Gascoyne Children’s Services Plan

This plan has been developed through the Regional Community Child Care Development Fund administered by the Department of Local Government and Communities and funded through the State Government’s Royalties for Regions program.
Executive Summary

The Regional Children’s Services Plans have been developed through the Regional Community Child Care Development Fund administered by the Department of Local Government and Communities and funded through the State Government’s Royalties for Regions program. The intent is to establish a more strategic, long term approach to supporting sustainable models of community managed children’s education and care services in regional Western Australia.

Evidence tells us that a person’s life successes, health and emotional wellbeing have their roots in early childhood. Caring and supportive environments in the early years that promote optimal early childhood development will support children to thrive throughout school and their adult lives. ¹

In Australia a number of key initiatives acknowledge the importance of the early years and have informed the development of this plan. Every year since 2009, the Australian Government has undertaken a census of all children in their first year of full-time schooling (Australian Early Development Census – AEDC, 2009-2015). The information can be used to provide an insight at a community level into the learning and development needs of young children. Evidence from the AEDC can be used to support policy and practice in early childhood education and can help shape the future and wellbeing of Australian children. In several regional and remote locations, including the Gascoyne, it is evident that communities, families and children may require additional support to achieve positive outcomes. ²

To further support the development of quality environments that support optimal children’s development, the education and care sector has experienced significant change in recent years with the development and implementation of the National Quality Framework (NQF). Established in 2012, the NQF applies to most long day care, family day care, preschool/kindergarten and outside schools hours care services. It aims to raise quality and drive continuous improvement and consistency. ³

The development of Regional Children’s Services Plans acknowledges the challenges faced by organisations that provide education and care services for children and families in regional areas. This plan recognises that maintaining the quality standards under Frameworks such as the NQF and providing for the diverse needs of children, including those who are vulnerable, requires the development and implementation of strategies to support the development and sustainability of a range of services for children and families.

Western Australia is Australia’s largest state with a total land area of 2,529,875 square kilometres and is made up of nine regional areas: Gascoyne; Goldfields-Esperance; Great Southern; Kimberley; Mid West; Peel; Pilbara; South West and the Wheatbelt.

Each region, aligned to the Regional Development Commission boundaries, is unique and has a diverse range of strengths and challenges.

This Regional Children’s Services Plan is for the Gascoyne region, a vast area twice the size of Tasmania and situated approximately 900 kilometres north of Perth. The Gascoyne region consists of four local government areas: The Shires of Carnarvon; Exmouth; Upper Gascoyne; and Shark Bay. The region has a diverse multicultural population and includes a high percentage of Aboriginal people living predominately in remote communities in Carnarvon, the Upper Gascoyne, and Shark Bay.

The Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre’s (GRCEC) vision is for strong communities and families where children and young people are valued and connected and realise a future full of possibility. To achieve this GRCEC provides services to children, youth and families to build individual, family and community capacity in education and care; transition to and through education, training and employment; individual and family support; counselling; partnership development and service coordination. GRCEC works to build connections between people including other non-government agencies, government, business and the wider community. In developing the Gascoyne Children’s Services Plan, GRCEC has drawn on the knowledge and experience gained over many years of service provision.

The Gascoyne Children’s Services Plan has been developed in a localised context, informed by government reports and papers; desktop reviews of agency and service provider websites; and extensive consultation of service providers and service users. The information gathered will provide input into the development of a state-wide Regional Children’s Services Plan.

The Gascoyne Children’s Services Plan provides an overview of the region; the background and methodology for the project, including consultation and analysis; regional trends and issues; key findings; and recommendations. It takes into consideration education and care services located in the Gascoyne region as well as broader services, initiatives and networks that support children and families.

In this document the terms education and care and childcare are used interchangeably. It is evident that, for some people, the former term does not have meaning for them and child care is more frequently used.

