

**Australian Government
Childcare and Early Learning
Productivity Commission
Inquiry**

**Submission
by
Contact Incorporated**

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Introduction

Contact Inc. (Contact) appreciates the opportunity to provide information to the 2014 Productivity Commission Inquiry, drawn from our experience of children's service delivery in rural, regional and remote areas.

Launched as a follow-on initiative from the *International Year of the Child* in 1979, Contact has a 35 year history of directly experiencing the content, context and challenges of developing children's services to best support isolated caregivers, services and communities to have access to appropriate services, to meet their needs and to optimise children's learning and development.

Contact has extensive involvement in research, sponsorship and co-ordination of major programs related to responsive and innovative service delivery for children, families and communities in isolated areas. The organisation also has considerable background in resourcing and providing professional development for children's services, particularly in rural and remote areas and within policy agendas that relate to aspects of the Productivity Commission Inquiry.

Contact's submission focuses specifically upon experiences within the provision of accessible, affordable, early childhood learning and care programs in rural, regional and remote areas for isolated as well as disadvantaged children, families and communities. As a member of the NSW Children's Services Forum (NSW CSF), Contact also supports the collective views presented in the NSW CSF submission.

For the purposes of this submission, Contact defines '*rural*', '*remote*', '*isolated*' and '*innovation*' as follows:

Rural

Those who live outside the larger metropolitan or urban population centres such as Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Darwin, Hobart, Melbourne, Newcastle, Perth, Sydney or Wollongong - these people accept that they are part of 'rural Australia.'

Contact Inc. 1993

Remote

Those who live a distance from a service centre and who lack reasonable and reliable access to other people, services and resources, and may have in some circumstances no regular contact with other families or children. They may be faced with the challenge of social, emotional, cultural, economic and geographic isolation.

Contact Inc. 1993

Isolated

Those who lack reasonable and reliable access to other people, services and resources, and have no regular contact with other families and children. They may be faced with the challenge of social, emotional, cultural, economic and geographic isolation or live in a disadvantaged locality.

Contact Inc. 1993

Innovation

'Innovation does not imply a totally new system but rather an introduction of new concepts, methods or approaches'.

'Something new or different introduced; the act of innovating; introducing of new things or methods.'

Macquarie Dictionary 199,8 page 498

Foundation Principles

Evidence is clear that from a fiscal cost-benefit perspective, high quality early childhood education is one of the smartest investments Australia can make.

Mounting evidence suggests that investments in early education should be considered an economic development strategy. Early knowledge and skill accumulation have a self-productive aspect, as Nobel prize-winning economist James Heckman says, “*early learning begets later learning and early success breeds later success*”.

Businesses and philanthropists are now looking at the benefit of investing in early childhood education especially for those children from disadvantaged communities, in particular, those living in remote communities. Evidence shows that children (particularly those suffering disadvantage and from low income families) who have access to high quality early education are more likely to continue in their schooling, improve their lifelong outcomes across a range of areas, including increased levels of educational attainment, employment, mental and physical health and reduced levels of incarceration, teenage pregnancy and welfare dependency.

If this inquiry is to succeed in its stated aims - i.e. to ensure that Australia has a more flexible, affordable, accessible childcare and early learning market that helps to underpin the national economy and support the community, especially parent’s choices to participate in work/learning and support children’s growth, welfare, learning and development – it is the view of Contact that a number of broad foundational principles need to be in place to build any future and improved policy agenda, funding, implementation and operational model for an Australian children’s services program and these are explored within the context of this submission.

To have the greatest impact for isolated and socially disadvantaged children and have a long-term economic outcome and lifelong benefit, Contact requests that the Productivity Commission’s resulting Australian Government Childcare and Early Childhood Learning Inquiry recommendations and Policy framework positions, have foundation principles that reflect that quality, accessible, affordable, culturally rich early childhood programs are a right for all Australian children and their families.

