified staff member is employed, and another when over 14 children are in attendance.

HOCCA has an exemption for both the Qualified Co-ordinator, and 'E' caregiver, and now needs to apply for an exemption for a 'relief' Qualified Co-ordinator. Because it has previously proven too difficult to find personnel to relieve staff during a 'lunch break', staff eat whilst still on duty each day, so consider an exemption could not be utilized.

HOCCA's renovated building is within the building regulations.

HOCCA is operating within the Children and Community Services (Early Childhood Care) Regulations 2006 and will require an exemption to Regulation 23(3) to operate mixed age groups of children with exempted qualified staff members. Staffing is organised according to the number of children's attendance bookings, 12 hours prior to the day. The Co-ordinator has the difficulty of assessing the situation of accepting an additional child, if this means that an additional staff member needs to be in attendance. As the Hyden Occasional Child Care Service is a non profit, voluntary committee managed, operated service, we are financially aware of our commitments. The Co-ordinator must decide to accept the child, or decline the booking, with the possibility of the parent not using the service in the future. As we are a small community in population, we need every child to be able to use this service, but it is not always able to justify the additional wages costs.

HOCCA has investigated the possible increase of its fees again (an increase was made in 2004), and although we understand it is lower than some surrounding communities' child care services, parents prefer not to accept an increase, stating they will find other baby sitters within our community, although they are untrained and unqualified. The children will then not be cared for within Children's Services regulations or standards.

HOCCA is still in the process of equipping our small but vital child caring service since relocating into its own building in July 2003. The service has fund raising events during each year, which is used for maintenance and to purchase equipment. During 2005 our goal has been to provide a safe and appropriate outdoor playground, with equipment and an environment that will enhance each child's developmental stage. Young children love being outdoors, so a cycle path has been constructed (costing \$1700) which, the children enjoy immensely and will further create enriched outdoor experiences for all the children. The Management Committee is continuously planning and aims to provide further equipment for climbing, sliding and swinging, whilst consciously being aware of safety considerations and regulations.

The renovated building and its equipment is at an age where maintenance and repairs are being needed. In 2005, an air conditioner needed to be replaced, and another installed to provide a comfortable environment for the children during the summer and winter seasons. During the winter months, the roof began to leak and the inside walls showed signs of water damage. The gas stove was serviced and an electrician employed to provide a maintenance check. These costs incurred are considered a burden to our budget but believe it is imperative for the sake of our children to maintain and uphold a high standard of comfort and safety.

By meeting our commitments, using the designated government funding for staff wages, it is necessary for the community to fundraise for any future improvements to our service.

HOCCA's concerns are as with all wheatbelt services, that is; staffing, funding, regulation requirements, lack of consistent communication, and voluntary community office bearer workloads. An additional support person (CSO Officer) would enable our wheatbelt services to have increased access to advice, to enable the service to develop an understanding of the new regulations and improve all communication between the child caring services and DCD.

Regulation 206(2)(d) of the Children and Community Services Act 2004 is also a concern for when our service's license will need to be renewed. It is considered it will be difficult to find an accountant willing to sign an agreement to an "applicant is of sound financial reputation and stable financial background." Each year, the HOCCA Management Committee find it necessary to conduct fundraising ventures in order to maintain and improve its service. Each financial year, the records show this centre is operated as a non profitable service, but is a much needed and utilised service by our small community and surrounding districts' population.

S Holmes
Responsible Officer
Hyden Occasional Child Care

OCCASIONAL CHILD CARE - KELLERBERRIN

Kellerberrin is located 200km east of Perth on Great Eastern Highway. The population at the 2001 Census was 1165. The closest child care facilities are Merredin (58km) and Cunderdin (44km).

In 2002, a survey of families indicated a strong need for Occasional Child Care in Kellerberrin for parents to gain employment, study and/or have occasional time out from their young children for appointments and the like. Funding was granted but the building identified for child care became unavailable for use. Our funding was subsequently allocated to another country town but we remained on the list of towns with an identified child care need.

In March 2005, 30 families in Kellerberrin completed surveys and 93% indicated they would utilise an Occasional Child Care service. This would involve up to 32 children. We gained support from both the school and Shire to use the existing Kindergarten building in a time-share arrangement with a proposal for resource sharing. An Interim Committee was formed to research the process and requirements of setting up the service and preparing a formal submission to Council. There was a strong possibility that Kellerberrin would be granted some funding towards operational costs, given our relinquishment of funds in 2002.

Despite the existence of all factors necessary to support the establishment of an Occasional Child Care service in Kellerberrin, a decision was made by the Interim Committee to proceed no further with the proposal. As we researched the process, the following issues became apparent:

- Administration requirements – time and expertise required to understand and comply with Child Care regulations and being an employer.
- Availability of qualified staff – uncertainty as to whether we could attract suitably qualified staff to meet staff/child ratios.
- Difficulty for interested people to access courses to upgrade or achieve suitable qualifications - we believed that our centre would be able to apply for one qualification exemption only.
- Fund-raising concerns – unreasonable for the committee to generate funds to help meet wages and bills in addition to their work as a committee member.
- Concern that Occasional Child Care relies upon the hard work and goodwill of community members who are already supporting a range of other community groups.
- Experiences of operating centres in the Wheatbelt were not reassuring eg.
 - * occurrence of administrative errors by volunteers
 - * huge volunteer work load
 - * expressions of frustration in fulfilling regulations
 - * ongoing budgeting and fund-raising difficulties

In light of the above issues, no member of the Interim Committee was willing to continue the process of establishing an Occasional Child Care service in Kellerberrin. We do not believe this facility could be sustainable given the minimal funding allocation, heavy reliance on volunteer hours, responsibility placed on volunteers to financially manage the business, strict regulations relating to staff qualifications and difficulties in attracting staff to the town for part-time employment. Community members would reconsider their involvement in the establishment of a centre if some or all of the above issues were to be addressed to a large degree.

Tracey Bywaters



Kondinin Community Childcare Centre



PROFILE

Kondinin is a rural town with a population of 250 of whom approximately 1/3 are permanent Aboriginal residents. The town is located in the south eastern Wheatbelt region and is 140km from Narrogin and 298km from Perth.

BACKGROUND

The Kondinin Community Childcare Centre is located at 42 Rankin Street, Kondinin in a purpose built building. It re-opened its doors in March 2002 as a community managed childcare centre. A Lottery West Grant was approved early that year which enabled the centre to be fully equipped with new furniture and toys/play equipment.

The centre is currently licensed for 24 places and became an Accredited Centre in June 2005.

We have positions for a part-time coordinator and carer, one of whom is Aboriginal and has currently resumed work after being on maternity leave. We have other part time casual staff as relief and lunch break workers.

Centre opening times are:
8.00-5.00pm Wednesday, and
8.30 – 5.30pm Thursday & Friday.

Our license allows for:

4 children 0-2
10 children 2-3yrs
10 children 3-6 yrs.

The current utilization is 66% and is utilized more as an occasional care service with 1/4 of enrolled children being of Aboriginal background.

Our centre operates as a multi aged grouped service and places at the centre rarely exceed 8 per day.

ISSUES

- Finding qualified staff to fill positions. After extensive advertising over intervals of four years to fill positions as required, we have been unable to find qualified workers. This forces us to operate under exemptions, which take time to be processed and approved.