**Regional summary, trends and issues**

Carnarvon is the largest Local Government Area in the Gascoyne region with a population of 5,787 people. 19.2% are Aboriginal and 15% are aged between 0 and 9 years. Getting more Aboriginal children into early learning programs and school ready has been identified as a regional priority and of particular significance in Carnarvon, due to the numbers of vulnerable children and limited connection of families to pre-compulsory education and care services. This is evidenced by results from the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) (2012) indicating a high percentage of children in the region, are developmentally vulnerable and are not ready for school.

Families and service providers indicate that services and programs are not regularly

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4 The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is Australia’s national statistical agency. The ABS provides statistics on a wide range of economic, environmental and social issues. Statistics mentioned in this report are from the ABS 2011.

5 The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) collects data on how Australian children are performing in a range of areas. The next AEDC collection will be in 2015. [www.aedc.gov.au](http://www.aedc.gov.au)
accessed by Aboriginal families and strategies are needed to support and encourage their engagement.

Similar challenges exist in the Burringurrah Remote Aboriginal Community situated in the Upper Gascoyne Local Government Area. It has a very small and transient population base, with 27% aged from birth to 14 years. The early childhood education program Best Start is no longer provided in the community. The school encourages three year olds to join in with the Kindergarten to Year 2 classes Monday to Thursdays. Many community members live between Burringurrah, Carnarvon and the Mungullah Community (in Carnarvon) and Midwest/Murchison townships. Due to the transience of families it is important to consider solutions across jurisdictions to ensure a degree of continuity and connection between early learning programs throughout the Gascoyne and in the Midwest.

The largest towns of Carnarvon and Exmouth each have an education and care (childcare) service running at full capacity with a three to six month waitlist. It is anticipated this situation will be considerably relieved in Carnarvon when building extensions are completed in 2015 at the education and care service. Neither town presently has a Family Day Care (FDC) service operating. In Carnarvon there are no options for Outside School Hours and Vacation Care for primary school aged children.

A priority for future workforce development particularly in the largest town, Carnarvon, is to ensure alternative childcare options are available, are of a high quality, easily accessed and meet demand. The Gascoyne Regional Development Plan 2010-2020 lists as a priority, the need to attract a younger demographic to settle in the region for lifestyle, business, employment and family reasons. Another priority is for improvements in the availability of quality health care and education and coordinated planning to accommodate predicted population growth. In light of this information, it is important to plan ahead to ensure services for children will meet future demand and encourage families to move to the region.

To meet quality standards and future demand it will be necessary to consider ways to grow a locally based, qualified and experienced education and care workforce. Career promotion in schools and with job service providers will provide information and increase interest. In addition the availability of appropriate locally based education and training and professional development opportunities will need to be considered.

As for any workforce, it is important to continually maintain and upskill staff. This is particularly important for the ECEC workforce to ensure they are meeting the National Quality Standards Framework. Gascoyne ECEC workers would benefit from more regionally based face to face professional learning opportunities being made available.

The Gascoyne Early Years Network (EYN) is one of 40 currently registered in WA, 35 of which are active and five inactive. During 2014, the West Australian Council of Social Service (WACOSS) conducted a review of WA’s existing EYNs. Their report, Supporting Early Years Networks in WA, Final Project Report (Oct 2014), found that EYNs are predominately made up of members from local government and not for profit

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6 Source Gascoyne Regional Development Plan 2010-2020
organisations. A majority of networks reported they did not have a clearly defined purpose; experience an absence of leadership; and lack vision and strategic planning. The Gascoyne EYN has similar challenges and would benefit from support being provided to establish a stronger network; develop strategies to include more community members and the other towns in the region; and consider strategies to ensure sustainability.

In the course of mapping services for the Gascoyne Children’s Services Plan, a myriad of service providers, children programs and activities were unearthed. Although Local Government websites are an excellent source of information, not all services are listed. For example, services and programs provided by community organisations and state and federal governments are on each individual organisation’s website and take some time to locate. Families or service providers new to the region would find it difficult to locate or access a service or make contact with key people. The *Mandurah Families Guide* is an excellent example of a directory that brings all services together in one resource. It is therefore recommended that research is undertaken to assess the viability of developing and maintaining a ‘Gascoyne Families Guide’.