Developing and delivering children’s services in rural and remote areas

All Contact endeavours are underpinned by proactive recognition that a one-size-fits-all approach to the delivery of services is not appropriate and that quality service delivery, like quality evaluation of outcomes and processes, requires grounding in the local context, values and needs of communities.

Responding to Child and Family need in regional Australia

Children’s service delivery in rural and remote areas need to be responsive to a diversity of local/regional patterns and issues. Addressing rural Australia’s family children’s service unmet need, through reliance solely upon developing early childhood learning and children’s services through market forces or a one-size-fits-all approach is limited in capability, if the intent is to deliver good quality, sustainable, culturally competent child/family services that effectively accommodate the breadth of local/regional contexts, values and needs.

In rural Australia, targeted, flexible, innovative children's service delivery approaches have an existing proven track record of effectively meeting children's service market gaps (including children with additional needs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, vulnerable, isolated, disadvantaged and at risk children). These services are providing a range of child/family and community programs above and beyond primary funded tasks with the value of these services far exceeding Government's investment. Resourcing provided by these services are overcoming child, family, and communities' isolation and further building personal as well as community capacity to respond to their own needs.

Traditional universal models of child care (Long Day Care, Family Day Care, Out of School Hours) may not be appropriate, feasible or the market would not normally allow these service types to operate viably, in some rural and remote localities for a range of reasons including:

- Irregular/inconsistent nature of population demand (transient communities); or
- Small/dispersed population base; or
- Diverse family need and work patterns; or
- Changing population needs at specific peak times e.g. seasonal work (primary industries/tourism); or
- Unusual sector /industry working patterns such as diary farmers; or
- High unemployment rates and/or low incomes with the cost of child care beyond families' capacity to pay despite Child Care Benefit (CCB)/special fee relief; or
- Changing/unpredictable incomes influenced by market and climatic conditions such as primary industry-based workforce background.



Further, community characteristics that may limit the viability of mainstream models of children's service delivery in rural and remote areas include:

- Geographic spread, distance and the sheer remoteness of some communities;
- Cultural impacts such as English not as the first language, different cultural perspectives about the value of children's services, Sorry Business, men and women's business;
- Climate (extremes of hot/cold), weather (e.g. rain cutting road access to communities), road conditions (e.g. unsealed) and limited transport options for families;
- Costs of investing in building facilities to deliver the intended children's service, particularly in remote areas with few alternate existing suitable community venues/locations for early/middle childhood service delivery and considerations relating to public health needs such as availability of fresh water, shelter, sewerage and toilet access;
- Availability of other child and family support programs including allied health and early intervention support;
- Breadth of child and family need and the time factor required for families to develop trust and engage with services.

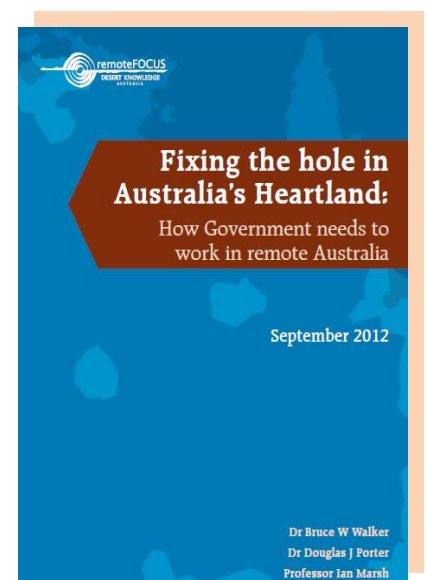
Operational aspects associated with rural and remote children's service delivery, cost more with consideration to elements such as:

- Fuel charges (Mobile children's services and services that supervise remote educators). Contact for example, delivers a children's service in the Northern Territory and fuel costs are on average \$800 per month;
- Majority of telephone calls are STD;
- Freight to transport children's equipment and resources from larger centres are a given;
- Accommodation for staff that travel to deliver programs in communities (on average \$120-\$150 per night per person in remote Northern Territory; or
- Staff are required in general to travel (fuel or airfare/accommodation, meals, relief staff) to attend professional development in regional centres.

