



Nurturing our Future

The PORSE Programme

Productivity Commission Investigation into
Childcare and Early Childhood Learning

Submission made by
PORSE In-Home Childcare & Educator Training (NZ) Ltd

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1. Background

The Australian Productivity Commission's investigation into childcare and early childhood learning in Australia has prompted opportunity for international models of early childhood education and care to be considered if relevant to Australia. The following submission made by PORSE In-Home Childcare & Educator Training (NZ) Ltd ('PORSE') serves to introduce the PORSE model of care and education, share how the model enhances child development outcomes and workforce participation, provide some indication of cost to Government and families when it comes to delivery and share more with respect to the regulatory framework and quality assurance processes.

The intent of this submission is to convey how the PORSE model could be introduced, either in full or as a trial in Australia in order to provide a flexible, responsive, accessible and sustainable solution to early childhood care and education issues that have been outlined in the Productivity Commission's Issues Paper (December 2013).

PORSE offers an innovative and capacity-building model so as to provide a turnkey service to educators and families. The PORSE philosophy is founded on the child being at the heart of all programme delivery, with a relationship-based lens guiding all quality assurance processes to determine the best possible outcomes for children and families. Ultimately, PORSE provides a service solution to reach, immerse and support adults to raise the next generation of responsible, resilient, competent and contributing members of society.

2. Organisational Summary

Introduction

With 20 years' experience in the industry, PORSE is New Zealand's largest and longest serving home-based early childhood education ('ECE') and training provider, enabling home-based care and education for nearly 7,000 children and 5,000 families, while also providing workplace training for nearly 3,000 educators working across New Zealand. PORSE has 39 Community Team offices operating within communities nationwide, holding 76 licences with the Ministry of Education as a licensed ECE service provider.

PORSE values attest to living and learning beginning at home, with the belief that the best foundation for early learning is the provision of a stable and secure environment where children can build strong one-on-one attachment relationships with their educators. PORSE educators embark on a career pathway, supported by regular home visits (fortnightly-monthly) from qualified early childhood education teachers who are able to provide professional support, educational resources and evaluation and assessment of each child's education and care programme.

What PORSE stands for and means

... to PLAY for hours on end

... to OBSERVE and know what to do

... to RECORD & RELATE, connect and establish an attachment relationship

... to SUPPORT with learning through play

... to EVALUATE & EXTEND with loads of encouragement

The PORSE Programme is family directed, using in-home and community learning settings. Guided by the New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum, Te Whāriki¹, it focuses on early brain development, nurturing care and respectful relationships between children, family and educators.

Our Philosophy: Quality ECE Through Strong Relationships

Research in the fields of infancy, mental health and neurobiology over the last several decades has changed our understanding of babies and the adults they become. It is now very clear that what we experience, feel and know in our infant and toddler years becomes the map by which we navigate the world.

The quality of those relationships with parents and caregivers are the key features that influence us for the rest of our lives, our sense of ourselves and our relationships with others. Children form attachments to their main caregivers and these primary attachments are fundamentals of life, as essential to growth and development as breathing and eating.

It is with this in mind that the PORSE Programme offers:

- A safe and settled home environment to enable familiarity and stability while using natural play and exploration.
- The community as a learning playground with regular group-based activities for children and their educators which promote friendship and fun, role modelling, observation, reflection of practices, confidence and sharing of information, resources and knowledge. Parents are also welcome to attend all organised activities.
- A learning journey that is unique to each individual child and developed by supporting a personally selected educator to meet families' needs, including any cultural needs.

¹ <http://www.educate.ece.govt.nz/~media/Educate/Files/Reference%20Downloads/whariki.pdf>

- A relationship-based approach to learning, with educators who become significant others in the lives of the children they nurture and their parents. This is particularly important for vulnerable children and their families as PORSE can provide additional support and link them up to other social services to ensure the family have the support they need.
- Children TIME for the unfolding of their natural development and individual potential. Similarly, it also allows educators time to recognise how children instinctively want to learn - how their learning emerges through the educator's skill of connecting, communicating and collaborating with the individual child's learning PATTERNS.
- Established career pathways for educators and parents to develop child-focused attitudes, skills and knowledge that will nurture young children off to the best start in life.