The Gascoyne Children’s Services Plan presents the following key findings and makes recommendations to establish a more strategic, long term approach to supporting sustainable models of community managed children’s education and care services in the region and other early childhood activities, programs and services.

**Key Findings and Recommendations**

### 1. More Aboriginal families in Carnarvon engage and participate in early childhood services, programs and activities

Increasing the number of Aboriginal children accessing early learning programs and being school ready is a regional priority. This is of particular significance in Carnarvon due to the reported numbers of vulnerable children and limited connection of families to pre-compulsory education and care services. Improving children’s development and wellbeing and supporting those in a parenting role is vital. Providing information about the importance of children’s development in the early years and supporting families to access culturally sensitive education and care and other services will contribute to strengthening families and communities. Aboriginal family engagement in activities, programs and services will help build solid foundations for children as they transition to and through school.

**Recommendation:**

1.1 Work in partnership with local Aboriginal people and gain leverage from existing service providers, education providers and other relevant stakeholders to provide opportunities for families to participate in activities that build their understanding and capacity to engage with education and care services, early learning

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7 2014 Supporting Early Years Networks in WA Final Project Report developed by the WA Council of Social Services.
1.2 Partner with Playgroup WA and schools to encourage take up of the Enhanced Transition to Schools Project to increase the connectedness of Aboriginal families and children to schools from an early age.

1.3 Link with the Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre’s (GRCEC) Aboriginal and Remote Children’s Services Team and stakeholders to engage Aboriginal parents in:

- The Parents and Learning (PaL) Program, a home based program, which focuses on early literacy and numeracy and builds the capacity of local people to become educators for their family and community, as well as a link to other services.
- The Every Child Every Day Project, developing resources such as children’s books, information posters or storyboards, newsletters, DVD’s or YouTube clips about the importance of engagement and participation in activities, programs and services in the early years.
- ‘Yarning’ sessions involving doll/toy making while discussing early brain development, the AEDC domains and children’s transition to and through school.

1.4 Establish the feasibility of and support for establishing an In-Venue Family Day Care (FDC) service or similar education and care model in the Mungullah Aboriginal Community that will:

- Provide access to appropriate, flexible and qualified education and care in the Mungullah community
- Create an opportunity to engage children in early learning activities that will assist with their development and school readiness
- Provide parents and carers with an education and care service to support them to engage in parenting activities, resource development, employment and/or training

2. Families in Carnarvon and Exmouth have access to flexible quality education and care services

There are limited available education and care options, including for school aged children in Carnarvon and Exmouth. With a predicted increase in population and a need to retain people in these communities for extended periods, planning is required to establish more sustainable education and care services for the future.

Recommendation:

2.1 Engage with the Exmouth and Carnarvon communities to promote the benefits of Family Day Care (FDC) as a home based business enterprise with the aim of meeting the demand for additional services.
2.2 Utilise different forms of media to raise the profile of FDC educators and increase awareness of an alternative service model.
2.3 Investigate the feasibility of an In-Venue FDC in Exmouth, Carnarvon and the
Mungullah Community as an alternative to a home based service.

2.4 Work with the school community in Carnarvon to determine support for and the feasibility of providing an Outside School Hours Care and Vacation Care service on school grounds or alternative suitable site.

3. Early years groups are supported, connected and sustainable

Supporting children to have the best start in life is a whole of community responsibility. Playgroups and early year’s networks play an important role in the community and are generally run by volunteers.

Playgroups provide opportunities for parents, carers and grandparents to engage with each other and for children aged from birth to school age to interact and play whilst developing their social, emotional, language and communication skills.

Early Years Networks (EYN) promote the importance of early brain development and positive experiences for young children. They aim to coordinate and support local activities and projects to support families with very young children from birth to eight years of age.

Playgroups and EYN’s rely on volunteers to carry out a myriad of tasks and family responsibilities, core work commitments and key drivers leaving the town/region are factors that can have an impact on the sustainability of volunteer groups.

