

*The equity of opportunity for
all young children:*

Port Augusta

March 2007

This paper has been developed by representatives from the following organisations / agencies in response to the recent visits by “*Adelaide Thinkers in Residence*”, Professor Fraser Mustard:

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- UnitingCare Wesley Port Pirie (Jan Oliver)
- Department of Education and Children’s Services (David Craig and Jeanette Conroy)
- Port Augusta City Council (Anne O’Reilly)
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report would not have been possible without the feedback and suggestions of the Port Augusta community. Families and service providers in this community have long sought a coordinated change to improve the developmental outcomes of their children. The efforts and determination of staff working with families and children must also be praised. They are often required to work in challenging environments and constrained by departmental boundaries.

The Port Augusta Early Childhood Development (PA ECD) Progress Group wishes to thank Dr Fraser Mustard for his enthusiasm and foresight, identifying the Port Augusta community as a potential site for implementing an integrated early childhood development model.

Dr Mustard's "*Thinkers in Residence*" support team have also provided valuable guidance and advice to the PA ECD Program Group. We wish to thank you for your efforts in coordinating Dr Mustard's visits and meetings along with making the journey to Port Augusta on several occasions.

The Progress Group thanks the Aboriginal community for their cultural expertise and advice in the preparation of this document to ensure future programs can be led and facilitated by culturally respectful and competent staff.

The Progress Group also wishes to acknowledge the Australian and South Australian Governments for recognising the critical nature of the early years of a child's life.

The Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments have committed to making early childhood development (ECD) a top priority, with a strong focus on early intervention and prevention, in particular, the development of a National Agenda for Early Childhood. The South Australian Government's vision is to provide every chance for every child and ultimately afford them the opportunity to have the best start in life

Finally, thanks must go to the members of the PA ECD Progress Group. We look forward to your tireless efforts being rewarded via the realisation of Port Augusta's vision for early childhood development.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Both the Commonwealth and South Australian Governments have recognised the value and importance of investing in early childhood development (ECD). The appointment of Dr Fraser Mustard as an Adelaide Thinker in Residence in late 2006 is evidence of the State Government's commitment.

Port Augusta's early childhood education and health outcomes are poor when compared to the rest of Australia. For example, Port Augusta has almost double the number of vulnerable children in one or more domains (40%) of the Australian Early Development Index in contrast to the National average (22%). These results are coupled with a high local birth rate and large Aboriginal population. Despite these results, Port Augusta has a strong commitment towards improving the outcomes for local children and families.

A major ECD initiative recently announced for Port Augusta is the development of a Department of Education & Children's Services (DECS) Children's Centre. This centre will aim to provide a place for parents and children from birth to eight years to access relevant ECD programs such as parenting support, early learning non parental care, referral to relevant services and pre-school. Whilst this positive commitment will go some way to improving local children's ECD outcomes, a more comprehensive and integrated model is required.

Dr Mustard, an internationally acknowledged expert in the field of brain & early childhood development, visited Port Augusta on two separate occasions in October 2006 and February 2007. After considering local current ECD outcome results and existing local capacity, Dr Mustard identified Port Augusta as a key site for developing an integrated program model for children and families that would serve as precedence for the rest of the State.

A multi-agency progress group was subsequently established to create a proposal that would deliver culturally inclusive, evidence based ECD programs with an aim to respond to the diverse needs of all Port Augusta's children and families.

To maximise the coverage of integrated ECD programs and services to all families, a hub and spoke model has been recommended for Port Augusta. The recently announced DECS Children Centre will be fundamental to the proposal

performing as a central hub for preschool, non-parental early learning care, ECD related programs, family support and outreach assistance to three Child and Family Centres (spokes) situated on existing DECS sites throughout Port Augusta. The three spoke sites will deliver drop in parent support services, ECD play based learning programs and community development activities.

Key Action Areas for the proposal were developed in response to feedback from community consultation and local demographic data, education and health outcomes. The following action areas also respond to identified South Australian Strategic Plan (SASP) objectives below:

KEY ACTION AREA	SOUTH AUSTRALIAN STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVE
1. Promote healthy pregnancy, birth and infancy	2.1: Reduce Smoking T2.2: Increase Birth weight T6.1: Aboriginal Wellbeing T6.3: Early Childhood
2. Parenting & Family Supports	T2.4: Healthy South Australians T2.5: Aboriginal Healthy Life Expectancy T6.1: Aboriginal Wellbeing
3. Early Childhood Development, Learning and Care	T.2 Preventative Health T.6: Aboriginal Wellbeing & Early Childhood T6.18: Aboriginal Education
4. Strengthen Community Supports	T2.7: Psychological Wellbeing T5.7 Aboriginal Leadership T5.8 Multiculturalism

Whilst this proposal's objective is to create an integrated ECD program model that supports all Port Augusta children and families, the progress group recognises the diverse needs and ethnicity of our community. Development of well branded facilities / programs that value cultural diversity and inclusiveness whilst ensuring program staff are culturally competent will increase access for Aboriginal children and families.

Key recommendations for this submission advocate for the:

- Completion of a feasibility study to scope the implementation, costing and evaluation of an integrated ECD program model of service.
- Establishment of an Enabling Committee with appropriate membership that represents the diverse demographics of the Port Augusta community to guide and support the scoping process.

- Establishment of an incorporated organisation in Port Augusta to facilitate the coordination and resources of future relevant ECD programs and services.

Backed by international research and evidence, Dr Mustard's goal has been to increase public awareness and investment towards birth to children aged three years.

Accepting the challenge set down in this submission will establish South Australia as an international leader in ECD investment along with creating equity of opportunity for all young children in Port Augusta.