This fits with the Australian Government's rationale for involvement in the review of childcare and early childhood learning –

“...enhancing early childhood learning and development opportunities contributes to: healthy child development (which builds human capital); better transitioning of children into the formal education system; reducing the risk of harm to certain children in the community and overcoming disadvantage and its longer term social consequences” (Australian Government, Childcare and Early Childhood Learning Productivity Commission Issues Paper, p5-6, 2013).

Workplace Training

PORSE is a registered Private Training Establishment², providing quality education as it applies to nurturing respectful relationships between adults and children in response to the demands of both learners and industry. As such, PORSE supports educators by providing the following training programmes and resources:

- *National Certificate in Early Childhood Education & Care (Level 3)*

The National Certificate in Early Childhood Education & Care (Level 3) (Version 4) is a flexible 21 week distance learning programme for carers, secondary school students, parents and educators who have a commitment to work and learn alongside children under the age of six years. It recognises basic knowledge, skills, and attributes required for ECE and care of infants, toddlers and young children across all early childhood contexts. In 2012 PORSE achieved a completion rate of 90% as compared to the sector median of 82%.

² <http://www.tec.govt.nz/Learners-Organisations/Learners/performance-in-tertiary-education/performance-by-type-of-tertiary-provider/about-ptes/>

- *Nanny Intern Programme*

This programme has been designed to support transition into the workforce for 17-25 year olds who have a passion for early childhood education. The Nanny Intern Programme³ (NIPs) provides an opportunity for young nannies to gain valuable hands-on, authentic and practical work experience in early childhood education in a home setting alongside a training family while completing the National Certificate in ECE (Level 3). As part of the programme, the family will pay the nanny's training fees and provide accommodation (if nanny/family chooses a live-in option) in return for having a nanny on-hand to help care for their child/ren. The programme runs for 21 weeks (the duration of the certificate course). Destination data is still being analysed for the 2013 year, however, in 2012:

- over 90% of enrolled training nannies completed the programme
- 86% of all nanny interns were supported into paid employment following their graduation from the programme.
- 7% of nannies went on to enrol in full-time study in early childhood education.

- *PORSE Programme Tools*

PORSE has developed a range of programme tools to support educators with the day-to-day delivery of programmes to children in their care. These resources align with New Zealand's ECE curriculum, Te Whāriki, and the PORSE acronym – Play, Observe, Record & Relate, Support and Evaluate & Extend. This is compiled in an Educator Operations Manual, including practical information, ideas and encouragement to support children's learning and development. A Child Programme Journal is used daily by all PORSE Educators to record key health and safety considerations and requirements, write learning stories, communicate with/invite involvement from families and document any other programme-specific details relevant to each individual child in care.

- *Self-review and quality assurance*

As a living, learning organisation, PORSE continuously engages in the self-review process in order to grow and improve. PORSE supports the self-review journey by ensuring a guided self-review process informs all areas of practice.

³ <http://www.porse.co.nz/content/nanny-intern-programme>

PORSE has received consistently outstanding reports from the Education Review Office⁴.

"There is a strong commitment to developing the professional practices of educators. Tutors encourage and support educators to participate in PORSE training programmes and gain qualifications to increase their understanding of how children develop and learn."⁵

"A feature of the service is the affirming and respectful relationship established between educators and children. Positive interactions within homes enhances children's social and communication skills. Children confidently approach educators who are highly responsive to their interests and needs."⁶

- *For Life Education & Training Courses*

Created as a subsidiary company to PORSE Education & Training, For Life Education & Training supports lifelong learning and is focused on empowering and supporting all people to consciously be in relationship with others. With the latest scientific research in early brain development and attachment theory informing programme development, For Life courses support parents and caregivers in their quest to nurture confident, self-regulating and resilient children. The For Life philosophy centres on learning occurring throughout all ages and stages of life.