- Our management committee is comprised of nine positions all of which are voluntary, unpaid positions.
- Current licensee (responsible officer) will be handing over these duties to the coordinator and in our case, this will place extra workload and responsibility onto the coordinator.
- Small centres such as ours, with only one or two main carers, take on increased work loads, where as in larger centres this can be dispersed amongst a bigger staff pool. This can take its toll on staff stress levels and requests for leave.
- We do not have a large pool of relief workers. We rely on university students home on holidays and part time teachers to fill these positions. This again requires exemption applications.



kulin child care centre

Background Information

The Kulin Child Care Centre opened on 2 February 2005 running as a Long Day Care service, operating 3 days per week. The Centre is managed by the Kulin Childcare Management Committee who act as a delegated authority of the Kulin Shire Council. The Kulin community has been very fortunate to have the support of the local Council which enabled the bulk of the preparation work to be undertaken by an employee during office hours. Accommodation has also been made available for our Centre co-ordinator.

Kulin is located 280km South East of Perth, it is a small rural community who's residents are constantly proactive in working to maintain population levels and the associated services required by these people. The establishment of a child care centre in town has been overwhelmingly supported by both families and the general community.

Initial investigations into the establishment of a child care service began in October 2003 when it was realised the demand for child care was in excess of what the existing family day care service could provide.

We were fortunate to receive funding from Lotterywest, otherwise this service would not be operating in Kulin.

Centre Structure

The Centre runs from the "old kindy building" and is leased from the Department of Education and Training (5 year term). Renovations totalling over \$20,000 were spent on the building at the end of 2004 in preparation for operation and in line with licensing requirements.

The Kulin Child Care Centre employs a Coordinator and 3 Part Time Caregivers as well as having 2 available relief caregivers when required and also a cleaner. The Kulin Child Care Centre is a 19 place, multi-ageing service that offers before & after School care, full day, half day and short notice care to the community.

Although licensed as a 19 place centre, our average daily utilisation is between 5 – 10 children per day. Currently we have 44 children enrolled at our Centre and being a new service, find that this number is still growing.

Goals

- To offer a high quality childcare service to the Kulin community
- To meet the varying needs of parents who utilise the Centre
- To operate on a not-for-profit basis, with any excess funding being utilised by the Centre
- To promote our motto of *developing, caring and learning* through all facets of operation

Issues of Concern

- Financial implications of new regulations – as our service was established on grant funding in line with existing regulations we would not be able to finance required structural, staffing and administrative changes
- Our service relies heavily on the provision of after school hours care and the proposed changes to limit the number of kindergarten and/or primary children that could attend would be a significant loss to our business

- There are no other options for childcare in the community – and it is unlikely that there will be
- The required changes to our staffing would be difficult to determine under the new regulations
- There is a lack of qualified staff available for relief, and those available may be geographically prohibited from being used on a short notice basis
- It is a common fact that the attraction of qualified staff to country child care centres has long been a problem, particularly in situations like ours that do not offer full time employment
- Our management committee is made up of volunteers – the significant workload, and required knowledge to manage a child care centre is considerable, particularly in remote area's where there is a lack of professional assistance.

Comments

- Rural variations for Child Care Licensing are needed to ensure existing services can continue to operate
- Unique situation of country services needs to be considered as there are many differences in the operational aspects city counterparts experience
- Qualified Staff – it is our ideal to secure qualified staff and we have been fortunate enough to do so, however this has been difficult as we are not in the position to offer full time employment.
- Multi ageing works well in country areas – particularly it is the case that it is often siblings of children in long day care that attend before & after school care
- Need to acknowledge the time/ratio significance of after School care ie. we may only have 4 – 5 children for one hour per day, 2 days per week – does this usage warrant structural changes in line with the new regulations?

The Kulin Child Care Centre provides a high quality, well utilised, flexible service to members of the Kulin Community which has in turn allowed mothers to return to the workforce, offered respite to parents with no family close by and generally contributed to the improvement of lifestyle in Kulin and surrounds.

Nicole Thompson

Responsible Officer / Chairperson – Kulin Childcare Management Committee



Merredin & Districts Childcare and Playschool

Kitchener Rd, Merredin WA Ph: 90411934

Merredin is situated 270 kilometres east of Perth on the Great Eastern Highway. Merredin has a population of 3632 people and is a regional centre for many small neighbouring communities in the Central Wheatbelt. Merredin and Districts Childcare and Play School (MADCAPS) is a long daycare centre servicing this region. There is also a Family Daycare provider in Merredin.

MADCAPS is an incorporated, not for profit, community managed centre. It operates from 8.00am to 5.15 pm, Monday to Friday, 50 weeks of the year. It is closed for two weeks over Christmas and New Year. The building is purpose built for long daycare and is leased from the Department of Family and Community Services until 2010 when the ownership will revert to the Shire of Merredin which owns the land.

MADCAPS is an accredited childcare centre licensed for 28 children whose parents work, or use it for respite.

ISSUES FACING THE CENTRE

Staff

The number of children attending MADCAPS fluctuates from week to week, creating staffing challenges as the centre is required to meet daycare centre regulations, whilst remaining financially viable.

The employment pool is limited, therefore there is a constant requirement for staff to develop their qualifications, or for exemptions to be sought whilst staff attain adequate qualifications.

In order for staff to access ongoing training and development, they need to travel to Perth, requiring payment for accommodation and travel costs, which puts a strain on the (not for profit) budget, especially with rising fuel costs. MADCAPS values their staff and do not question their need for training and development. It means that extra effort needs to be put into voluntary fundraising effort in order to enable this to occur.

Volunteers

Being a not for profit centre, the staff and committee often provide voluntary service to keep the organization running. Attracting committee members is an ongoing challenge and the new regulations will increase this as the burden of responsibility falls more upon the committee and away from State and Federal Governments (eg credit checks being the responsibility of local committees rather than the government). There is a lack of training opportunities for voluntary committee members who are responsible for running the centre and ensuring its compliance with regulations.

The fantastic support from DCD's Community Service Officers is stretched and therefore limited as their workload is overwhelming due to the tyranny of distance in rural and remote areas and the amount of support required to keep voluntary committee members up to date and clear about the regulations.

Remaining viable requires a constant fundraising effort on the part of small volunteer committees and staff members.

What is the alternative? Unlicensed, unregulated, unqualified daycare for our children. This is not acceptable for any child and rural children should not be put at risk of this being their only choice because of ill-considered government regulations.

Sally Robson-Thomas
Committee Member

PROFILE OF THE SHIRE OF MOORA CHILDCARE CENTRE

Community Profile:

- Moora is situated 172km from Perth covering an area of 3,788sq km.
- The population of Moora & Districts is currently 2,780.
- Although at this point of time seasonal work does not have a great impact on Moora other than the shearing season, which attracts a small number of workers. Future plans for citrus orchards and a cattle feed lot will however have a large impact on seasonal work with fruit pickers etc. This is expected to have an effect over the next 2-3 years.
- Support services are the Child Health, Family & Children's Services and excellent medical facilities.

Childcare Service:

- The Moora & Districts Child Care Centre currently operates as an Occasional Care service and is licensed for 19 places.
- The centre is opened for 5 days per week from 8.30am to 5.00pm each day.
- We run 3 sessions per week morning, afternoon and full day session. The service is currently utilised to an average of 65% patronage each week, and is currently able to meet the demand on the facility. However we are 95% full with babies and have a few on the waiting list. From what I hear there are more parents with babies who in the near future will need care and we do not have the available places.
- There is one Family Day Care service operating in the town.
- The Moora Playgroup committee and Toy Library committee are both very active within the town and meet twice a week.