Currently connections to organisations that offer support to early years groups in the Gascoyne are limited.

The Gascoyne Early Years Network (GEYN) would benefit from support to re-establish a clear strategic direction that will be inclusive of a wider range of stakeholders and include the whole of region. Playgroups in the Gascoyne would benefit from face to face support to ensure they have strategies in place to remain viable and sustainable.

Recommendation:

3.1 Work with the GEYN to adopt a framework that will assist the network to:
- Access support services available to the EYN’s to assist in identifying a purpose and long term strategic direction with roles and responsibilities of each member organisation clarified.
- Remain resilient and sustainable through changing capacity of service providers
- Manage succession planning when key drivers leave the region
- Encourage community involvement and inclusiveness of stakeholders across the region.
- Strengthen connections between services

3.2 Enable the sharing of good news stories, best practice and program information between the GEYN members.

3.3 Support the network to apply for funding opportunities such as the Early Years Activities Grants Program for events/activities during National Families Week.

3.4 Work in partnership with the GEYN to increase community awareness and
market the value of the children’s services sector by promoting programs and
good news stories via print media (community and school newsletters); social
media, short video clips and face to face delivery at children and family events;
parent and stakeholder workshops.
3.5 Support Playgroup WA to deliver a series of workshops in the region to build the
capacity of playgroups and develop good governance practices to ensure
sustainability.

4. Families are able to locate and connect to children’s services, activities and programs in their community

Families and service providers, especially those new to the region may find it difficult to
locate, access and link with children’s services, programs and activities and, or make
contact with key people.

Recommendation:
4.1 Work with the LGA’s, community organisations and service providers to develop
a comprehensive online and printable one stop Children’s Services Directory
listing a range of services such as:
• Health and wellbeing of parents – services to support parents
• Health and wellbeing of children – child and general health clinics; counselling
• Things to do and where to go - location of parks; community events; and facilities
• Education and care services
• Services for children and families and education providers: Playgroups; schools; kindergartens; library activities; community based services and support programs
• Gascoyne Children’s Services Plan line information
• Websites and helpful information

5. The Gascoyne region attracts and retains a qualified and skilled early education and care workforce

The national shortage of qualified education and care workers extends into the
Gascoyne region with reported difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified educators.
The situation is further impacted by the lack of available face to face education and
training opportunities in children’s services delivered in the region with on-line delivery
currently the only option.

Young people and jobseekers may be unaware of the range of career pathways
available in children’s services and that future job prospects are positive due to a
national skills shortage for this sector.

Opportunities for children’s services and education and care providers to access quality
face to face professional learning is limited due to cost and distance from major regional towns.

**Recommendation:**

5.1 Promote opportunities for educators to attend a regional education and care conference.
5.2 Support the delivery of professional learning opportunities in the Gascoyne.
5.3 Work in partnership with training providers and the children’s services sector to:
   - Increase the pool of qualified education and care workers to meet the needs of a growing industry
   - Advocate for the funding and delivery of face to face courses in Carnarvon and Exmouth in Certificate III and IV in Children’s Services, particularly, but not exclusively, for Aboriginal people
5.4 Promote early childhood education and care services as a positive career pathway choice for high school students and jobseekers:
   - Facilitate information sessions/workshops to targeted groups
   - Develop a local resource such as a series of short video clips promoting the importance of early childhood development and career pathways that will make a difference to families in the Gascoyne community
   - Conduct onsite visits to educations and care services such as Granny Glasgow Education and Care and the Durack Institute of Technology
   - Source and promote work experience opportunities
   - Provide information on small business guidelines

GRCEC wishes to thank everyone who provided their time including staff of State and Commonwealth Government agencies, Local Government authorities, early education and care services, non-government agencies, community members and Aboriginal organisations. They gave generously of their time and shared their knowledge and thoughts. They provided valuable information which assisted in the development of the Gascoyne Children’s Services Plan.