Successfully delivering quality rural and remote children's services is often impacted by issues relating to:

- Staffing – difficulties of recruitment and retention of qualified permanent and relief staff;
- Level of leadership, management skills and experience of both staffing and management committees;
- Access to appropriate professional resourcing agency supports that understands the uniqueness of rural and remote children's services;
- Governance - ability to draw upon skilled individuals to manage the children's service.¹

A significant amount of research and consultation has gone into building a better understanding of the unique challenges of governance in remote Australia over recent years. A national organisation - **remoteFOCUS** 2012 Report – '*Fixing the hole in Australia's Heartland*' – outlines relevant data, information and some concepts for possible ways forward to address these challenges.



¹ 'Fixing the hole in Australia's Heartland' - '*remoteFOCUS Group*' - a group with extensive experience in dealing with remote communities who are working to develop practical alternative options/models to improve governance, policy, and infrastructure and service delivery in remote communities.

Australian Government Budget-Based Funded Children's Services

Existing Australian Government Budget-Based Funding (BBF) Program children's services are in the main reflective and responsive to a range of unique market needs for some defined rural and remote communities and cannot be compared easily to mainstream policy frameworks.

'The BBF Program is an element of the Community Support Program, under the broader Child Care Services Support Program. The BBF Program provides a contribution to the operational costs of approximately 340 early education, childcare and school age care services in approved locations. These services are predominantly located in rural, remote and Indigenous communities where the market may not support the viable operation of services or where there is an additional need for culturally competent services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.'

A range of service types are funded across Australia including Indigenous playgroups, crèches, Mobile services and Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services. Services funded under the BBF Program are known as Budget-Based Funded services or 'Non-Mainstream' services and are not generally approved to administer Child Care Benefit on behalf of families.

The BBF Program is currently under review to ensure that the program continues to achieve its policy goals and delivers the best quality services and outcomes for families, children and communities. The annual allocation for the BBF Program is capped and the program is closed to applications for the establishment of additional services in new locations'²

In Contact's experience, BBF children's services are successfully providing flexible, affordable and accessible programs for some rural and remote isolated, vulnerable and disadvantaged families that would not otherwise have access to children's services, as well as overcoming the complex range of isolation factors that can inhibit rural and remote families' access to mainstream services. BBF children's services are enabling parents to have some choices to participate in work/learning as well as supporting children's growth, welfare, learning and development.

These services have demonstrated an ability to be adaptive to changing circumstances and in consultation with the community, have modified programs to respond to new and emerging needs.

BBF children's services are presently funded on one-year contracts - which gives little scope to plan for innovation. Capped BBF annual funding is significantly impacting upon service viability, their ability to be flexible or provide new programs to the community. To ensure rural, remote, isolated and disadvantaged children and their families continue to have access to these existing affordable quality early education and care services, will require additional annually indexed, sustainable funding levels to ensure their ongoing operations.

It is imperative that the existing Budget-Based Funding Program and any future targeted innovative children's services Australian Government program accommodates a funding mechanism that allows for viability and 'growth' of early and middle childhood learning development services so they remain available and relevant to the rural and regional communities they serve.

² Source: Australian Government Department of Education website

Australian Government funded Budget-Based Funded Services are currently out of scope within the National Quality Framework (NQF). Through a funding contract (NSW Professional Support Co-ordination Unit -PSC), Contact is engaged with a range of NSW remote BBF services that are embracing and working towards the NQF. Quality outcomes for children in BBF services are being delivered despite the various challenges of working in isolated rural and remote settings and lack of resources because of the people, the unstinting commitment and contribution of the individuals who staff these services and their ability to:

- Manage service budgets to deliver programs with no or minimal fees where possible, reflective of the services provided and family socio-economic situation;
- Respond to a range of service settings/locations, community realities and meet multiple community needs;
- Deliver creative and flexible programs;
- Develop trust with families; build good respectful relations within communities and with other services.