Issues facing the service:

- Staffing at the Centre is:
 - 1 x Full Time contact Director with Diploma in Child Care
 - 1 x Full Time Care giver (Cert III)
 - 1 x Full Time Trainee (studying Cert III) complete Cert 111 in June 2006
 - 1 x Part Time Lunch relief worker
 - 1 x casual relief worker
 - 1 x casual cleaner
- Obtaining qualified staff, reliable temporary relief and SUPPS support workers is causing a problem, at the moment we have only one qualified and no qualified staff to relieve our Director, which is proving to be a major issue. We have advertised both here in Moora and also in Perth, but unfortunately we have had no response for the adds.
- The Centre is administered by the Shire of Moora and is funded from attendance revenue and grant funding. Staff organise small fund raising ventures during the year to assist with equipment purchases. The Shire of Moora's current budget for 2005/06 shows a net operating loss of \$20,620 for the year. This figure includes Shire administration costs in addition to the Centres running costs.
- The current building being used for the Centre is very old, and a special exemption is held regarding some of the unavailable facilities. The Shire has included a new Child Care Centre in its future plan for the year 2008/2009. Whilst the current building is serviceable, a new location and building will a great benefit for the centre.
- The Centre licence number is 4982, and a building exemption is held for part 4 regulations 44 & 45.

Impact regulation changes may have:

If 2.4.4 Support Staff and 2.4.6 On Duty, were to come into effect it would bring further financial hardship to the Centre as finding extra staff is always difficult. Our kitchen over looks the children's indoor play area and staff can observe children while preparing food.

We have a contact director who needs to be in the office at certain times throughout the day. The office has a large window overlooking the children's indoors play area. The Director can still see the children and is called upon if needed.

Other relevant information:

- Whilst the Centre has full time and part time child care workers, a management committee formed under the Shire of Moora meets on a monthly basis to discuss the progress of the centre. This committee discusses projects, which may assist in fund raising ventures and other improvements to the running of the centre. The outcome of these meetings is reported to Council on a monthly basis.
- The Centre was taken over by the Shire as from 1 February 2005, due to difficulties facing the previous committee with cash flow. The centre was finding it difficult to fund the increased insurance charges being placed on it. In an effort to attract more users for the centre, the daily fees were decreased at the beginning of the year, and the current fee structure is: -
 - 8.30am – 12.30pm \$22
 - 12.30pm – 5.00pm \$25
 - Full day \$45
- With the reduction in fees the centre has attracted an increase in usage. A marketing programme has been in place with the Director and staff forwarding a regular newsletter to the Shire district. This has proved successful with good feedback from the community.
- A computer, photocopier, printer and fax have been added to the administration office of the centre, and with the addition of child care software it has made the running of the centre more efficient.

Mike Prunster
Community Development Manager
Shire of Moora
Email: mprunster@moora.wa.gov.au

Michelle Evans
Director
Moora & Districts Child Care Centre
Email: moorachildcare@westnet.com.au

The N.E. Wheatbelt Child Care Project – Mt Marshall

This project resulted from three Shires in the NE Region of the Wheatbelt agreeing to work together to establish a regional child care service to meet the needs of four towns within the 3 Shires. The aim of this three year pilot project is to overcome the severe lack of child care facilities in isolated rural communities by combining the resources of three Shires so that four isolated small towns can obtain a basic community service. The Shire support will assist the towns in obtaining high quality child care that should be the right of all families in city and country regions.

The towns involved are Beacon, Bencubbin, Koorda and Wyalkatchem.

Over the last four years there has consistently been a request from the towns of Beacon, Koorda and Wyalkatchem for child care services. In early 2003 the Chief Executive Officer of Mt Marshall, Ken Donohue, initiated a community meeting in Bencubbin to discuss the options available and to gauge the present demand for child care. Discussions also occurred on the prospect of the inclusion of other towns from the North East Region of Councils (NEWROC Association). The conclusion of this community meeting was that child care was required in this region. Ms Rebecca Watson was then appointed as the Mt Marshall Shire's new Community Development Officer. Ms Watson then became the facilitator for this project. Community meetings in each town were held and a combined interim committee was formed. This committee has worked hard to try to get this project off the ground. Each Shire has agreed to pay for the capital upgrade of the buildings that will be used for the child care services in each town.

Requests for funding for this project have been submitted through the State Department for Community Development and through the Federal Department for Family and Community Services (both through the Long day Care Application process and through the Stronger Families funding rounds). However each application has failed and although this project aims to meet the needs of these four communities there appears to be no available funding either through the Federal or State Governments for this innovative project. The Mt Marshall Shire is prepared to sponsor the staff member and assume the risk for professional and public liability. The three Shires have discussed providing rental support to attract someone to come and live in the area. These strategies will substantially reduce the annual running costs of the service. However this project will still need ongoing funding. These isolated small communities do not have the population basis to support and subsidise what is an essential basic family support service. Annual funding is required to assist with salaries and annual travel costs for a three year period.

This is an innovative and collaborative project aimed at assisting isolated women in the North Eastern Wheatbelt.

SOME OF THE ISSUES REGARDING CHILD CARE SERVICES IN THE WHEATBELT.

Providing licensed child care in small isolated rural communities is very difficult. However this service is very important as a community health service and provides the support that isolated families often need. It is essential in preventative strategies concerning community health issues.

Expectations on Volunteers

- Most Child Care Services in the country are community managed and are non profit organizations. There is complete dependence on volunteers to establish and then run the service. The requirements placed on these volunteers are the same as for a larger funded or private organisation that is run for profit. The burden on these community volunteers in time, money, accountability, responsibility, stress and skill development is huge

Child Care Licensing Requirements

- Child Care Licensing Regulations are the same for large and small services. Costs to achieve these standards when adapting an old community building in a small country town can be very high.

- Staffing requirements result in the need to continually advertise for qualified staff. This is despite the fact that there is little prospect of obtaining a qualified coordinator for a part time position in an isolated country town. The ongoing costs for this advertising are very high and fund raising is often required to obtain the funds to achieve this requirement.
- Requirement of staffing plans and then three monthly reviews although having advantages adds to the high work load of volunteer committees compared to paid staff completing these tasks in larger services.

Staffing

- Attracting qualified child care staff to a small rural community is difficult.
- Expecting qualified staff to move to an isolated community to work part time is unrealistic when comparing a part time job to a full time position in the city.
- Obtaining and keeping qualified staff is difficult. The ongoing requirements for services to provide staffing plans and exemptions when qualified staff are not available is onerous on the volunteers with little changing from one review to another.

Financial Issues:

Viability of any child care service is based on numbers using the service. In small towns the population available to use the service is limited even though the costs for running the service are similar

- Insurance costs have risen dramatically over the last two years. The funding provided to assist these services increases on a CPI basis. There has been no other funding to offset these extra costs.
- Services are forced to be only part time because of small populations, which impacts on the financial viability of these non profit services
- The small populations and varying use of the service due to seasonal issues (seeding, harvest etc) impacts on incoming funding which impacts on the viability of the service.
- The need to keep fees low to enable all members of the community to utilise the service versus the dilemma of needing a greater income to cover costs can be taxing on services with small populations.

Models of Child Care

- The choice of types of child care is limited in isolated country towns. There are three main types of child care available:
 - Long Day Care is for families requiring full time care due to work or study commitments. The ability to establish this service is dependent on numbers of children using the service.
 - Family Day Care caters for a small number of children (4 under school age) and most small communities have a greater need than for 4 children to be cared for.
 - Occasional Child Care is the only other option, which enables licensed care a few days a week. The emphasis of use is for non working parents. There is no availability of the full Child Care Rebate although an annual subsidy to the service is aimed at counteracting this. However this subsidy has not kept up with the increased costs services are now facing.