INTRODUCTION

Promoting the importance of the early years has long been a priority in Port Augusta. A strong network of passionate individuals continue to collaborate at a local operational level to drive this agenda. Investment made by Commonwealth and State Governments in Port Augusta also reveals a strong understanding and commitment to affording children the best possible start in life.

Comprehensive evidence detailed in this report indicates current methods of delivering support and services to promote ECD in Port Augusta are not achieving acceptable rates of return for the funding provided. This is not to underestimate the professionalism and fervor of local staff but more so to highlight the need for sustainable long term investment and to review current systematic deliverables provided by government agencies.

Whilst the local Regional Child & Youth Health Advisory Group and Port Augusta "Communities 4 Children" Committee (local multi-agency/organisation ECD focused committees) continue to advocate for and highlight challenges facing families, there has been limited opportunity to collectively evaluate the effectiveness of local efforts towards improving ECD outcomes.

The appointment of Dr Fraser Mustard as Thinker in Residence and his subsequent interest in Port Augusta has given our community the energy and opportunity to prepare a submission that not only challenges the current model of service but also places measures of accountability to deliver real outcomes and positive differences in the development of our young children.

Dr Mustard recently visited Port Augusta on two separate occasions. The first visit in November 2006 was a scoping exercise to gain understanding of the current services and expertise in the community. The second visit (February 07), Dr Mustard addressed the wider community seeking their feedback and ideas on a proposed draft model of service that could significantly contribute to the improved accessibility and coordination of ECD services. This proposal was

developed in draft form for consultation by the PA ECD Progress Group with guidance from Dr Mustard and his Thinkers in Residence support team.

The following proposal takes into consideration the quantitative evidence available for ECD outcomes in Port Augusta, international ECD best practice models, the expertise and experience provided by Dr Mustard and local staff and community feedback via consultation.

BACKGROUND

The Importance of Early Childhood

Evidence confirming the importance of the early years is now widely available throughout Australia and internationally. In their 2002 ECD paper titled Early Childhood Development in British Columbia: “Enabling Communities”, Mustard and Picherak wrote:

“During gestation and the early years after birth, when experience-based brain development is most active, and therefore most vulnerable, the experiences, including the environment, that a young child is exposed to have a long reach throughout the life course. Good nutrition, safe water, immunisation, responsive care-giving, play based learning, protection and the support of mothers and other care-givers, lead to good early childhood development.

The early period of development (pre-natal and post –natal) as well as the early years are a very sensitive period for the experience dependent wiring and sculpting of the billions of neurons in the brain that set a base for future function.”

The experiences and relationships a child has, plus nutrition and health, significantly affect child development. It is important to invest in early childhood development to foster a healthy and competent population, and to promote opportunities for children to achieve their potential. Proactive governments are responding by making significant steps in changing current governance, investment and service delivery to promote and enhance ECD.

Service Delivery Issues

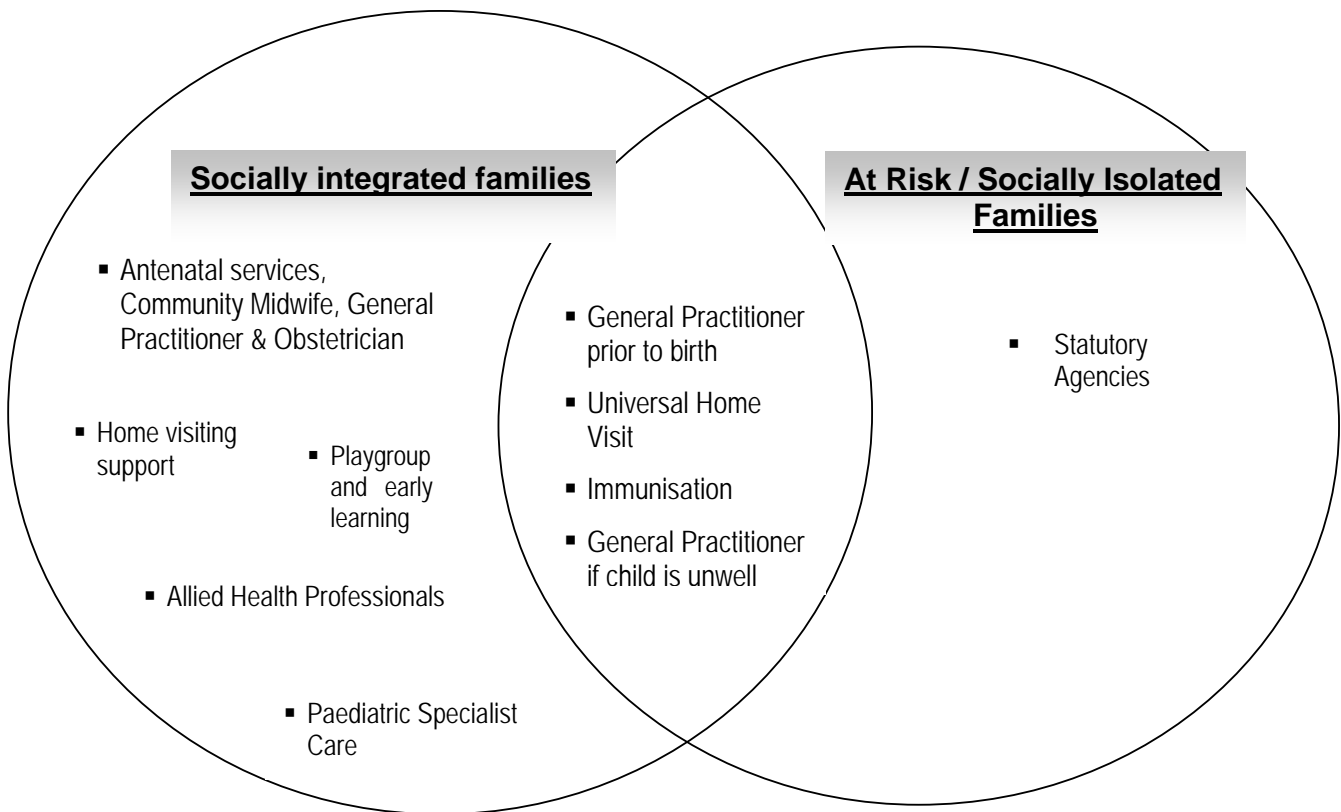
Evidence indicates families who are at risk and/or socially isolated from the community generally have poorer education and health status.

