COMMUNITY PRESCHOOL OUTREACH GRANTS

In 2015 community preschools in rural and remote areas of NSW received grants of $7,000 to increase access and participation of children in their local community.

The Directorate is now receiving feedback from community preschools from across NSW about the fantastic initiatives they have implemented within their communities using the funding provided under this program.

EC Extra spoke with Mulwala Preschool, who have put their funding towards employing an Aboriginal staff member. Together, they are working to ensure that Aboriginal language and culture are embedded in daily activities with the children. They have also developed information resources for Aboriginal families to support them in accessing and engaging with the preschool.

Other successful initiatives from community preschools include:
- training staff about cultural barriers to preschool participation
- inviting members of the Aboriginal community into the preschool to share their knowledge and skills with children
- providing a breakfast program for children at the preschool
- developing resources for families about the benefits of early childhood education.

Community Preschool Outreach Grants of up to $15,000 will be available in 2016/17 through an application based grants process. More information about this process will be available soon.

FAMILY DAY CARE FACT SHEETS NOW AVAILABLE IN COMMUNITY LANGUAGES

Family Day Care approved providers and educators can now access a series of fact sheets in community languages provided by the Commonwealth Department of Education. These facts sheets assist individuals to understand their responsibilities and obligations as a family day care provider and/or educator, how to comply with family assistance law and provide information on where to go for support or further information.

The eleven community languages include Amharic (አማርኛ), Arabic (العربية), Assyrian (ܐܪܡܝܐ), Dari (دری), Dinka (Thuuŋjāŋ), French (Français), Hazaragi (یگ مرزو), Nuer (Naadh), Somali (Soomaali), Sudanese (Sunda) and Swahili (Kiswahili). These are now available from the Commonwealth Department of Education’s website.

2017 RURAL AND REMOTE EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHING SCHOLARSHIPS – APPLICATIONS CLOSE 13 MAY 2016

Thirty scholarships worth up to $10,000 per scholar are available to help diploma qualified educators working in rural and remote services to upgrade to a Bachelor Degree leading to a four year trained early childhood teaching qualification.

It is anticipated that most recipients will commence their studies in the 2017 academic year. However, there may be a limited number of scholarship places available for scholars who wish to study later in the 2016 academic year. Details of eligibility criteria and how to apply are here.

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ACECQA NATIONAL WORKSHOPS

ACECQA is currently conducting workshops focusing on Educational Leadership. The interactive workshops are being led by ACECQA’s National Education Leader in partnership with the Early Childhood Education and Care Directorate and Professional Support Coordinators. Workshops across the state are filling fast. Limited places are still available for workshops at Coffs Harbour, Lismore, Wagga Wagga, Wollongong and Dubbo. Sydney metropolitan and the Newcastle session are now full. To register for one of the remaining sessions visit the ACECQA Events page.

RECOGNISING INDIGENOUS CULTURE - EVERYDAY

Recognising the unique place that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures hold in Australia should be part of the educational program at all services.

A number of approaches can be undertaken to ensure that services are embedding Indigenous perspectives in practice including:

- Practical: providing access to resources that represent Indigenous people and cultures as well as undertaking activities with an Indigenous focus
- Symbolic: displaying Aboriginal flag and Torres Strait Islander flags, making acknowledgement of Traditional Owners a part of your key events
- Substantive: working relationships with your local Indigenous community and seeking to employ Indigenous child care professionals within the service.

It is important that all staff have awareness of how to engage and support children from all cultures. Training and professional development plays a role, as well as self-reflection on attitudes towards children from different cultural backgrounds.

Indigenous culture provides a wealth of learning opportunities for all within the community and services should make the time to make sure that it is shared every day. The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care has a number of useful resources on their website at www.snaicc.org.au.

MAKING A COMPLAINT TO ECECD

The Department of Education sets high standards for the services it delivers and is accountable to the Government, the Minister and the people of NSW for its actions and decisions. Complaints we receive are one way in which we can gauge the responsiveness of our service and measure our performance. You can find information on how to make a complaint, timeframes and what happens with the complaints we receive on our website.

INVOICES FOR ANNUAL FEES

Invoices for Annual Fees will be sent to Approved Providers within the next four weeks, for payment by 1 July 2016. Invoices are emailed directly to approved providers to the email address registered on the NQA ITS. If you need to update your details on the NQA ITS you should do so now.

In previous years we have received feedback from Approved Providers advising they have not received their invoices. These invoices have later been found to have been delivered to a junk email folder. Approved Providers are encouraged to save the email nqaits@acecqa.gov.au to their contact list to avoid this occurring.

Payment of your invoice can be easily made online via the NQA ITS using a credit card or via BPAY. Approved Providers are reminded that they need to have paid the invoice in full by 1 July in order to avoid a late fee.

ARE YOUR CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES LIVING DOCUMENTS?

Child protection policies are an important part of having a Child Safe Organisation. They should be clear, simple and easy to read. Importantly, all policies and codes of conduct for staff should be ‘living’ documents. Policies only work when they are used day-to-day in the service. It is always obvious to our staff when a policy has been ‘left on a shelf’.

Regular reviews of all policies ought to be a part of a service’s practice. The NSW Ombudsman has developed a self-assessment checklist that services may find useful when undertaking the next review of their child protection policies. You can find a copy of the checklist at the NSW Ombudsman website.

COMMUNITY PRESCHOOL CAPITAL WORKS GRANTS PROGRAM

On 20 November 2015 the Minister for Early Childhood Education, Leslie Williams MP, announced funding of $8 million over four years to create up to 500 new preschool places through a Capital Works Grants program.

The Capital Works Grants program will provide grants funding for not-for-profit, community based preschool providers proposing to increase the number of 600 hour preschool places available by one of the following:

- building new preschool services
- expanding an existing centre-based service
- purchasing a new motor vehicle for an existing mobile preschool service
- other capital works delivering innovative solutions to increase the number of preschool places in areas of high need.

Expressions of Interest will be invited from Friday 6 May 2016 until Friday 20 May 2016. Service providers will need to register in advance to provide an Expression of Interest for this program.

For more information see our website, or contact the Partnerships and Programs on: 1300 755 426 or email: ecec.funding@det.nsw.edu.au.

Keeping in touch

Update your contact details by logging onto the NQAITS portal and/or for funded services by logging onto ECCMS.

You can also get in touch with us by:

- phoning us on 1800 619 113 (general) or 1300 755 426 (funding)
- emailing us on ecec@det.nsw.edu.au (general), ecec.funding@det.nsw.edu.au (funding) or eceextra@det.nsw.edu.au (EC Extra editor)