Changes to the existing Early Childhood and Learning System

Complex isolation factors can inhibit families' access to mainstream children's services in rural and remote areas and a formulae-based, one size funding approach may not be feasible, viable or sustainable in intent to engage and support their specific needs. From a fiscal cost-benefit perspective, investing in high quality early childhood education especially for those children from disadvantaged communities, in particular those living in remote communities will be one of the most strategic investments Australia can make for the future.

To ensure rural and remote and disadvantaged regions/communities have access to high quality culturally competent early childhood learning, education and care, that provide parent's with choices to participate in work/learning and support of children's growth, welfare, learning and development, will require changes within the existing Australian Early Childhood Learning and Child Care System. Contact believes the following changes are required:

Funding and Planning Approaches

A robust ongoing planning approach to specifically identify child and family child care/children's services needs and gaps in rural and remote Australia.

An improved administration and better integration of Australian and State/Territory Government funding for early childhood services is essential, including a more efficient and sustainable way to provide 'universal access to children's services' across the nation.

Rather than relying solely on child care market forces, targeted, flexible/innovative models of children's services can address rural and remote service gaps including children with additional needs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, culturally and linguistically diverse children, disadvantaged, vulnerable and at risk children.

Australian Government funding contracts provided for targeted/innovative children's services extended beyond one-year current contracts **to at least three years** to provide scope to maintain responsiveness and plan for innovation.

No matter where children and their families live, priority of access guidelines always include children who would best benefit from access to early childhood education and care.

Adequate funding to meet the above principles and to:

- Ensure that any new rural and remote targeted services are funded through children's services funding growth on top of services currently available;
- Provide for annual indexation at a level that enables existing and any newly funded early/middle childhood targeted services to maintain a high level of quality service delivery;
- Recognition that it costs more to deliver children's services in rural and remote regions and as a result, funding indexation and a capacity for growth will be essential – to accommodate increasing, higher related service delivery costs and to address new/evolving population needs;
- Take actions in relation to the ongoing financial viability of existing Australian Government budget -based funded children's services;
- Enable children's services designated for Indigenous and socially disadvantaged population groups to be substantially free.

National Quality Framework

The current National Quality Framework (NQF) has been developed on a strong national consultation process; sound evidence base focusing on the impact of high quality early childhood education; as well as an extensive investment by all levels of Government and the early education and care sector. We are committed to the sustaining of the levels of quality identified within the NQF, qualifications timelines/requirements and centre-based service ratios.

Significant ongoing professional development learning and support funds are required to:

- Further support the transition of some current rural and remote NQF services and current out of scope services to be brought fully into NQF;
- Provide options for non-regulated children's services to be reflected within the NQF in the future. This could be achieved by such services becoming subject to a Code of Practice for their service type adapted from the *Early Years Learning Framework* and the *National Quality Standard* and then further supported in the implementation of this Code of Practice.

Retention of rural and remote early education and care workforce

- Sustaining a skilled and qualified rural and remote early education and care workforce requires ongoing specialised professional learning and peer support programs tailored to the unique needs of remote children's service delivery. These approaches can play a critical role in overcoming professional isolation and growth in leadership and management skills.

Nationally there is a need for:

- Recognition of the critical importance of early education and care to children's needs and increasing responsibilities and professionalism of the sector;
- Reflection of the importance of the sector as a foundation and investment in Australia's future through increased wages and associated conditions;
- Ongoing leadership and management professional learning opportunities and supports to further build a firm foundation for the sectors ongoing effectiveness and professionalism.

Attachment 1 Contact Inc. Case Studies

The following section provides brief outlines and information of three Contact innovative projects that are directly responding to isolated, vulnerable and disadvantaged caregivers and communities access to services. Attachment 2 provides a reference paper on best practice in design and development of funding and service models for Indigenous children, families and communities.

Contact Children's Mobile Service

Mobile Service – established in the Northern Territory – over the past three and half years. A recent submission to the Australian Government Indigenous Jobs and Training Review is included to provide some insight into the actual grass roots and practical matters associated with remote service provision and dealt with throughout this submission.