Reduced exposure to formal “intersections” that provide early detection, intervention and early learning and development can hinder the potential best start in a child’s life. An integrated model of service that is community owned and culturally diverse will reduce the perception of an agency style service whilst increasing social and cultural access to families who have been historically difficult to engage. In addition, an integrated model would also reduce current operating and communication difficulties between large government departments and service providers.

The following “Venn” diagram supports the previous statement and illustrates the current inequalities in access to programs and services between families (of children aged 0 – 3 years prior to entering pre-school) who are socially integrated in the community and those families who are not.

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Once families enter the network of ECD programs and services, transition between support services and preparation for entry to the education system is achievable. However without access to this network, whether this is due to cultural difference or perception, fear of the system or lack of understanding, at risk families have to navigate their own course.

Policy Context

South Australian Government

The recently published South Australian Strategic Plan (January 2007) acknowledges the importance of early childhood development. The Plan aims to maximizing the health of newborns, increasing stimulation to develop early literacy and enhancing environments for infants and young children where they are nurtured. The State's Strategic Plan specifically addresses the needs of Aboriginal children and aims to improve both ECD and literacy. The AEDI has also been introduced as tool to measure ECD improvement. The strategic plan also underpins the "Education Works" initiative which aims to "make sure children have more opportunities to achieve their best". As the above demonstrates, under the leadership of Premier Rann, the South Australian Government has recognised the potential return on investment in ECD.

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Department of Education & Children's Services (DECS)

The South Australian Government recently announced Port Augusta as one of the ten sites for a new Children's Centre aiming to lead the way in providing the best possible education system for children. The Children's Centres will be a place for parents and children from birth to eight years to access services including early learning child care, parenting support, programs and referral to relevant services and pre-school.

Corporation of the City of Port Augusta

The Port Augusta City Council's mission statement is to "*Create and sustain a safe and vibrant community where people want to live, work, play and visit*". Strategies detailed in the Council's plan include:

- 1.2.5: *Plan, implement and provide ongoing commitment to activities and programs which increase the likelihood of achieving positive outcomes for children, young people and the community*
- 1.2.7: *Identify new partnerships to provide effective program delivery for the young and aged people of our community*

The Port Augusta City Council also facilitates the operation of the Miriam High Special Needs Centre which provides early intervention support services to families of children with special needs and/or developmental delay. This service has been recognised as a centre of excellence for their delivery of services to such children and is considered a key stakeholder in an integrated ECD model for Port Augusta.

"Communities 4 Children"

The Commonwealth Government's Stronger Families and Communities initiative funds the "*Communities 4 Children*" project with Port Augusta being selected as a site. Following a comprehensive community consultation, the project has developed five key programs identified as priorities by the community. The flagship for this project is the realization of the Early Years Parenting Centre which recently opened at 1 Stirling Rd. This centre provides families with access to a range of services whilst also running programs to support families and young children.

Country Health SA – Early Childhood Directorate

Recently formed Country Health SA has identified ECD as a priority with the creation of an Early Childhood Directorate. An Executive Director has been appointed and plans to further develop the portfolio are currently underway.

Local Context

The city of Port Augusta lies at the head of the Spencer Gulf and situated close to the Flinders Ranges. As major highways from the north, south, east and west converge in Port Augusta, it is often referred to as the Crossroads of Australia.

During the establishment/scoping phases for two prominent Port Augusta early childhood initiatives (Country Health SA Early Childhood Intervention Portfolio [2003] and the Commonwealth funded Communities 4 Children initiative facilitated by UnitingCare Wesley Port Pirie [2005]), extensive consultation was conducted with local families and service providers to gain an understanding of the challenges and needs of local families.

Consultation findings revealed the following similar highest priorities including:

- Supporting and promoting healthy young families
- Supporting families and parents with early learning development
- Creating a Child friendly community / environment
- Family and children's services working effectively as an integrated system

The South Australian Government recently announced that Port Augusta will be one of ten new "Children's Centres". The Children's Centre concept will provide a whole of government approach to ECD. The Centre will work in partnership with the Port Augusta community to bring together a range of services for children and families, based on local needs and family choice. These services will focus on child and family education, health and support. The Port Augusta Children's Centre has been identified as the vehicle to sustain the Early Years Parenting Centre (an initiative of the Commonwealth's "Communities 4 Children" – see above) and is expected to be operational by 2009.

This announcement, coupled Dr Fraser Mustard's visits established the foundation for the PA ECD Progress Group to generate a draft model of service for consideration that is underpinned by the feedback from community consultation. In particular, although the local community welcomes the establishment of a single Children's Centre, concerns were raised that this model would not service the whole community. The following population approach will strengthen and increase the catchment reach of an integrated ECD program model

STATUS OF PORT AUGUSTA CHILDREN

Demographics

Port Augusta has experienced significant capital investment and population growth in the past five years. 2001 – ABS Census indicates a population of 13,511 however a population of in excess of 15,000 people @ 2007 would be more accurate. The city is also considered a hub for surrounding mining communities such as Roxby Downs and Leigh Creek to access retail facilities and Government services. Since the recent announcement by BHP Billiton to expand the Olympic Dam mine (near Roxby Downs) many families use Port Augusta as a base to reside and travel to Roxby Downs (2.5 hour road trip) for work, generally on a rotating roster (ie: 4 days on 4 days off). Anecdotal information suggests that Port Augusta's population may increase rapidly over the five to ten years.