In isolated towns there are a variety of needs. Carers who work and need full time care and carers who need respite to travel to appointments in Perth or major country towns. There is not a child care service that meets the varying needs of country families nor that is flexible enough to do so. The key issue in this is the lack of population to support a full time service.

None of the above three types of care meet all the isolated community's needs. This is just another hardship in terms of lack of appropriate services for isolated rural communities.

- The requirement for qualified staff however doesn't altar from meeting the Child Care Licensing Regulations for a Long Day or an Occasional Child Care Service. This is a huge ask for isolated part time services.
- Distances between towns' means that it is not feasible for carers to travel to another town to utilise a service there.

SUMMARY OF REASONS WHY CHILD CARE IS NEEDED IN THE WHEATBELT

- To attract people to move to the country to work, Shires are finding that they need to have basic services in place. Child care is one of these required services.
- To keep people from leaving small country towns basic facilities like child care are required.
- A child care service enables qualified women who already live in isolated districts to have a choice about returning to part time work or to further their study. At present they don't have a choice. They have to stay at home and care for their children.
- A child care service enables carers to attend appointments and go shopping while their children are being cared for.
- As well as providing a much needed service, Licensed Child Care enables parents to put child safety and child protection first. Farming properties are dangerous work places and having the option of child care ensures that young children are not placed in danger on the farm while parents are busy on the tractor working, especially at busy times like seeding, harvesting and shearing.
- The isolation that most rural families face, limited extended family support and the seasonal structures of the community (seeding, shearing, harvesting) put pressure on families. Isolation and limited services can result in serious community health issues.
- A child care service not only provides the ability for children to socialise and participate in developmentally appropriate activities but also is an avenue to provide information and support to parents regarding parenting issues.
- Parents with new babies and other children often need respite. This is a preventative way to ensure positive parenting occurs.
- Rural remote communities don't have access to services to meet the social needs of families and communities that urban areas take for granted.
- Each family has the right to access essential services. There are no choices in the rural areas and limited other services. Issues to do with mental health (post natal depression) require services to enable the protection of children as well as for the support of the parents and the need for respite. Child care services assist in this process.
- Community health issues can be related back to the need for community services. Child care is one of those services that assists the community in numerous ways. It is no longer a baby sitting system but a highly developed facility that is regulated to ensure that the physical, cognitive, social and emotional needs of the children are being met. While this is happening the needs of the parents are also being met enabling a healthy community which in turn then requires less supports when times are bad such as during the last few years of drought.

The Boodie Rats - Mukinbudin Occasional Care Inc.

History

The Boodie Rats is an incorporated **non-profit** organization in Mukinbudin, in the Eastern Wheatbelt of Western Australia. We were licensed in October 2004 as an Occasional Care service and initially only offered one day a week care. We are now running a second day on the provision that this day is self funded i.e. the wages are covered by the fees received. The management committee is made up of volunteers who are very passionate people and not only require the service but also bring some great expertise. All of our key committee members are mothers, partners in our own small business's, run very busy lives and have the following qualifications:



- **Chaiperson** – Liz Petkau who has a work history in banking.
- **Vice President** – Silvana Piper has a Bachelor of Arts in Education.
- **Secretary** – Nola Comerford-Smith is an ex Local Government Councillor and a Telecentre Coordinator with great administration skills.
- **Responsible Officer and Treasurer** – Ann Brandis is a retired Assistant CEO in Local Government with extensive financial and administration experience.

Our other committee members also have skills that provide great assistance to our centre.

The Mukinbudin Shire Council has been very supportive in providing a building, renovations, ongoing administrative services and financial support. They also administer the payroll for our staff members. As we cannot attract CCB placements we try to keep our fees fair and in line with what our city cousins are expected to pay. However after funding and fees are received it is still vital for our committee to fund raise between \$1000 and \$2000 each year, something that our City counterparts would not ever have to consider.

Our Main issues

Non-Profit organization/small country day cares are being treated exactly the same as City based profit making day cares under the regulations.

This is unfair and unreasonable and we are not on a level playing field. We understand the need for regulations but feel they do not provide the flexibility to suit our community-based service. There are many issues that we have to face to comply with the regulations that are targeted at City based profit making Daycare Centres, some of these are:

- **SUPPORT** - We are expected to maintain a high level of care yet we do not have the same level of support. Our CSO Penny Curry, although fantastic, has a huge area to service and is also juggling a huge workload to service child -care centres with a wide variety of needs.

A supportive network such as the Family Day-Care Scheme would be an asset to our community-based service. This could be a great resource and support to staff and management committees who spend hours of volunteer time on paperwork that could take half the time if they had a more accessible and user-friendly support network. We need to spend less time reinventing the wheel and more time with our families.

- **VOLUNTEERS** - We are all volunteers administering the running of the Service. In the city these are paid positions. We maintain all aspects of the service – the building, administration, policies, procedures, staffing, finances....etc.... and then we have the luxury of putting our children in to care for a fee while we work without being able to claim CCB. We are fortunate to be able to see that this is an essential service in our community but definitely feel that we are taken for granted.
- **STAFFING FLEXIBILITY – No child care model to suit the service.**

Staffing Exemptions: (previously reg. 30 now reg. 81 and reg. 23 of new regulations)

Our Coordinator and 1 of our assistant carers hold staffing exemptions (as per reg. 30, old regulations). This is an ongoing issue as all previous attempts to attract qualified employees to work 2 days per week have been unsuccessful. We believe we have the best possible alternative that complies with the guiding principles of the *Children and Community Services Act 2004*.

The Boodie Rats is a multi-age service that uses the 'backfilling' process regularly for the duration of a session and at times both sessions of a working day. The Boodie Rats is a rural community service and the only formal child-care facility in town, which is trying to meet the needs of our community members. Unfortunately, each day is different with some parents using our Service on a casual basis and some using it on a regular weekly basis. We need some flexibility to cater to the needs of our enrolled children especially those who attend day care with their siblings. Ultimately, we need to have some guidelines to cater to our multi-age group center whose model does not necessarily fit within the new regulations. Obviously we want to insure the well-being of the children and staff and maintain a regulated service but we would like to achieve this without sending children away to informal 'backyard' care due strict child/staff ratios that are aimed at larger long day care centers.

Our service is in the awkward numbers range between Family Day Care and Long Day Care. The Single Operator model has been suggested numerous times but does not cater for the number of children that we have. Although we may have only up to 5 children on a regular basis, there are also regular times that we have between 5 and 10 children. These are the needs of our community and as the only Child-Care facility in the town, we need to meet these needs. There has never been a formal child-care facility in our community and we feel that we are now providing a service that acts in accordance with all the guiding principles of the *Children and Community Services Act 2004*.

- **FUNDING FLEXIBILITY** - A small population base, this affects the number of children we can attract, which is also affected by our staffing exemption. We can only sustain 2 days per week so therefore we have not been able to obtain any CCB placements, which then penalize country parents financially even further. We would like to have equity with other services and sustainability for our future.
- **BUILDING FLEXIBILITY** – There is no foreseeable change to our building so we will need the flexibility to be exempted from regulations 38, 39, 40 for staff room, are for administrations etc and kitchen (no stove) .