RuralCONNECT

A specialist peer support and professional development program which provides easy access to information and resources focusing on quality practice for defined rural and remote children's services.

Griffith Links

A program designed to support CALD families' understanding of children's services available to them, support their access to children's services and better connect them to their community.

1. Profiling the Contact Children's Mobile

There are still many remote areas in Australia where services to support young children and their families are not available. Between 2010-2014, philanthropic funding is enabling the development of the Contact Children's Mobile Service (CCMs) based in Alice Springs and providing a range of child and family programs to the Ti Tree and Utopia Homelands regions for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal families.

The key to the Mobile's operations is the use of a collaborative approach to service delivery with the view of reducing service duplication, the more efficient use of resources and the promotion of shared goals.

Submission to Indigenous Jobs and Training Review (December 2013)

Rationale

Increasing and sustaining Indigenous training and employment is an issue many businesses and philanthropists have supported in order to reduce the employment inequality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous adults. We applaud GenerationOne and the Australian Government's commitment to filling the balance of the 60,000 promised AEC jobs by employers to truly break the cycle of disadvantage caused by intergenerational welfare dependency, compounded by failure to educate future generations. Successful adult Aboriginal training programs engage the individual, their communities and build connections and self-confidence.

However, evidence is clear that from a fiscal cost-benefit perspective, high quality early childhood education is one of the smartest investments Australia can make. Mounting evidence suggests that investments in early education should be considered an economic development strategy. Early knowledge and skill accumulation have a self-productive aspect, as Nobel Prize winning economist James Heckman says, "*early learning begets later learning and early success breeds later success*".

Businesses and philanthropists are now looking at the benefit of investing in early childhood education especially for those children from disadvantaged communities, in particular those living in remote communities. Evidence shows that children (particularly those suffering disadvantage and low income) who have access to high quality early education are more likely to continue in their schooling, improve their lifelong outcomes across a range of areas including increased levels of educational attainment, employment, mental and physical health and reduced levels of incarceration, teenage pregnancy and welfare dependency.

The Proposal

Contact is aware this submission is a left field approach to achieving employment outcomes for Aboriginal adults. However given the evidence documented above, we believe to ensure equal employment opportunities are available for Aboriginal adults in the future, Aboriginal children must have opportunities for early education which involves their parents and the community. There is need to invest in activities that provide these opportunities.

There are still many remote areas in Australia where for childhood educational opportunities are not available. In response, between 2010-2014, philanthropic funding from the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation and The Yulgilbar Foundation has enabled the development of the Contact Children's Mobile Service (CCMs) servicing in the Ti Tree and Utopia Homelands regions.

Operating in eight remote Aboriginal communities, these communities are now more children aware and families are engaged with their children's learning and education. We believe that Government has a responsibility to support programs such as the CCMs, post philanthropy if the model has been tested, is working well and meeting community needs.

An Evaluation Report, funded by the Federal Government and conducted by the Menzies School of Health Research measured the initial set-up processes of this Central Australian-based Contact Children's Mobile, the Mobile's success in meeting its desired outcomes and the extent to which this service model could be adopted in other remote and indigenous contexts. The Menzies Report highlights the effectiveness of the CCMs and its contributions to the early childhood education and educational landscape in Ti Tree and Utopia Homelands region, provides evidence of the Mobile's innovation in reducing social exclusion and supporting highly vulnerable Aboriginal families and identifies the potential of the Mobile service to bring about fundamental and lasting improvements to the lives and opportunities for the children and families in these regions, including employment opportunities for parents in their community.

Funding is needed now to sustain operations until Government has finished its current National Audit of programs. There is strong support from both the Ti Tree and Utopia Homelands regions for the maintenance and extension of the program and community members have expressed their willingness to attend meetings with Contact in an attempt to secure ongoing funding.

Unless Contact can find ongoing funding before February 2014, this service will close!