Port Augusta's child population, based on 2001 – ABS Census reveals:

Population Aged	Port Augusta Total	Aboriginal	% of Aboriginal
0-5 Years	1,173	299	25.49%
6-8 years	613	164	26.75%

Port Augusta is identified as a central meeting place for the remote Aboriginal communities of northern South Australia, particularly families and groups from the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) lands. The Port Augusta Aboriginal population significantly fluctuates in the summer periods as people move to and from these communities.

Planning of service provision for an integrated ECD model needs to be mindful of this population fluctuation and be able to accommodate increased demand and meet the needs of families where English is a second language

Based on 2001 – ABS Census, Port Augusta Aboriginal community represents over 15% of the population. Of particular note Aboriginal children represent over 25% of Port Augusta's 0-8 years population.

NB: The ABS Census should only be used as a guide when measuring Aboriginal populations.

Birth Rate

Port Augusta also has a high birth rate when compared with country South Australia and South Australia as a whole. Aboriginal births are consistent with the percentage of the child population. In 2005, 25% of births in Port Augusta were to Aboriginal families (*Total births = 205, Aboriginal births = 50*)

Port Augusta birth rate when compared to South Australia

Area	Numbers of Births 2005	Crude Birth Rate *
Port Augusta	205	14.9
Country South Australia	5,136	11.9
South Australia	17,800	11.5

Note 1: Port Augusta recorded over 300 births in 2005, however 205 were identified as births to families who reside in this community. Note 2: Crude Birth Rate = Number of birth / population shown by 1000 persons. Source: ABS, Cat 3301.0, 2005, Births Australia.

Australian Early Development Index

Recognised as a highly regarded ECD measure of how children are faring in their community, the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) was conducted in 2005 across much of north and far western country South Australia. This was the first site in South Australia to participate in the AEDI.

The AEDI has since been included in South Australia's 2007 Strategic Plan (Objective 6: Expanding Opportunity) to continue to measure the State's improvement in ECD.

The AEDI is a population measure of young children's development based on the scores of a teacher completed checklist consisting of approximately one hundred questions covering physical health & well being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development and communication skills / general knowledge.

Over 30,000 children have now participated in the AEDI since it's inception in 2003 across Australia. When compared to the National group data, Port Augusta's results are alarmingly poor. Dr Mustard at a presentation in Port Augusta in late 2006, referred to these results as unacceptable.

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The AEDI results for Port Augusta demonstrate that outcomes for local children are well below both the national and state averages with more than 40% of all children considered developmentally vulnerable. This concerning rate increases significantly for local Aboriginal children.

Location	% of children developmentally vulnerable on <u>one</u> or more domains aged 5 years	% of children developmentally vulnerable on <u>two</u> or more domains aged 5 years	% of children performing well aged 5 years
National results	22.6%	11%	65%
Port Augusta	43.1%	22.9%	32.6%

AEDI domain specific data for Port Augusta expose the following results:

Domain	% of children developmentally vulnerable aged 5 years	% of children performing well aged 5 years
Physical Health & Wellbeing	16.0%	16.7%
Social Knowledge and Competence	22.2%	11.1%
Emotional Maturity	9.9%	13.4%
Language and Cognitive Development	17.5%	5.6%
Communication Skills and General Knowledge	18.1%	17.4%

Out of the ten regional communities surveyed in the 2005 north and far western country South Australian AEDI, Port Augusta had the highest proportion of children considered vulnerable. This benchmark data serves as Port Augusta's inaugural score card. The AEDI will be completed every two years in Port Augusta to measure the impact of future coordinated efforts.

This confronting data, whilst conclusive, requires a response that challenges current models of ECD services. Outcomes however may only be identifiable in the medium to long term, ie: 3 -5 years.

BREAKING THE MOULD – A COLLECTIVE RESPONSE

Port Augusta is often a site of interest for government and non-government initiatives. Planning and community consultation often results in short term investment and unsustainable objectives. This proposal presents an exciting opportunity to break the mould and establish a program based model that delivers measurable outcomes and responds directly to those in greatest need.

Significant consultations were conducted in 2004 by Country Health SA (the then Northern & Far Western Regional Health Service) and in 2005 by Communities 4 Children facilitated by UnitingCare Wesley Port Pirie. Subsequently the PA ECD Progress Group's draft proposal was shaped on the foundation of the key results captured from these consultations.

To validate and gain support for the draft proposal, members of the Progress Group facilitated several consultations including a public meeting with key stakeholders from government, council, related organisations and business and a gathering of Aboriginal women in senior ECD roles to discuss key elements necessary to ensure such a service was culturally diverse and engaging.

Feedback raised by attendees re-affirmed the importance of ensuring the following factors were addressed in the final model of service:

- Long term sustainability & ongoing measuring and evaluation of outcomes
- Parental engagement, community development
- Agency collaboration and community ownership
- Cultural sensitivity, diversity and respect
- Upskill and acknowledge expertise of ECD staff

The consultation then provided opportunity to consider how such a vision for Port Augusta could look in five years. Work group feedback included:

- Flexible service delivery and operating hours (ie: not just 9-5pm)
- Co-located infrastructure
- AEDI improvement on current results resulting in a healthier community
- Centre of excellence in ECD resulting in attraction of new skilled labour
- Trained, skilled and culturally competent workforce
- Image of Port Augusta improved & enhanced economic development
- Increased awareness amongst families re: importance of the early years

The following principles to establish the basis of development for an integrated ECD model were approved by attendees of the consultations:

▪ Achievable	▪ Measurable	▪ Culturally competent
▪ Sustainable	▪ Duplicable	▪ Effective

▪ Integrated	▪ Accessible	▪ Inclusive
▪ Locally owned	▪ Flexible	▪ Available to all

PROGRAM MODEL – *The Equity of Opportunity for All Young Children*

The key components of this chapter consider governance, proposed ECD model and service delivery (current and proposed), infrastructure (existing and required) and accountability.