- **REG. 80 Primary school age enrolled child and transitional**

The Boodie Rats is housed in the old CWA Building in Mukinbudin which is shared with the Mukinbudin Playgroup. Currently we have 1 child who comes to the center in an after school care capacity. Her younger brother is 3 and also attends the center until their Mum finishes work at 4.00pm. Under the new regulations the School aged child will be unable to sit with her brother and have afternoon tea and a play before Mum picks them up as they must not use 'the same areas of indoor or outdoor space...' and 'a contact staff member does not supervise both primary school age enrolled children and the other enrolled children at the same time'. Effectively, due to our space and staffing limitations that turns the primary school child away from the service and her sibling.

We completely understand the need for regulations as the safety and welfare of our children is paramount. However, the appropriate Departments need to understand that we have spent countless volunteer hours establishing our service, countless more volunteer hours managing our service all so our children are cared for in a safe, nurturing, developmentally appropriate environment. We need to have some flexibility, support and reassurance that we are doing the right thing for our children. We need the understanding that The Boodie Rats is seen for what it is and that's a service set up by community members for our community and we want that to be a legacy that we can continue. We don't want to be crushed under the weight of bureaucracy because we don't fit into a child-care model.....we've worked too hard for that.

Childrens Services in Narembeen

Narembeen is approximately 300km from Perth and has a Shire population of around 1000. Narembeen has a strong sense of community and the town offers good sporting facilities, health services and amenities.

Narembeen Numbats Occasional Child Care Centre provides occasional care on two days per week, for up to 12 children at any one time. Primarily we provide non-work related care, offering respite care for parents who are often isolated from their extended family and who have few or no alternative local options for child care. We operate from the Shire-owned former CWA hall and our Centre is well equipped with indoor and outdoor play equipment.

Other children and youth services in Narembeen include a K - Year 10 high school with approximately 150 students, a well stocked Toy Library, an active playgroup, YAC and very active youth sporting activities (swimming club, Netta, Auskick, junior hockey etc). Up to about four years ago a family day care also operated in Narembeen until the operator moved inter-state. This was very popular and there is certainly a need amongst working parents to have childcare in our community which can offer more flexible hours.

Issues regarding children's services in our community

- Lack of qualified staff - time involved for committee seeking exemptions, supervising and monitoring staff and the high costs of training (in February this year as part of the training and support for our new Co-ordinator we paid an Early Childhood trained teacher to work alongside her for the first month due to a lack of other immediate training opportunities)
- Finding committee willing to serve - we expect a lot of a volunteer committee and recruiting a treasurer, president and responsible officer can be particularly difficult. We plan to consider paying our treasurer from next year which will require further fundraising.
- We are funded only for one and a half days per week whilst we operate for two days per week. We are reliant on fundraising to support our operating costs which puts a further burden upon the volunteer committee.
- Distance from training
- Lack of contact with other services for networking and support
- Fluctuating numbers from year to year - last year we were turning children away due to lack of places and operating a waiting list some weeks. However this year a lot of children moved on to Kindy and Pre-primary leaving us with some regulars but a lot of much younger children who attend on a much more irregular basis giving us much more unpredictable numbers.
- We keep our costs as low as possible (\$5 per hour and \$7.50 per hour for two children from the same family) to ensure that our service is accessible to all families in our community but this income, combined with the unfunded half day session and the high staff/child ratios involved with the younger children and babies we currently cater for creates a precarious financial situation.

The success of childcare services in Narembeen is very dependent on the staff we can recruit and the goodwill of our committee and community. At present we are very fortunate to have dedicated staff, a hardworking committee and supportive parents who combine to provide a service which we are proud to offer to our community.

NARROGIN REGIONAL CHILD CARE CENTRE

We are an Accredited Long Day Care Centre. We are licensed for 32 children and provide care for children in Narrogin and the surrounding communities. Being the only centre in town we are fully utilized and have a waiting list. We are community based and therefore run by a Management Committee. The Management Committee also oversees the operations of The Upper Great Southern Family Day Care Scheme (UGSFDCS) and The Narrogin Mobile Service, with both sharing our premises.

Current Issues of Concern

Like many services in regional areas our biggest and most constant issue is qualified staff. For the last few years we have been fortunate to have a qualified staff member in each room, but we regularly need to seek exemptions for when a qualified staff member is sick or on leave.

We also currently have a few other issues that relate to the Child Care Regulations that are under review.

1. It has been discussed that there will be changes to current staff: child ratios. For us, this change would mean:
 - Employing another qualified staff member- this would be difficult as we are lucky to have the qualified staff we have and always have trouble finding qualified relief staff.
 - Some services may look at not providing care for children under 12 months because they may not be able to get the qualified staff and due to the significant extra cost involved. We would prefer not to be forced into this option as we would then be taking the service away from families in the community.
 - Modifying our building. As our building has been designed to accommodate the number of children in rooms for the age groups we are currently licensed for we would have to look at modifying our premises to cater for the changes to ratios. This of course costs money. We would not want the number of children we are licensed for to be reduced as this would have an impact on our financial viability and it is also taking away a service from the community.
2. The regulations review document states: ‘... Additionally, modifications to centre based care services must also provide a certificate from a registered architect that the proposed plans comply with the requirements of the regulations.’

As we do not have a registered architect in our town it would mean getting them to come from Perth or Bunbury (locations of closest Architect) which would cost a considerable amount. It would be more realistic for many services to have this regulation to state architect or qualified Draftsperson.
3. Services that care for school age children will soon be required to have a separate closed in toilet for these children. We presently do not have a separate toilet other than that used by staff. We often have a few children aged 5-6 years attending the centre in school holidays because they have a younger sibling that attends the centre and the parent chooses to bring them to the centre. These older children use the bathroom that the 3-5 year olds use. If we are unable to provide care for these older children some of our parents will be put in a difficult position.

UPPER GREAT SOUTHERN FAMILY DAY CARE SCHEME

The Upper Great Southern Family Day Care Scheme is part of a multi functional service (Narrogin Regional Child Care Services Inc.) sponsored by a management committee. We also run an In-Home Care service.

The Upper Great Southern Family Day Care Scheme is based in Narrogin. We cover the towns of Narrogin, Williams, Darkan, Wagin, Dumbleyung, Lake Grace, Kulin, Kondinin, Hyden, Corrigin, Brookton, Pingelly, Wandering, Popanyinning, Cuballing and Wickepin. The scheme is Staffed by the Co-ordinator Christine Gorton who works full time and the assistant Co-ordinator Jenni Hoysted who works 2 day a week.

Our Scheme is accredited by the National Child Care Accreditation Council.

The role of the Family Day Care Scheme is to co-ordinate a network of Carers in a given area. The Schemes primary responsibilities are to monitor carers in their provision of care for young children, refer parents to carers for placement of their children, and the administration of government funding and Child Care Benefit.

We provide training for all carers in our scheme, a toy library is taken out to the carers home. We also run a playgroup each fortnight in Narrogin.

Some of the issues we face are:

- The distance from some of our carers, it is not always easy to get to meet all the families and their children using our service.
- We have had requests to run Family Day Care in venues other than the carers home. This has caused a problem with licensing as it is not the primary dwelling of the carers home.
- Inconsistence with information from licensing officers when they visit the carers home.
- Inconsistence in information from the licensing unit when we ring for clarification on an issue (depends who you speak to).
- Recruitment of carers. They are very often put off by the large amount of licensing paperwork.