Case Study Improving Indigenous Employment into the future Contact Children's Mobile Service

There are still many remote areas in Australia where services to support young children and their families are not available. In response, between 2010-2014 philanthropic funding from the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation and The Yulgilbar Foundation has enabled the development of the Contact Children's Mobile Service (CCMs) servicing in the Ti Tree and Utopia Homelands regions.

From inception, Contact's primary focus was to develop a trusting relationship by engaging in positive ongoing discussion with potential stakeholders including Elders, family and community members, service providers and Government representatives. The CCMs is providing holistic programs which focus on children, are respectful of communities and inclusive of families other caregivers, is seeking to overcome isolation and increase the social cohesion of communities and encourage employment opportunities. Service delivery is underpinned by recognition that quality service delivery is grounded in local context, values and the needs of the communities.

A collaborative approach to service delivery to reduce service duplication, the more efficient use of resources and the promotion of shared goals is achieved through respectful ongoing engagement and consultation with Aboriginal children, families and community and their participation in the design, development and delivery of Mobile.

Commencing with child-focused programs, once established, additional complementary programs are added such as health, family or other community requested services based on identified family need. It is Contact's vision that community members may be supported to obtain Children's Services qualifications in the future, to further enrich the programs and provide employment for local community members to support services offered by the Contact Children's Mobile.

Key Outcomes

1. Acknowledgment that the Contact Children's Mobile is an important resource within the Barkly and Central Desert regions - providing a strong sense of community, capacity building, ownership and valuing of the Mobile and its contributions to their community.
2. Families and community identifying skilling requirements and aspirations to undertake study, to know more about their children and to work with the Mobile.
3. Strong relationships established at all levels prior to service delivery commencing.
4. Continued strong relationships in the communities when service delivery commenced with regular child, family and community programs provided at eight remote Central Australian sites, consistent participation of 5 to 25 children and caregivers - mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, grandparents and Elders.

The Evaluation Report conducted by the Menzies School of Health Research measured the initial set-up processes of this Central Australian-based Contact Children's Mobile, the Mobile's success in meeting its desired outcomes and the extent to which this service model could be adopted in other remote and indigenous contexts.

**Menzies School of Health Research, Contact Children's Mobile Evaluation Report
available upon request.**

2. RuralCONNECT

RuralCONNECT is specialist rural and remote children's services peer support and professional development program, operating as a key component of Contact's current programs.

RuralCONNECT currently supports children's services in rural NSW specifically in the communities of Balranald, Bourke, Brewarrina, Broken Hill, Cobar, Coonamble, Deniliquin, Hay, Gilgandra, Hillston, Lightning Ridge, Nyngan, Tibooburra, Wanaaring and Walgett.



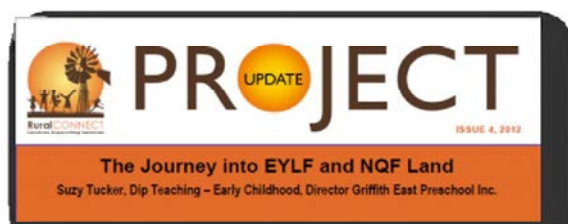
RuralCONNECT provides a responsive link between children's services and the support needed to meet changes in the children's services sector such as the implementation of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the National Quality Framework (NQF). The aim is to bridge the professional isolation due to remoteness that these services can face.

This is achieved by:

- Offering a professional development program to respond to skill gaps;
- Using technology to link educators and provide answers to common issues;
- Offering peer support programs enable the sharing of ideas, strategies and solutions.

RuralCONNECT Updates are distributed to NSW rural and remote children's services with content focused on quality practice, the quality reform and continuous improvement and are attached for reference.

These and other valuable quality resources are available on Children's Services Central (NSW Professional Support Co-ordination Unit) and the Contact website (www.contactinc.com.au).



3. Griffith Links

In partnership with Griffith CALD Families, community leaders and the local children's services. Contact delivered a program known as Griffith Links to:

- Increase the knowledge base of Griffith CALD families issues and constraints that affect their ability to access the existing early childhood services;
- Generate opportunities for potential reshaping of early childhood services to be more culturally relevant and accessible for Griffith CALD families and their children.