Governance

In his recent visits to Port Augusta, Dr Mustard flagged that the myriad of services, various budget lines and methods of reporting statistical data outcomes were too cumbersome and needed streamlining to achieve the ultimate goal of delivering truly collaborative services to young children and families. Feedback from community consultation confirmed Dr Mustard's confusion when trying to understand "who does what" in delivering ECD services in Port Augusta.

Recognising successful ECD investment strategies such as those of the Canadian Government who in September 2000 "*affirmed their commitment to the wellbeing of children by setting out their vision of ECD as an investment in the future of Canada*" an appointment of a Minister of State for Early Childhood Development firmly placed ECD on the National Government's agenda has given the PA ECD Progress Group insight into how a truly integrated and collaborative model could be shaped.

The PA ECD Progress Group with the support of Dr Mustard and his team agree there is a superb opportunity to expand the current Children's Centre commitment to that of a whole of community approach where integrated quality ECD services are available throughout all of Port Augusta.

In grasping this opportunity, a governance configuration that blurs current departmental boundaries to achieve family focused culturally competent services is required. The establishment of an incorporated body represented by relevant key stakeholders and community members would create a locally accountable and driven ECD focused organisation answerable to the community and to funding authorities. The Incorporated body would draw on expertise and resources of existing DECS, Health, Family and Community Services and non-government related parenting/family programs to create a seamless service delivery to families.

The incorporated body would act as the central point of contact for:

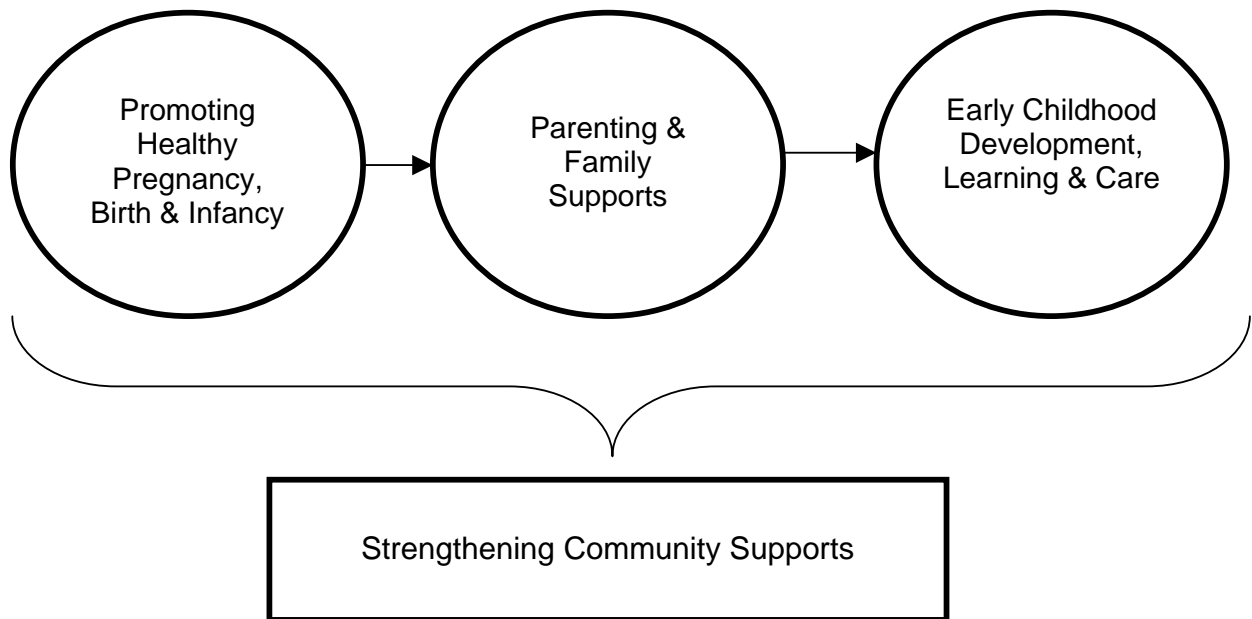
- Departmental liaison
- A clearing house for relevant reporting
- Accommodation of all ECD related funding (government and non-government funding).

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Areas for Action

Areas for action and funding commitment highlighted by local families and relevant services include:



These priorities and the previously mentioned underpinning principles are embedded in the following model for integrated ECD services for Port Augusta that challenge historical methods of service delivery.

1. Promote Health Pregnancy, Birth and Infancy

Key Outcome Areas (KOA) for Priority 1 will include:

1. Increased birth weight
2. Entry into antenatal support services in the first trimester of pregnancy
3. Increased breast feeding participation
4. Reduced teen pregnancy rate
5. Achieve a minimum of seven antenatal visits
6. Reduction in drug and alcohol use during pregnancy (including smoking)
7. Increased consumer and volunteer participation and planning
8. Increased registration of Aboriginal families into Family Home Visiting
9. Maintain high immunization rate

These KOA's will be achieved via the following strategies:

STRATEGY (KOA Priority 1)	SERVICE PROVIDER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Antenatal support services and group sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Port Augusta Hospital (PAHRHS) ▪ Children, Youth & Women's Health Service (CYWHS) ▪ Pika Wiya Health Service (PWHS)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Medical birthing services (GP / Obstetrician) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local Obstetrician & Obstetric GPs ▪ Northern Regional Paediatric Unit ▪ PAHRHS ▪ CYWHS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Health promotion (ie: nutrition, drug and alcohol support, immunization, family planning, parent advocacy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PAHRHS ▪ PWHS ▪ CYWHS ▪ Drug & Alcohol Service – South Australia ▪ Department of Education & Children's Services (DECS) ▪ NGOs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Family Home Visiting & Parent / Child relationship development (attachment) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CYWHS ▪ PAHRHS ▪ Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service ▪ Families SA ▪ PWHS ▪ Early Years Parenting Ctr / Good Beginnings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child Development & Health screening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PAHRHS ▪ PWHS ▪ CYWHS

	▪ DECS
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2. Parenting and Family Supports

Key Outcome Areas (KOA) for Priority 2 will include:

1. Reduction in Accident & Emergency presentations for accidental injuries
2. Reduction in per capita Tier 1 & 2 notifications in ten years
3. Reduction in per capita Tier 3 notifications in first five years
4. Reduction in children placed into care of the Minister
5. Reduction in number of vulnerable children in the AEDI Social Knowledge & Competence and Emotional Maturity domains within five years
6. Increase in referrals to child health related programs
7. 50% of children and families accessing integrated ECD services in first three years, 80% in five years
8. Reduced behaviour management referrals to CAMHS

STRATEGY (KOA Priority 2)	SERVICE PROVIDER
▪ Group Attachment based, Parent Support and Behaviour Management programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PAHRHS ▪ CYWHS ▪ PWHS ▪ Families SA
▪ Health Promotion to parents re: ECD & Brain Development	▪ All related ECD services
▪ Drop in services and access to family support workers in each site within the proposed model	▪ Port Augusta integrated ECD facilities
▪ Dad's support program and Aboriginal Dads Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ UnitingCare Wesley ▪ PWHS ▪ Country Health SA
▪ Parent Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Port Augusta integrated ECD facilities ▪ PAHRHS ▪ NGOs

3. Early Childhood Development, Learning & Care (0-8 years)

Key Outcome Areas (KOA) for Priority 3 based on the philosophy of delivering ECD programs “*early, often and effectively*”) will include:

1. Improved AEDI results on all domains including reduced vulnerability rates
2. Increased participation in early literacy and play based ECD initiatives
3. Increased coordination of multi-agency support services to families of children with special needs and development delay
4. Increased detection of preventable diseases and development delay
5. Family engagement in whole of community events that promote families
6. Increased access for families with children aged 0-3 years to child allied health professionals and reduced referral of children aged 5 – 12 years.
7. Reduction in students presenting with learning difficulties at school.
8. Improved scores in Year 3 literacy & numeracy tests for children
9. Increased enrolment to Pre-School, particularly 3 year old Aboriginal children and increased attendance at Pre-School and Primary School.
10. Improved running records data in reading achievement for Year 1 students
11. Increased opportunity for parents to assist in the planning and implementation of ECD specific programs.

STRATEGY (KOA Priority 3)	SERVICE PROVIDER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Delivery of Playgroup and play based learning activities including Learning Together and early learning programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DECS ▪ PAHRHS ▪ Miriam High Special Needs Centre ▪ Child Care Centres ▪ UnitingCare Wesley
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Delivery of Pre-school and non-parental care services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DECS ▪ Port Augusta City Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Delivery of a Child Development Unit and early detection / screening programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PAHRHS ▪ PWHS ▪ DECS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Drop in Services, Parent advocacy and access to toy library 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Port Augusta integrated ECD Program model ▪ DECS ▪ NGOs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Access to Allied Health staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PAHRHS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Family Fun Days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ UnitingCare Wesley & related ECD services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continued investment in Miriam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Port Augusta City Council

High Special Needs	▪ Department of Health
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4. Strengthen Community Supports

Key Outcome Areas (KOA) for Priority 4 will include:

1. Evidence of community wide ECD policies that support a child and family friendly environment implemented.
2. Increased opportunity for parents to assist in the planning and implementation of ECD specific programs
3. Increased choice and relevance of ECD programs made available
4. Increased transport facilities for families to access ECD programs
5. A minimum 30% of total ECD staff are of an Aboriginal background.
6. Increased professional development for ECD model staff
7. 100% of ECD staff will receive training in ECD and brain development
8. Increase parent's and carer's knowledge of the importance of ECD.
9. Local business, agencies and services develop and implement innovative practices that support children and families.

STRATEGY (KOA Priority 4)	SERVICE PROVIDER
▪ Ability to be open, transparent and accountable	WHOLE OF COMMUNITY
▪ Investment in community capacity building and resilience initiatives	
▪ Promote ECD programs that respond to community choice, innovation and shared responsibility	
▪ Focus on early childhood and family development	
▪ Provide professional development including ECD, Brain Development, Behaviour Management, Parenting support / skills, parent / child relationship (attachment)	
▪ Establish a sustainable transport strategy	
▪ Promote the inclusion of parents to be involved in planning and management of ECD services across a range of services.	

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| ▪ Business sector provide increased investment in ECD programs. | |
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MODEL PROPOSAL

Cultural Components

As previously stated, approximately 25% of Port Augusta's population aged 0-5 years are of Aboriginal descent. Whilst considered a meeting place for several remote Aboriginal communities, Port Augusta also has a diverse range of kinship groups based within the local area. All programs will be developed for optimum access by the whole community; however given the large Aboriginal population, cultural factors will be fundamental to all aspects of the centres.

A recent external evaluation of the Family 'Anangu Bibi" Birthing Program (a birthing program that targets at risk Aboriginal women in Port Augusta and Whyalla) attributed much of the success of the initiative to two important features:

1. Local families recognised the cultural values of the program and related to the program staff. Subsequently the program has enjoyed high participation rates especially with families who traditionally have been difficult to engage.
2. Recruitment, professional development and empowerment of Aboriginal Maternal Infant Care (AMIC) workers has resulted in this program being a career path of choice, in addition community consultation feedback from community women requested for Aboriginal women to be cared for by Aboriginal women. The employment of skilled AMIC staff has ensured service delivery is culturally competent and of a high quality.