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Date: 25 May 2015
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Introduction

The Gascoyne Children’s Services Plan has been developed through the Regional Community Child Care Development Fund administered by the Department of Local Government and Communities and funded through the State Government’s Royalties for Regions program.

The intent is to establish a more strategic, long term approach to supporting sustainable models of community managed children’s education and care services in regional Western Australia. To achieve this outcome non-government organisations have been awarded funding through a tender process to develop regional children’s services plans that involve consultation, mapping, and current analysis and forecasts of community, social and economic profiles. The nine regional children’s services plan will take into consideration education and care services located in regional Western Australia as well as broader services, initiatives and networks that support families and children. In the Gascoyne the Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre was awarded this contract.

Evidence tells us that a person’s life successes, health and emotional wellbeing have their roots in early childhood. Caring and supportive environments in the early years that promote optimal early childhood development will support children to thrive throughout school and their adult lives.

In Australia a number of key initiatives acknowledge the importance of the early years and have informed the development of this plan. Every year since 2009, the Australian Government has undertaken a census of all children in their first year of full-time schooling (Australian Early Development Census 2009-2015). The information, collected by teachers in the year children turn five, can be used to help shape the future and wellbeing of Australian children. The AEDC provides educators across sectors and community members with a common language to understand and discuss what is working well in their community and where families may need support to ensure that their children are on-track during the early years. Evidence from the AEDC can be used to support policy and practice in early childhood education and children’s services.

The five AEDC domains provide an insight at a community level into the learning and development needs of young children. The data can be used to start conversations that raise awareness of the importance of the early years, develop relationships with local early childhood education services and assist with the understanding of vulnerability and protective factors in the community.

In several regional and remote locations, including the Gascoyne, it is evident that communities, families and children may require additional support to achieve positive outcomes. Education and care services and other initiatives and networks can play a pivotal role in supporting families and children to thrive.
To ensure education and care services provide quality environments that support optimal children’s development, the sector has experienced significant change in recent years with the establishment of the National Quality Framework (NQF).

Established in 2012, the NQF applies to most long day care, family day care, preschool/kindergarten and outside schools hours care services. It aims to raise quality and drive continuous improvement and consistency. The NQF specifies higher standards for both educator qualifications and educator to child ratios. These new requirements have being phased in to allow the sector time to adjust and are subject to review.9

The development of Regional Children’s Services Plans acknowledges the challenges faced by organisations that provide education and care services for children and families in regional areas. This plan recognises that maintaining the quality standards under Frameworks such as the NQF and providing for the diverse needs of children, including those who are vulnerable requires the development and implementation of strategies to build and support a diverse range of services. The development, design and delivery of these services require the engagement of local families and other key stakeholders. People who are drivers or advocates need to be identified and supported to ensure sustainability.

Western Australia is Australia’s largest state with a total land area of 2,529,875 square kilometres. The Gascoyne region is just one the regions of WA where the project has been undertaken. Each region aligned to Regional Development Commission boundaries is unique and has a diverse range of strengths and challenges. The regions are:

- Gascoyne
- Goldfields-Esperance
- Great Southern
- Kimberley
- Mid West
- Peel
- Pilbara
- South West
- Wheatbelt

The Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre (GRCEC) was successful in gaining the contract for the development of the Gascoyne Children’s Services Plan. GRCEC is a non-government, not-for-profit, incorporated community organisation. It has operated in the Mid West Gascoyne and Murchison regions of Western Australia since 1975 delivering a diverse range of programs.

GRCEC’s vision and purpose aligns with the development of the Gascoyne Children’s Services Plan.

“Our vision is to support the development of strong communities and families where children and young people are valued and connected and realise a future full of possibility. GRCEC is committed to providing services to children, youth and families to build individual, family and community capacity. We deliver services in education and care; transition to and through education, training and employment; individual and family support; counselling; partnership development and service co-ordination. We work to build connections between people including other non-government agencies, government, business and the wider community”.