Share & Care Community Services Group Inc. – Northam

The Central Wheatbelt Family Day Care Scheme was established in 1990 and covers 140,000sqkm. We currently have 9 Carers in Northam, 1 each in Moora, Merredin, Beverley, Cunderdin, Toodyay, Lancelin, Muchea and Bencubbin. We have recently lost 1 carer in Bindoon.

We have three In Home Care Providers, 1 in Northam, 1 in Beverley and 1 in Quairading.

The Family Day Care Community is feeling pressure from all the changes to State Regulations, and the constant demands placed on them. We are over regulated with demands coming from funding bodies, licensing, national standards, scheme policies and procedures and Quality Assurance. These all place a heavy burden on Carers who really just want to provide a safe, caring and fun environment for children.

The Share and Care Child Care Centre has recently changed from Occasional Care to Long Day Care. We now open Mon - Fri 6.30am to 6.30pm. We have four core staff, 2 qualified and 2 with Certificate 111. Our casuals all have Cert 111 or are studying. We have applied for two exemptions. One for a qualified staff and one for the backfill issue.

We are a 28 place centre. 8 0-2, 10 2-3 and 10 3-6.
We have a big demand for 0-2's with a waiting list.

Moving to Long Day Care has been positive and parents are starting to use the benefits of the early opening and late closing.

The three programs come under the umbrella of Share and Care Community Services Group Inc and are managed by Program Manager Maureen Allert, Assistant Program Manager Rhonda Lawrence, and all fees are processed by an Administration Officer Susanna Throne.



QUAIRADING

- Quairading is located 161km east of Perth.
- It has a population of 1200 people within the shire.
- Agriculture is the predominant industry of the shire.
- Currently we have no childcare facilities within the Shire of Quairading.

A survey was conducted by the Community Development Office in March 2004 into the childcare needs of the Quairading Community:

- 23 families responded to the survey.
- 17 of those families required childcare for work purposes.
- A total of 37 children required daycare during the week.
- 62% of those 37 children were under the age of three.

A small band of volunteers have been working on establishing a daycare centre in Quairading since the year 2000. We work with the support of our shire council through the Community Development Officer, Apryl Longford.

Our goal is to establish joint shire/community run not –for- profit Occasional Childcare Centre.

Issues facing our Community with regards to childcare:

1. Lack of facility at present.
2. Verbal commitment has been given for funding to facilitate the establishment of an occasional childcare centre by Minister McHale (June 9, 2005), however we have not yet received written confirmation of this funding so the project has stalled.
3. Volunteers are frustrated and exhausted by lack of progress.
4. Locating a suitable building with genuine long term tenure option.
5. Concern about spending capital works funding on a building that may not be able to guarantee long term tenancy.
6. Lack of volunteers to maintain the project as the demands on volunteer's time is strenuous.

We also anticipate the following issues when the facility is in place:

1. That the centre would be viewed as business *rather than a not for profit service*.
2. Lack of appropriately qualified staff (to current licensing standards) within the community and a small populous area to draw upon.
3. Difficulty attracting appropriately qualified staff as the position would not be full time and we would be unable to provide subsidised rental accommodation.
4. Difficulty finding 'relief' staff (ie. sick days, holidays) as we cannot draw on expertise within the community (ie teachers, nurses) due to the strenuous licensing standards and strict exemption rules.
5. Difficulty attracting volunteers to administrate the centre as the demand on their time is very high.
6. Having to compete with other charitable/volunteer groups for monetary donations to maintain centre, from such a small populous.

We anticipate that unless licensing, staffing and funding issues (as discussed at the Wheatbelt Forum, June 9 2005) are not addressed, our centre would struggle to remain a viable service.

We *urge* Minister McHale and her department to consider:

- Funding for part time administrators (paid secretarial position)
- Greater flexibility in granting licensing exemptions in the case of staffing so small rural communities can draw upon existing expertise.

TOODYAY – Little Rascals Child Care Centre

Little Rascals is a long daycare licensed for 34 children, operating between the hours of 6.30am and 6.30pm. Toodyay is a small community one and a half hours from Perth (80km), with a population of approximately 5,000. Besides this centre there is one Family Day Care operating in our town. People travel to Perth and Northam for work, using both their own transport and the early train. We have families that have moved here from Perth so they have left their family support behind and use us for respite. We are currently operating at a 75% capacity but could be operating at a fuller capacity if we had additional qualified staff.

We have two doctors and one community health nurse, all other support services are in Northam (30kms). Playgroup meets two mornings a week, kindy gym one morning a week and there is a toy library.

Issues Facing Our Service:

Staffing – lack of qualified staff. There is not a lot of incentive for staff to study due to low rate of pay considering duty of care and responsibility involved. Being a rural centre we do not have readily available access to qualified staff. Relief staff from Perth are not usually willing to travel.

We have one permanent and one casual qualified staff, the casual being pregnant. We have two staff studying their diploma that work under an exemption. When we applied for the last two exemptions we had to state when the girls would be finished their studies. The exemptions were given for that time (which is 3 months). This places the girls under extreme pressure considering they are working full time and one is a single mother of three.

We feel exemptions are too black and white. These two girls have ten years full time child care experience, approximately 3 months off finishing their studies and we still had difficulty being granted their exemptions. We feel exemptions should be looked at individually and realistically. For example one exemption was granted from 1pm to 6pm Tuesday to Friday. When we responded we needed full days not half days we were granted full days on Tuesday and Wednesday and half days Thursday and Friday. We cannot understand if they trust this person to be exempt for some days why not other days, taking into account the qualified coordinator works five days a week. Due to this we cannot increase our numbers on Thursday and Friday mornings and what parents want just afternoons?

This is the profile and issues of the above centre. Any questions please contact Coral Grundy.

Ph/Fax: 9574 2922
Email: littlerascalsccc@westnet.com.au

WONGAN HILLS CHILDREN'S SERVICES PROFILE

Community Profile:

Wongan Hills is a rural community located 184 kilometres from Perth with a population of approximately 1500 people. Wongan Hills is the main town in the shire of Wongan Ballidu that includes the smaller communities of Ballidu, Cadoux and Kondut. Wongan Hills is an area of great rural production. The town plays a significant role in the agricultural machinery industry. The community is well serviced with sporting facilities and service clubs. The service industries provide high quality, reasonable priced services and are backed up by competent peripheral industries. The town has a District High School, Hospital, Doctor, Dentist, Child Health Clinic and visiting health professionals such as Speech, Physio, OT etc. The district has many young families as evidenced by the numbers of children attending childcare and playgroups. Isolation on farms for mothers with young children is a real concern.

Existing Childcare Services:

- **Wongan Cubbyhouse** Occasional Childcare – a 19 place centre operating 4 days/week, 40 weeks a year. Average number of children attending per day is 16, but can fluctuate throughout the year. Highest demand is mornings and for children under 3 years (no vacancies). Children are mostly from non working mothers who take advantage of the excellent sporting, leisure and shopping facilities in the town. Respite care is also offered to Aboriginal and Special Needs children. Children attending the centre are not only from the town but surrounding farming communities, such as Calingiri, Ballidu, Kalannie etc. These families are travelling 80kms to access childcare. Care is also offered to working parents who have structured part time and casual employment around Cubbyhouse hours, combined with private babysitting.