- *Health and Safety*

PORSE supports all educators with the health and safety requirements of operating a home-based service, as outlined in the Ministry of Education's 2008 regulatory framework⁷. Health and safety is regularly checked and maintained in each PORSE home by educators, with fortnightly-monthly visits from a Programme Tutor (ECE trained teacher) supporting any required documentation, implementation and review. All PORSE Educators are police checked and provided with health and safety information before their journey with PORSE begins. They also complete a First Aid certificate with PORSE's national First Aid partners, St John. Programme policies inform all health and safety systems and the quality assurance processes.

⁴ The New Zealand government department that evaluates and reports on the education and care of students in schools and early childhood services ⁵ PORSE Lower Hutt S2 Education Review, ERO Report dated 16 February 2011

⁶ PORSE Mt Maunganui Q1 Education Review, ERO Report dated 14 March 2011

⁷ <http://www.lead.ece.govt.nz/ManagementInformation/RegulatoryFrameworkForECEServices/2008RegulatoryFramework.aspx>

3. Funding Home-Based Early Childhood Education in New Zealand

Ministry of Education funding is paid directly to early childhood education provider (e.g. PORSE) in order for the provider to operate and deliver a programme for the number of children specified on the provider's license. Funding is different depending on the early childhood education provider type.⁸

- ECE Subsidy

The ECE subsidy funding is paid for up to 30 hours per week per child. It is not paid for any more than 6 hours per day. Funding for teacher-led home-based ECE services such as PORSE is as follows⁹:

Table one: ECE rates for teacher-led home-based ECE services

| \$ per funded child hour (including GST) | Rates to 30 June 2013 | | | Rates from 1 July 2013 | | |
|---|-----------------------|------------|--------------|------------------------|------------|--------------|
| | Under 2 | 2 and over | 20 Hours ECE | Under 2 | 2 and over | 20 Hours ECE |
| Quality | \$8.22 | \$4.40 | \$9.17 | \$8.26 | \$4.42 | \$9.22 |
| Standard | \$7.20 | \$3.90 | \$8.66 | \$7.24 | \$3.92 | \$8.71 |

- 20 Hours ECE

20 Hours ECE is a higher rate of funding available for children aged between three and five for up to 20 hours per week and no more than 6 hours per day. Early childhood education providers are required to opt into the scheme as additional policies need to be met. Around 80% of all early childhood education providers have opted into the scheme.

20 hours ECE was designed to cover the average costs of ECE childcare and no fees may be charged to families for any of the 20 Hours ECE hours attested to.

One hour of 20 Hours ECE replaces one hour of normal ECE subsidy funding.

There is an additional 10 hours per week per child funding available at the over two rate above. The funding rates for 20 Hours ECE can be seen in table one above.

⁸ Further information on funding can be seen here:
<http://www.lead.ece.govt.nz/ManagementInformation/Funding/FundingHandbook.aspx>

⁹ <http://www.lead.ece.govt.nz/~media/Educate/Files/Reference%20Downloads/Lead/Files/Funding/FundingHandbook/AppendixOne2013FundingRates.doc>

4. Childcare and Early Childhood Learning Review Objectives

Based on the above Organisational Summary, it is evident that the PORSE model meets the key objectives outlined by the Productivity Commission in the Issues Report in the following ways:

1. *Supporting workforce participation, particularly for women*

- PORSE offers two-fold benefit for the workforce, enabling parents to return to work knowing that their children are well looked after while also providing opportunities for parents to become home-based educators, bringing other children into their homes and caring for them alongside their own, providing additional income.
- PORSE is flexible, responsive and accessible. As it occurs in a home-setting there is no direct cost to build new centres and supporting infrastructure. This is also supportive for rural and other hard-to-target areas. The licensed hours extend beyond the non-standard work hours to provide for more flexible care arrangements to better suit the needs of the modern-day workforce.
- PORSE is efficient and effective – by having close to 40% of the home-based ECE market, funding is used effectively to increase workforce participation through free training and provide responsive and individualised learning programmes for each child.
- Parents who have been welfare-dependent are supported to engage with PORSE as a part of finding work and/or childcare, reducing long term unemployment and reliance on welfare support.
- Youth aged 17-25 years old can participate in on-the-job training and gain a free nationally recognised ECE qualification by enrolling in the Nanny Intern Programme to set them up for further studies or full time employment and gain important life skills.

