



BUDGET BASED FUNDING PROGRAM REVIEW

South Australian Mobiles Submission

27.9.2012

There will be other submissions from organisations which provide mobile services to children and families. We believe mobiles are an effective model of delivery to assist in meeting market failure.

Mobiles offer many types of services including preschools, health, crèches, occasional care, play-sessions, parent sessions, and long day care.

This submission is from the South Australian mobiles (Mallee COGS based in Lameroo, and CCOWS based in Robe). Both these services offer Long Day Care.

Each week we have the potential of offering bookings for 132 places in Robe and the surrounding districts, and 135 places in the Southern Mallee. Not all these places are utilised each week. At the present time children from 150 families are cared for weekly. Staff and parents may travel long distances to the venues. The premises used are owned by other organisations and they must be adjusted with each visit, to accommodate Long Day Care, eg putting up temporary fences for safe areas, portable cots and mats for sleeping. Sometimes Funds may be needed to make the premises or buildings safe.

DIFFERENCES

The *difference between centres and BBF Mobile services* is particularly evident in the social capacity building achieved. Our families are in rural and remote areas. We observe the benefits that our mobile services bring to the children and families that they serve.

(1) Parents contact with each other.

These services enables parents to have contact with each other , and provide a network in which parents feel comfortable in sharing stories about coping with their children. Passing on tips and information about assistance for survival in areas where there is little infrastructure, nor supportive services.

(2) Children with Children.

Often children do not see others outside their own family. Coming to care is a beneficial and sometimes a HUGE social learning experience.

(3) Professional Staff with Children.

This often enables the identification of special needs children may have, which warrant attention or/ and intervention.eg speech delays, symptoms of autism, health and nutrition needs, developmental delays. This is often the first time these needs have been observed and identified .Early assistance places the child in a much better position for transition and growth

Example 1: Boy at a remote site was diagnosed with Autism after the mobile staff made requests for assistance from Health authorities. The ensuing case management, appointments, treatment and parental assistance was made possible by the CCOWS request. Progress enabled the boy to make a better transition to Kindergarten than would otherwise have been possible.

(4) Professional Staff with Parents.

Support is offered with confidentiality through the process of referral, and afterwards through the access to appropriate agencies and services. The ability to translate and explain directions and information to some parents who are overwhelmed or bemused by the situation and the language use benefits both child and parent.

Example 2: A Certified Supervisor accompanied a parent to a Regional meeting with 5 health officials (including an Adelaide Paediatrician) and she was able to assist the parent to understand the testing and implementation of a program, suitable for her daughter with cochlear implants. There are ongoing conversations and support for the family.

(5) *Empowerment of Parents*

Parents feel empowered by positive conversations about their children and parenting. These occur daily. In some areas a staff member conducts home visits to further rapport and provide the opportunity for parents to discuss their children openly in the confidentiality and comfort of their own home. This is an empowering experience for parents and facilitates social capacity building.

Because the mobile service is offered in premises not owned by the mobiles, there is sometimes a lack of withdrawal space in which to talk with parents privately.

(6) Of course, these benefits supplement what is the main purpose of our 'core business', and that is to *provide meaningful experiences, care and opportunities for children's optimum growth and development*. This is provided by qualified staff members, who respond to children, sites and circumstances with informed, educated, appropriate and innovative responses. In this state we have been fortunate to have worked with the SACSA framework, and this is simplifying the transition to programming with the EYLF.

Please see the CCOWS Annual Report 2011-2012, which accompanies this submission for descriptions of challenges and achievements and community involvement. This also makes clear the difference between a day's operation in a centre and in a mobile service.

ADMINISTRATION

Administratively there would be an increased ability to be effective and efficient in strategic planning and appropriate service implementation and delivery, if there was:

(1) *Ability to expand present services or establish new ones.*

We believe more people are moving away from cities, particularly to coastal areas. IT enables businesses to be transportable. There are 120 spaces being sought (over the Robe and Beachport areas). There is no possibility of responding to the community needs without expanding the present service.

(2) *Have funding agreements which cover 3 years (or more).*

One year does not allow for ongoing worthwhile projects, or for flexibility of response to changing community needs. The other noticeable impact on the ability to sustain present levels of service delivery is the deficit between Funding Agreements which increases by the CPI%, when this is not keeping pace with the reality of rising operational costs. For mobiles, the freight of items, activities and resources is increasing; vehicle maintenance and premises rental are also growing. Staff wages (which in the case of SA, is governed by the EB of the Award Rate of Sponsor bodies, namely the Robe and Lamerloo Councils), is much greater than the CPI%.

(3) *Access to qualified staff in rural areas is problematic.*

We try to manage attraction and retention of appropriately qualified staff, by ensuring local people are encouraged to study and become qualified educators.

Sometimes this backfires as it offers a pathway out of the district. Incentives for serving in country areas and affordable, accessible housing would be advantageous. There needs to be positive links with Local Councils.

- (4) Sharing and mentoring and providing governance for mobiles would be an enabling path towards improved quality of service delivery. *NAMS is the peak body for mobiles*, and the Executive members accept the responsibility of their positions, with the understanding of their organisations. This peak body does not have funded Executive roles, each NAMS executive has responsibility as a Director of their own service. There is room for improvement in this situation.
- (5) *Family and Community engagement* is encouraged with trust, rapport and respectful relationships which develop over time. Parents who are not employed have more time to develop those relationships and that rapport. And sometimes this is beneficial to their parenting and understanding of children's development. In our experience, working parents often have a different view of what a "quality service" should provide. Opportunities for parents to be actively involved in Management Committees, volunteering, knowledgeable and responsible engagement and input, are possible – but presents many challenges. Continual searching for ways to educate parents about 'early brain development' is an ongoing project for mobiles and a challenge to be met by Government and Communities. It is seldom recognised and accepted that children are learning before they get to "Kindergarten".

CHALLENGES WITH PRESENT LEGISLATION

- (1) There is an inability to offer 'traineeships' to many staff as the hours they work per week, is not sufficient to enable them to be eligible for a traineeship. The nature of delivery of mobile services means that staffing is seldom full-time, as staff members are often employed at the service site nearer to where they live, and do not work across sites.
- (2) Parents are unable to access CCR as we are not a CCB Funded service. There is often confusion when they are told that our services are 'not approved'.
- (3) The SA mobiles have worked with DEEWR officers in this State to explore the viability of moving to CCB Funding. It was determined that the numbers of children were not sufficient to sustain the operational costs of the service. This is a case where BBF is the better choice, but the limits of that funding do not allow for expansion of the service to meet growing community needs.

We value the opportunity to submit our thoughts about the position of mobile services in SA in relation to the BBF Program. Continued dialogue and association with State and Federal DEEWR officers will be greatly valued by the services as they work towards 2014. This model of service delivery reflects the Government of South Australia's proposal for new Child Development Legislation under the banner of "Every chance for Every Child". This relates also to the Federal Government desire to provide services for every child no matter where they live.

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