Griffith is unusual with its relatively high CALD population although this is still lower than NSW as a whole. Local advice about the number of CALD communities varies with indications that there are at least 46 different ethnic profiles within Griffith LGA area.

Griffith LGA currently has a range of funded children's services that provide some form of Early Childhood Children's Services, supports and activities for children aged 0-5 years.

Twelve (12) of the existing services provide child care or preschool programs and receive funding from either the NSW or the Australian Government's Other early childhood supports and activities available include an Early Intervention Service, Family Support Service and the Women's Refuge. Community Health and a number of self-supported playgroups function at different venues in the community.

Pacific Islander Family Community Consultations provided some insights into the issues that these families face. Additional community CALD consultations reaffirmed perspectives raised and provide a framework for a general position about the types of barriers CALD families face in their access to the Griffith Early Childhood Children's Services. Constraints highlighted for Griffith CALD families included:

- Different cultural perspectives about the value of children's services;
- Limited access to transport;
- Minimal understanding of what is available in the community, services provided and assistance that can be accessed;
- English language and communication constraints both written and verbal;
- Affordability of child care and preschool options;
- Understanding varying children's services, enrolment processes, eligibility criteria and waiting lists and transition to school processes;
- Inability to access services due to waiting lists;
- Difficulties associated with obtaining specialised supports for children with additional needs;
- Perceptions of limited respect and understandings of cultural practices in services;
- Special considerations for transient CALD families that reside in Griffith during peak seasonal activities such as fruit and vegetable picking.

Facets of current children's services system realities were raised as barriers to greater CALD community involvement in the services including:

- Waiting lists;
- Recruitment and retention of children's services staff and carers;
- With the exception of two operators, the independent nature of services;
- The need to maintain service viability and an inability to lower current fees;
- Limited staffing capabilities to undertake community capacity building activities due to staffing and regulatory requirements.

Solutions presented focused upon a number of approaches. A review of data suggests that fostering and strengthening individual, family and community networks could only enhance child and family social outcomes.

All solutions, models and strategies aimed to:

- Raise awareness in the CALD and general community about Griffith Children's Services, programs, assistance and supports;
- Promote and foster greater links between Griffith CALD families as well as children and Government agencies;
- Support the further potential of the children's services to enhance procedures and promote inclusive practices.

Targeting the current children's services singularly to meet needs and provide further access to CALD families is limited with consideration to the breadth of need and the children's services current waiting list and staffing constraints. Potential exists to provide greater support to the Early Childhood Services in their current operations, to enhance the quality of service, develop an understanding of how to meet the diversity of families, reflect upon current programs then look at how to make meaningful changes.

Griffith CALD family requirements go beyond simply accessing existing Early Childhood Services. CALD family needs cannot be separated from a total child, family and the community consideration. The issues and barriers articulated could be applied to CALD access to all programs that relate to children and families including disability health, education and welfare supports. An interdepartmental and community partnership planning approach for Griffith will be essential to more effectively resolve some of these constraints as a long-term strategy.

A partnerships utilising skilled bilingual/bicultural workers to instigate activities rather than relying upon voluntary effort will be necessary to ensure that future assistance and supports are provided in the most responsive manner. Essential to the success of this model will be the development of the locally identified solutions rather than a generic approach, coupled with collaborative efforts with the involvement and willingness to support the Griffith agencies and community including CALD leaders and children's services. To ensure the establishment of trust, collaboration and to support emerging Griffith CALD and children's services there is an ongoing requirement for this activity.

In the proposed Griffith CALD child and family initiative, bilingual/bicultural workers would be employed principally to assist both the Griffith children's services and to connect with the CALD families. Given the CALD population base, there is potential for the recruitment of workers from at least four or five of the key Griffith CALD communities.