During a recent consultation meeting held with local Aboriginal women regarding the implementation of an integrated ECD concept, the following points were raised:

- Well trained Aboriginal family support workers must lead the individualized care for families.
- Programs must be appropriately branded and connected with the community to engage families
- A broad representation of support workers need to be employed to be able to accommodate various age and language, diversity and ethnicity.
(Note: Pt Augusta has twenty seven different Aboriginal language groups)

With these learnings, this proposal incorporates the following elements to achieve a culturally respectful and inclusive ECD model in Port Augusta:

- Aboriginal led in family support services

- Cultural advisors will be engaged in individual program design, marketing/branding to the community and implementation.
- Aboriginal FTE will represent the broad range of language groups
- Aboriginal community will be represented in the governance structure
- Ensure all non-Aboriginal staff are culturally competent
- Values developed and adhered to regarding mutual trust and respect

Program design

The progress group conceived a “hub and spoke” model as the most appropriate structure for families in Port Augusta when considering:

- existing infrastructure
- geographical spread of the township
- current and planned future service delivery
- demographic, educational and health outcome data
- the needs of Aboriginal children and families

The progress group agreed the proposed Children’s Centre would operate as the model’s Hub delivering services centrally whilst also providing outreach support to a further three centres (tentatively identified as Child & Family Centres) located on existing DECS sites in the west, north and east of Port Augusta.

The purpose of introducing Child & Family centres in existing DECS sites (namely Augusta Park, Flinders View Primary School and in the Willsden area) is to increase catchment areas and improve accessibility for families to enter a supportive ECD environment. However families would be welcome to choose their preferred centre to access.

Proposed catchment areas are:

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| Central: | Bounds North/West of Carlton Parade including Davenport Community to the eastern side of the Gulf. |
| West: | Western side of the gulf to the edge of the township |
| North: | South/East of Carlton Parade, to North of Victoria Parade east including Stirling North |
| East: | South of Victoria Parade to Power Station Road |

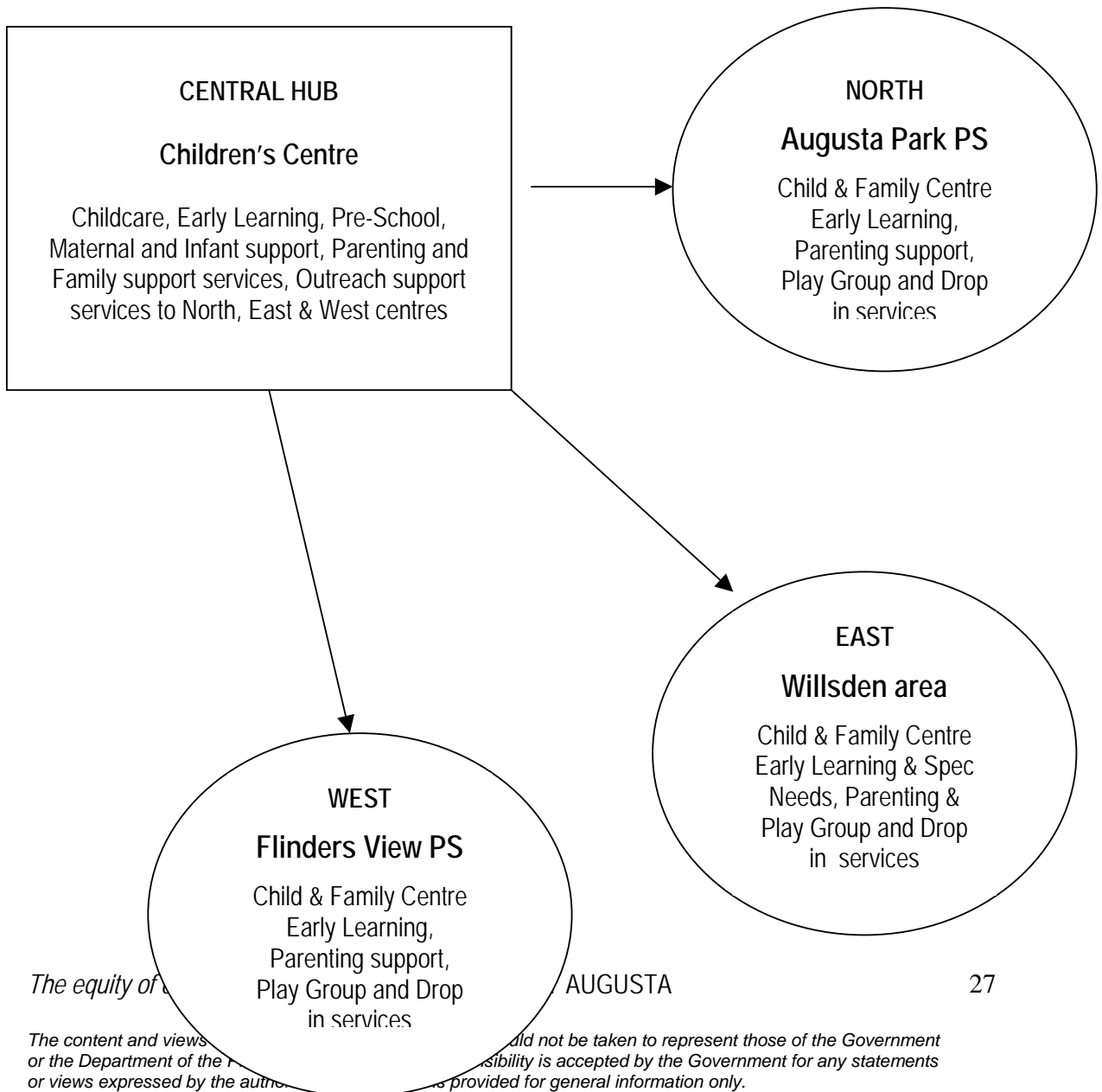
ASSUMPTIONS

When considering this proposed program model, some assumptions should be highlighted:

1. The objectives of this integrated ECD model is centered on family support and community development. If Preschool and Child Care services are approved to be linked to the Outreach Child & Family Centres, then the

- DECS staffing ratios and subsequent infrastructure requirements will need to be considered.
2. A “Children Centre” is coming to Port Augusta. This proposal is based on this committed investment as a given. Additional funding is being sought to establish the three Child & Family Outreach Centres that build on the current Children Centre concept.

Proposed integrated ECD Model – PORT AUGUSTA



PROPOSED STAFFING STRUCTURE

Feedback from local families, advice from Dr Mustard and international evidence links the success of integrated ECD models to two key factors:

- Community perception of the service (ie: do local families identify this program model as another institution or as a family friendly environment)
- Expertise of program staff

The Children's Centre Hub would afford support to each of the three outreach sites via program management, community development, program development and coordination, access to outreach support from Family Support Workers and the Allied Health staff.

Staff employed by the Port Augusta integrated ECD model will be attached to the program, not necessarily to a centre. This will ensure flexibility to programs and improve access for families to outreach centres.

EVALUATION

Dr Mustard has reminded the Port Augusta community several times, “*if you can’t measure it, don’t do it!*” With this in mind the PA ECD Progress Group recommend the following strategies to measure the effectiveness of the integrated ECD model:

1. Appointment of an external evaluation partner from commencement of the investment.

This will not only give opportunity to measure the impact of the program model on an ongoing basis (during the life of the initiative) but also allow external reflection of service delivery and effectiveness for continuous improvement.

2. Establish a benchmarking and comparative process

Whilst Port Augusta has several current quantitative measures of ECD performance, often this data is not well utilized, ie: is often considered in isolation and not integrated with other agency / organisation measures.

The 2005 AEDI data will be used as a benchmark for community capacity and child performance measures. The PA ECD Progress Group recommends the AEDI be conducted every two years in Port Augusta to monitor impact of the integrated ECD concept.

In addition, DECS Literacy and Numeracy data will continue to gauge longer term improvements in school and will be accessible by the evaluation team.

3. Community guidance and feedback

In addition to the ECD Model providing opportunities for parents to assist in the planning and implementation of ECD specific programs, families will be encouraged to provide suggestions and feedback to the Community Development Officer re: accessibility, cultural relevance and family friendly perception.

3. Monitoring the life course of local children

Prominent International longitudinal studies that have monitored children’s progress from birth to adulthood have revealed valuable insight in to the effectiveness of ECD based programs. Such studies indicate children’s health and socio economic status are greater than those children who have been not been exposed to parent / carer based ECD programs.

With the support of an external evaluator, consent from parents and ethics approval, the PA ECD Progress Team recommends a longitudinal study be established that integrates multi agency information into a collated database that is able monitor participating children’s progress of a significant period of time

RECOMENDATIONS

Based on the previously mentioned assumptions and understanding that a Children's Centre will be established in Port Augusta by 2009, the PA ECD Progress Group submits the following recommendations to progress this concept:

1. A feasibility study be completed to scope the program model of service and associated costing of the concept including the tender process to select an external evaluating partner.
2. Establishment of an Enabling Committee that oversees the planning and scoping of the model. This committee should have appropriate membership that represents the diverse demographics of the Port Augusta community.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTION

There are several difficulties this proposal presents to the State Government including the integration of ECD programs that are accountable to different Ministers. In addition, ECD investment is not cheap and often outcomes are difficult to quantify in the immediate to short term.

Establishing an incorporated organisation that blurs the current departmental boundaries and empowers the community to build quality ECD capacity will result in improved outcomes for children. Based on international results, similar initiatives have revealed positive impacts on the target population within three – five years.

Port Augusta's commitment to participate in the AEDI every two years will provide results that respond directly to previously mentioned key outcome areas both within this initiative and to the South Australian Strategic Plan.

To build on the momentum and energy created through the preparation of this proposal whilst serving as a legacy item to Dr Mustard's visit to South Australia, the Port Augusta community is seeking the State Government's support to action the submission's recommendations.

In a climate of reorientation towards the early years, Port Augusta, if granted the opportunity, presents as a potential valuable illustration for other communities across South Australia to develop truly integrated services committed to giving every child, every chance at the best start in life.

REFERENCES

1. ECD in British Columbia: *Enabling Communities*, 2005
2. Australian Early Development Index Community Profile: *Northern & far Western Region SA*
3. Australian Bureau of Statistics *Census 2001 Data*
4. Country Health SA Profile: *Port Augusta*, 2007
5. South Australian Strategic Plan 2007
6. Department of Education and Children's Services: Better Schools, Better Future. *An overview: Education Works 2006*
7. Social Process Planning Model for ECD in Port Augusta: *Basil Hetzel*
8. Stronger Families and Communities Strategy, *Communities 4 Children Circular*, 2007

APPENDIX

Supporting documents available upon request include:

- ECD Service Mapping (Port Augusta)
- Community consultation results, Country Health SA (2004) and Communities for Children (2005)
- Dr Fraser Mustard Public Meeting consultation results (February 07)
- ECD Proposal consultation with senior Aboriginal officers (March 07)
- AEDI Community Profile results 2005
- Country Health SA Profile: *Port Augusta 2007*

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