Our current attendance records are as follows:

AGE	TUES AM	TUES PM	WED AM	WED PM	THUR AM	THURS PM	FRI AM	FRI PM
0-2	4	5	4	2	4	3	4	2
2-3	4	3	4	2	4	3	5	4
3-5	7	4	6	4	10	8	6	2
TOTAL CHILDREN ATENDING	15	13	14	8	18	14	15	8

Wongan Cubbyhouse has 3 indigenous children enrolled and 1 special needs child. We employ a special needs carer for this child.

- **Playgroups**
 - Wongan Hills has 15 children attending. Operates from a building shared with Child Health clinic.
 - Ballidu has 12 children all from farming families utilizing a class room at the primary school.
 - Calingiri has 12 children from farming families attending sessions in a community building.

Problems / Issues:

- **Occasional Care** does not meet the demands of working parents (school holidays etc)
- **Costs** of childcare are increasing. CCB is not available to Cubbyhouse. Fees have to be affordable for all families but meet the costs of the service that are continually increasing. Expected increases in wages are a major concern as this will need to be passed onto fees.
- **Staffing:** There are numerous problems involved with employing staff, some of the more difficult problems are:
 1. Unable to secure Qualified staff and are therefore working with exemptions.
 2. Staff are not long term so continually appointing new staff affects consistency of care. Childcare is not seen as attractive because of poor wages, few suitable applicants for advertised positions.
 3. Difficulty in securing casual staff for busy times (lunch etc) because of short hours.

Wongan Cubbyhouse currently have the following staff employed:

- 1 Qualified Caregiver working Tues & Thurs
- 1 Unqualified Caregiver working under exemption Wed & Fri
- 1 Special needs carer working Wed, Thurs & Fri
- 3 Unqualified caregivers working part-time Tues, Wed, Thurs, Fri
- 1 Part-time Administration Officer

- **Building** – Wongan Cubbyhouse has relocated twice since it opened in 1993. Current lease expires in May 2006 and will not be renewed. There is at this stage no suitable building to relocate to. Financial costs of meeting regulations to adapt existing community buildings are prohibitive. Fundraising is currently underway to fund a purpose built centre, this seems to be our most attractive option at this stage.
- **Family Day Care** – There is no family day care available in Wongan Hills at present.
- **Lack of childcare** has created “backyard babysitters” who are caring for numbers of children without any official control. Standard of care is suspect. This will become more prevalent with the closure of FDC and the inability for Cubbyhouse to absorb more children.

The district of Wongan Hills has a high demand for affordable childcare both full time and occasional. Cost of childcare is the biggest factor in influencing the utilisation of existing services. The cost of travel for farming families must also be added to actual childcare costs. Highest demand is for babies/toddlers that require more qualified staff and more building space. These two factors staffing and buildings, are influential in the availability of services in this town.

WUNDOWIE

The Fluffy Ducklings Day Care Inc. **Licensed Occasional Care for 2 – 6 year olds**

We are an occasional care service running for 15 years this May. We have had many carers over the years, including teachers and students with exemptions. When these people are ready for full time work again we lose them. Our current Coordinator is rearing 2 small children at the moment and only does part time work as she needs time with her growing family – our future is never secure. As we deal in 4 short years of people's lives, unless these people have large families and time to commit to volunteer, we have a lot of turnover in all aspects of Occasional Child Care.

I have been through many a Children's Services Officer as well and by far Penny Curry has had the most stamina and perseverance. Penny has gone out of her way for our service and I cannot commend her highly enough. These people are integral to the running of our services and help in the translation of the licensing requirements. Just having a Departmental representative at our meetings makes them much more formal and helpful in sorting through all the paperwork.

The centre would not be possible without the funding, even though this does not go far enough. Some years fundraising is essential and it is hard in small communities. Lotteries has been a boon this year and in the past. Some good years pay for some lean years and the urban sprawl might be on its way here, time will tell.

Our issues are many but more pressing is the premises that Shire have put us in. The garden is being renovated by the community, the Shire chooses not to help us. The facilities are minimal – toilets and room space - exempted and office space and equipment not available. The phone shares space with the microwave and the bookcase leans up against the fridge.

We share the space with the Community playgroup. Shire Council does not see the importance of Child Care in the community. This I reiterate in our Outcome statements – each 6 months. I must say though, we started humbly – a room at the school and now we have a place of our own, it could be better because our children deserve the best. Their education is what drives our future and it starts in child-care, our carers are trained educators.

Our licence requirements are rigid and we do our best to comply but the impossible must be exempted unless more public money is spent on us.

I have stayed with the Committee for the past 15 years as the Treasury job is a hard one to pass on with so much to do – it frightens people. I have it down pat but have no time to attend meetings due to work commitments.

Treasurer: Eileen Buckley

Wyalkatchem

A town of 640 people, with many young career families moving in and out of town (without immediate family for support). We have no Child Care (other than the illegal backyard operators).

Our closest Child Care service is either Cunderdin or Goomalling (a round trip of 120kms for either town, morning and afternoon). Some families are seriously considering this 2 hour trip in order to complete work commitments or other commitments. This does seem unreasonable to expect.

To combat this problem, we joined forces with the Shires of Koorda and Mount Marshall to get a one service into each of the towns. Although this would not satisfy the demand, we thought that by being less greedy we were more likely to receive Government funding!

We battle to retain our young families in town for longer than 2 years as they struggle under the weight of fulltime care for their children, whilst some of the mothers wish to do part time work. The skilled Mums in town that do not utilise their skills and want to, include

- Chartered Accountant
- Nurse
- Physiotherapist (now left town)
- Office Administrator x 3
- Other various

In the days of not enough people to fill positions, the issue of Child Care can solve some of this.

Scott McKenzie
Chief Executive Officer
Shire of Wyalkatchem



Yilgarn Occasional Child Care Centre

PO Box 139, Southern Cross Phone 90491554

BACKGROUND

Southern Cross is a town centrally located within the shire of Yilgarn. Other smaller towns surrounding the Yilgarn include Bodallin, Moorine Rock, Yellowdine, Bullfinch, Marvel Loch, Mount Hampton and Koolyanobbing.

Southern Cross is situated in a remote area with Perth being 370 km to the West and Kalgoorlie 225 km to the East. The population is approximately 1200 and the main areas for employment are mining and rural. Rental properties in town attract high rents for poor accommodation and mining companies often choose the option of fly-in, fly-out for their workers therefore there are less families in the area and more single adults. The mining population is also very transient and the recent collapse of the Sons of Gwalia Mining Operation has meant that a lot of the families have had to relocate to other larger towns. Since St. Barbara have taken over Sons of Gwalia a few families have moved into town but mainly because of the closure of the outlying primary school in Marvel Loch in 2005.

HOURS OF OPERATION AND AVERAGE ATTENDANCE

Within our town site we run an Occasional Child Care facility that currently has a licence for 22 children from 0 – 6 years of age. Our operational days are as follows; Monday closed, Tuesday 9.30 am -12.00 pm, 2 ½ hours for 3 year old program, av attendance - 10
Wednesday 8.30 am – 3.30 pm, 7 hours for day care use, average attendance - 7
Thursday 8.30 am – 3.30 pm, 7 hours for day care use, average attendance - 9
Friday 8.30 am – 3.00 pm, 6 ½ hours for day care use, average attendance – 8.
We are open during the school terms' which is approximately 39 – 40 weeks per year and are closed during the school holidays. Our average attendance for the 3 year old program is 10 children and for the Day Care is 8 children. We have 38 children enrolled at the centre from a total of 28 families.

NOTE: There are no other Day Care facilities in the surrounding area.