2. *Addressing children's learning and development needs, including transition to school*

- Philosophy and programme delivery is informed by the latest scientific research in early brain development and attachment theory.
- Small group sizes and low educator to child ratios allow for one-on-one interaction and engagement through a consistent and committed educator.
- Educators are supported to design individual programmes for each child to accommodate their own unique needs and interests, particularly cultural needs.

- A rich community programme focuses on the natural unfolding of a child's development and learning through experience by using community environments to explore the interests of the child.
 - Transition to school programmes available to support children with learning the social efficacy and school readiness skills required for the transition to primary school.
 - PORSE is an Accredited Private Training Organisation, offering free workplace training to all educators and Programme Co-ordinators that is targeted and fit for purpose.
3. *Early childhood learning and education is flexible to suit the needs of families, including families with non-standard work hours, disadvantaged children and isolated families*
- Programmes and service hours fit around the needs of children and parents, with a great degree of flexibility offered service to service around provision of care during non-standard hours. Care can be offered in the child's own home or in the home of an educator (depending on parents' wishes). If opting to provide care in their own home, the parents are able to avoid travel to drop off/pick up at centres. This is particularly advantageous on rural areas where there may be less access to ECE centres.
 - Additional services can be obtained easily should the needs of parents or children change. This could mean a change in existing care arrangements (e.g. increase/decrease in hours, change in care start/finish times, change in home where the care takes place etc) or set up of new care arrangements.
 - Programmes respond to individual needs, family values and cultural diversity. Flexibility in adapting education and care to a particular child enables educators to cater for children with special needs.
 - Targeted and specific training can be offered to educators and families to support them in meeting any special needs of children/families in their care.
 - PORSE works with Government to provide tailored and responsive strategies to target priority groups and vulnerable children. This has included focuses on: youth aged 17-25 as they transition from school into the workplace, lower socio economic families, families of Māori or Pasifika descent, children with disabilities, families/educators who speak English as a second language and families who are geographically isolated.

4. *Funding arrangements that better support flexible, affordable and accessible quality childcare and early learning*

- In New Zealand, PORSE operates under a provider-funded model, enabling a simple and efficient funding approach for all parties involved.
- The PORSE service offers value for money and is effective and efficient as Government funding rates for home-based ECE services are significantly lower than those for centre-based services.
- Due to care taking place in the home, there is no need for the expense associated with building childcare centres or associated infrastructure.

5. Conclusion

It is based on the Productivity Commission's overall objectives that we recommend that the POSRSE model be considered as a part of the investigation into childcare and early childhood learning in Australia.

In New Zealand, the success of the PORSE model is evident in its 20 year operating history as the largest home-based provider. Most importantly, PORSE provides high quality childcare and early childhood learning for children, producing high quality outcomes and allowing services to be accessible and flexible enough to meet the individual needs of any family. PORSE services have not only supported increased participation rates in childcare and early childhood learning – they have had universal effect, improving outcomes in health, nutrition, housing, welfare and education nationwide. Now the opportunity exists for PORSE to expand into the Australian market so that Australian families and educators can enjoy flexible, responsive, accessible and sustainable solutions to the early childhood care and education issues identified.

We strongly urge the Productivity Commission to trial the PORSE model. We would be happy to further meet to discuss this exciting opportunity and would happily work in partnership to nurture the future of Australian children.

6. Appendices

For additional information, including evidence-based research and evaluation documents that discuss both the provision of home-based early childhood education in New Zealand and the delivery of the PORSE programme as a home-based provider, please see the appendices attached to this submission.

These appendices are as follow:

- *Appendix One*

Hallmark, S., Managing Demand and Matching Quality: The Case for PORSE Home-Based Early Childhood Education (Hallmark & Associates, 2012).

- *Appendix Two*

Hallmark, S. Evaluation Report on the Operation of PORSE Programme, Delivery and Support (Hallmark & Associates, 2013).