



Ariah Park Preschool

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Childcare and Early Childhood Productivity Commission

Ariah Park is a small rural village with the population of approx 500. It is situated in the Riverina region. Ariah Park Preschool is the only form of Early Childhood Learning Centre and childcare in a 35km radius. Our children travel up to 50kms to reach us. We cater for children from 3 years to beginning school. Our preschool has grown considerable with the support of the Preschools Growth Programme and we are now open 3 days a week. The majority of our children travel by school buses.

Our licence is for 24 children. We operate out of the Community Hall. Ariah Park Preschool is a community based preschool run by our parents. We have the support of our wider community. The community was devastated by the loss of \$20,000 in funding with recent changes by the NSW Government in not funding 3 year olds.

Our parents feel completely abandoned by the NSW Government with these changes. This 20% loss in our budget will mean lots of cut backs to days and hours leaving our parents without the vital care they need. Our families are mostly rely on the agricultural sector for their employment and income which ebbs and flows with the seasonal changes. Many of our parents work to supplement their farming income. They try to manage off farm employment around our opening hours.

Our fees depend on enrolment numbers and fluctuate throughout the year. We are constantly overseeing our budget. We also offer casual days when children are absent to our working parents. Being a community based preschool parents are very limited in what they can claim through the Child Care Benefit.

Our community, committees and staff have worked tirelessly in their efforts to extend preschool operating times so our little friends can enjoy the benefits of preschool and to be able to offer the flexibility of care needed in our area. Last year we had a record enrolment of 39 children and already this year have 34 children enrolled. Small rural preschools are unique and very special. It would be the greatest tragedy to lose this service for those very important and vulnerable children.

Yours Faithfully,

Leanne Watterson
Director