EXEMPTIONS

Our Centre currently has 4 exemptions;
Staff to children ratio is not viable when we have a multi – age Day Care.
Fence height is too low by 10cm. (Have replaced Stage 1 of 4 stages.)
Staff are unqualified. One staff member currently studying but will take 2 years to complete.
Staffroom and office are not available in the building as it is not purpose built.

BUILDING

The building currently being utilized by the Yilgarn Occasional Child Care Centre is owned by the local Yilgarn Shire Council. It was purpose built for an offsite Kindergarten many years ago. There are many problems encountered when the regulations are to be strictly followed. Some of these have already been fixed over time; however there are still many requirements that still need to be adapted. We currently have exemptions for the fence and for the lack of office space and a staffroom.

6 MONTH FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Jul – Dec 2005 expenditure for our centre includes;
Salaries and related costs \$19609.00
Utilities and Admin \$7909.00
Equipment \$165.00

Total \$27683.00

Jul – Dec 2005 income for our centre includes;
DCD payments \$9789.00
Fees \$16798.00
Total \$26587.00

Before any fundraising this leaves us with a deficit of \$1096.00

Fundraising \$9823.00.

Most of this fundraising has to go toward replacing a fence which is currently under exemption for being too low.

COMMENTS/CONCERNS

To balance the budget we would have to either raise another \$1100 within the community or raise the fees. Both options are not viable. Fundraising every year puts the committee under a lot of pressure and they have to compete with other sporting bodies and community organizations. To raise the fees would mean that lower income earners would stop using the facility as we are only an occasional child care service and the Child Care Benefit is not enough.

Caregivers that use our centre come from wide and varied backgrounds. Some use it so that they can continue their study externally, some to bring in income to support themselves, some to bring in a second income to support their family, some to utilize the time to go to appointments or short term courses and others to gain respite as they have no extended family in the area. If we could have access to full Child Care Benefit then families would be more inclined to use the centre on a regular basis and our fees could be raised slightly to help cover operational costs.

Volunteers are a huge part of our Child Care Centre. Without them there would be no service in the community. The treasurer has the role of paying wages and calculating the tax and superannuation, recording all expenses and income manually to suit the requirements of DCD and reporting monthly to the committee and 6 monthly to the DCD and Licensing. This usually takes 6 hours per week and if they were paid at \$19.00 per hour would cost us \$114.00 per week and \$5928.00 per year.

The Secretary has an even bigger role of coordinating the monthly meetings, typing any letters, minutes and advertisements, liaising between the treasurer and the president, collecting and documenting the mail, filling out forms, surveys, grant applications, renewals, notifications, monitoring memberships, updating family information and collating averages. This would take approximately 2 ½ per day and if they were paid at \$19.00 per hour would cost us \$237.50 per week and \$12350.00 per year.

The new regulations have meant that there is a move from a Responsible Officer to a Supervising Officer who must be on the premises 25 hours per week or 75% of the time. In our situation the role would have to go to a staff member as the current Responsible Officer has another job and cannot afford to give this up to be at the Child Care Centre. Larger Centres have the use of a Director who is paid to do all of this paperwork. Smaller Centres are totally run by volunteers. It would put a lot of pressure on staff if they had to do a full day's work and then hours of paperwork at home when they are supposed to be spending time with their family. If paid at the rate of \$19.00 per hour this would cost us an additional \$13400.00 per year.

It should also be noted that the volunteers who run the Day Care also use the facility themselves as they too are studying, working or need respite care as they have no family in the area. ***To find another \$31678.00 to pay others to work in these positions is impossible for our centre.*** The committee is finding it harder to retain volunteers for these positions as they burnout rather quickly, especially as they also assist with the fundraising.

Another issue which affects our Child Care Centre is the lack of qualified staff in the area. After extensive advertising we have had to source two exemptions to meet the childcare needs of the district. One staff member is studying but unfortunately until she completes her Diploma she will continue to need an exemption. This will take time as you have to pass Certificate III in childcare first. While the Shire Council are very supportive and have offered the use of a single brick flat for

rent, the hours available do not provide an attractive enough package to entice fully qualified workers to the position. The Centre is also not financially viable to offer relocation costs or rent assistance.

Regulations stipulate that when there are 5 children on the premises and one of them is a baby then we have to have 2 staff present at all times. Quite often there are only 5, 6 or 7 children booked into our Centre and the fees they bring in do not cover the staff wages for the day. Similarly when there are only 2 children still on the premises and one staff member has been sent home the fees from the 2 children does not cover the wages of the staff member present. It is apparent that the personal experience gained by mothers is overlooked in favour of the paper qualifications.

We currently have an exemption for our low fence and lack of office and staffroom facilities but cannot afford to fix these problems straight away. We also need a computer for ease of access to staff and committee members. We have applied for grants to help us to improve our centre but so far have been unsuccessful and so have only managed to replace 1/4 of the fence. This puts pressure on the volunteers to keep on applying for other grants year after year and the paper- work is plentiful.

There is a strong need for a Child Care Centre in our Community to cater for the families who need to work, study or use it for respite care. The regulations have meant that we pay for two staff when the fees of the children do not pay their wages. The staff members are both on exemptions as we were not able to entice qualified workers to the area, this puts pressure on the secretary who has to report regularly back to DCD and Licensing with a whole lot of paper work to prove that the staff we have hired are capable. The secretary, treasurer and other committee members are busy trying to raise as much money as they can to assist with the day to day operation of the Centre which leaves no money to buy new toys or large pieces of outdoor equipment. This is obvious when looking at the lack of money spent on equipment in our statement. The funds are not there unless fundraising can be managed. This causes burnout of the committee and they are extremely necessary in managing the Child Care Centre.

The Management Committee and Staff strive to be motivated and committed to providing quality child care and to improving the facilities of the Yilgarn Occasional Child Care Centre.

Janine Dal Busco
Responsible Officer

The Isolated Children's Parents' Association

...or ICPA, is a national body committed to representing all rural and remote students and their families at all stages of educational opportunity.

Established in 1971, the ICPA has become well respected within Government departments and the education community at both State and Federal levels.

ICPA has been instrumental in achieving many of the benefits we in the country now enjoy:

- 🕒 **Funding for travel to and from boarding schools/hostels.**
- 🕒 **Improvements in student/teacher ratios.**
- 🕒 **State living away from home allowance.**
- 🕒 **Constant monitoring of curriculum.**
- 🕒 **The Retired Educator Volunteers for Isolated Students Education scheme (REVISE).**
- 🕒 **Residential Care Certificate requirement in boarding schools/hostels.**
- 🕒 **State of the art replacement for HF radio in Schools of the Air.**
- 🕒 **Programs to encourage teachers to the country.**
- 🕒 **The introduction of Support Teacher Learning staff (STLs) to address student learning difficulties.**

Your membership helps to ensure issues relating to rural and remote education continue to be kept on the government's agenda. These relate to:

- 🕒 **School Bus services.**
- 🕒 **Acting teaching positions.**
- 🕒 **Priority Country Areas Programme (PCAP) funding.**
- 🕒 **Assistance to students going into apprenticeships.**
- 🕒 **Early Childhood – in home care/mobile units.**

You can join your local Branch, or become a Lone Member if there's not a Branch near you. For more information and membership, please contact:

Kathy Boladeras (State Secretary)
Wonganoo Station
LEONORA WA 6438
kathyboladeras@bigpond.com
Ph: 9037 5942

Liz Ray (Lone Member Officer)
PO Box 3
KARLGARIN WA 6358
plray@bigpond.com
Ph: 9889 5067