Activities that the CALD Family and Children's Services bilingual/bicultural workers would undertake would include:

- Co-ordinate the translation of children's service promotional materials, information packs and their distribution in the CALD and Griffith community;
- Providing assistance to assist in the development of resource publications;
- Gather relevant translated materials for inclusion in media outlet parenting features;
- Facilitate links between CALD families, children's services, community and Government agencies to collaboratively respond more effectively to CALD community need;
- Build upon the strengths of existing children's and community agencies by developing promotions that would more effectively reach the CALD communities to raise awareness of services and supports available in the community;
- Create opportunities for agencies such as Early Intervention, Centrelink and Community Health to link with the CALD community;
- Investigate and assist in the facilitation of planned community endeavours such as Community Cultural Days, Children's Services Expo;
- Liaise with the Griffith *Families First* Network group, the Multicultural Resource and Information Centre, Griffith Shire Council and relevant Government agencies to improve access by CALD families to existing children's services and resources;
- Making referrals for the CALD families to children and community services;
- Provide assistance during enrolment and other service procedures as required;
- Assist by the use of their language and cultural understandings to work with children's services to improve procedures and cultural practices to better meet the needs of CALD community members;
- Resource existing children's services by investigating and providing information about culturally relevant resources and supports;
- Facilitate professional training and support activities to develop and enhance Inclusive Practices within the children's services.

In a complimentary strategy, Community Information Sessions, Community Ethnic Radio Broadcasts and local newspapers would be utilised within the project to support and promote the children's services and parent supports. With sufficient funding and resources there is scope for the Griffith CALD Child and Family Initiative workers to assist as possible with the facilitation of linkages between CALD families to all programs that relate to families and children.

Some additional areas of identified need could be incorporated into the Griffith CALD Child and Family workers initiative activities such as investigating seasonal harvest transient CALD families' need and community transport opportunities. However, given the breadth of challenges already ahead, it was recommended by Contact and the community that should funding be available these tasks be accommodated in separate short-term project options.

Attachment 2 Reference Materials

Safe and Supportive Indigenous Families and Communities for Children CFCA Paper No. 7

Clear advice around best practice in design and development of funding and service models for Indigenous children, families and communities is contained in *Key Messages / CFCA Paper No. 7/2012 – ‘Safe and supportive indigenous families and communities for children: a synopsis and critique of Australian research’*. These messages should form a foundation for the review considerations around services for Indigenous as well as all other isolated and disadvantaged families.

CFCA PAPER NO.7 2012

This paper reviews the research on building safe and supportive families and communities for Indigenous children in Australia. It examines the evidence base in the areas of: building safe/ supportive Indigenous communities for children/families; support for vulnerable/at-risk Indigenous families and prevention of child abuse/neglect in Indigenous families/communities.

Key Messages from this work are:

- Longer time-frames than those currently provided are required for programs and services to:
 - Build trusting relationships with Indigenous families and community partners;
 - Identify client needs and to plan and implement appropriate responses;
 - Devise and deliver effective engagement strategies;
 - Foster Indigenous cultural understandings for service staff and for the broader community
 - Develop evaluation strategies that identify longer-term outcomes for Indigenous families.
- Indigenous participation in the planning, delivery and measurement of programs is critical in fostering greater trust and connectivity and enhancing community awareness.
- Engagement strategies work best when Indigenous families are consulted about their needs, and services respond using holistic approaches that are delivered in a culturally sensitive manner.
- A collaborative approach to service delivery has resulted in a reduction of service duplication, more efficient use of resources and the promotion of shared goals. It is unclear whether these benefits will result in positive outcomes for Indigenous families in the longer-term.
- When Indigenous clients exit from programs there is little known about the impact that services have had on their families beyond their engagement with the program.
- Short funding periods and limited resources for programs have restricted the capacity of some services to provide appropriate support to Indigenous families.
- Indigenous perspectives about how child abuse prevention information is shared among the community can help to identify where, when and how child prevention interventions could be delivered.
- Program evaluation data are rarely linked to population-wide data to establish the longer-term impact of programs on Indigenous families and communities. Improved data linkage may help to establish a solid evidence base to inform child protection strategies for Indigenous families and communities.