GRCEC has successfully delivered a range of services focused on supporting early childhood development across the Gascoyne for a number of years. GRCEC has developed and/or provided substantial input into a range of community plans, research documents, mapping and needs analysis and implementation of plans at a local, regional, state and national level, including, but not limited to:

- WA Youth Mentoring Reform Group – Mentoring Framework
- Positive Pathways for young people in remote communities: What works?
- ‘The Space in Between: Youth Connections Futures Paper’
- Partnership Brokers Environmental Scan and Strategic Plan (Midwest Gascoyne)
- Midwest Gascoyne and Murchison Human Services Regional Managers Group Strategic plans
- Youth Co-ordinating Network Strategic Directions
- Midwest Murchison Drug and Alcohol Plans
- Midwest Chamber of Commerce and Industry Strategic Plan
- Carnarvon Community Women’s Group Strategic Plan
- Carnarvon Youth Agency Network Strategic Plan
- Midwest Regional Blueprint (2014 draft document)

Knowledge and experience gained through service delivery in the Mid West Gascoyne has been invaluable in developing the Gascoyne Children’s Services Plan.

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10 Source: Geraldton Regional Community Education website [http://edcentre.wa.edu.au/about/](http://edcentre.wa.edu.au/about/)
Regional Overview

The Gascoyne Region is located in the north-west of Western Australia (WA) and is a 138,000 square kilometre (km²) area including offshore islands. The Gascoyne represents about 5.5 per cent of the State’s total area and is approximately twice the size of Tasmania.

The region’s 600 kilometre (km) stunning coastline is part of WA’s Coral Coast and home to the World Heritage areas of Shark Bay, Ningaloo Reef and the Cape Range Peninsular.

The region stretches inland roughly 500km to Mount Augustus, the world’s largest monocline, and to the Burringurrah Aboriginal Community.

With an abundance of natural attributes and moderate to tropical weather, it is not surprising tourism is a major industry in the region along with mining, horticulture, retail, fishing, and pastoralism.

The population of 9,826 is dispersed between four local government areas: the Shires of Carnarvon; Exmouth; Shark Bay; and Upper Gascoyne. It is bordered by the Mid West region to the south and east, and the Pilbara region to the north.

The Gascoyne region has a rich Indigenous history and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people presently make up approximately 14.7% of the region’s population, residing in towns and remote communities. The multicultural demographic is represented by a fusion of Scottish; Italian; Vietnamese; Irish; Indian; Filipino; Croatian; Serbian; South African; and New Zealand residents to mention a few.¹¹

The Living in the Regions 2013 report¹² indicated many of the 278 Gascoyne survey respondents had lived in the region for more than 11 years. Of the 278, only 17% were born in the region with 29% having moved from another

¹¹ ABS National Regional Profiles by ASGS 2008-2012
WA region and 54% having moved from outside WA. Overall they rated lifestyle; community connectedness; happiness; and general health and well-being highly and, felt the Gascoyne region provided this.

The Gascoyne Development Commission's (GDC) 2012-2013 Annual Report\textsuperscript{13} states that the Gascoyne’s population is projected to increase to over 11,500 by 2026 (currently 9,288 - ABS 2011). The report goes on to say that in partnership with the GDC and Gascoyne LGA’s an aspirational population target of 20,000 residents by 2026 has been identified as achievable. The majority of the population is concentrated in Carnarvon, the largest centre in the Gascoyne, followed by Exmouth.

**Shire of Carnarvon**

The Shire of Carnarvon at approximately 46,500 km$^2$ in size is the largest Local Government Area (LGA) in the Gascoyne. It is situated on the Indian Ocean just over 900 km north of Perth. It includes the popular holiday town of Coral Bay 238 km to the north and borders the Shark Bay Shire about 330 km to the south.

Predominantly a rural shire, Carnarvon is the central hub and administrative centre of the Gascoyne region. It has a population of 6,095 with a median age of 38.4. 455 are aged from birth to four years and 690 are aged between five and twelve years. The Aboriginal population make up 19.2% of the Shire with 15% aged from birth to nine years.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{13} Source: Gascoyne Development Commission

\textsuperscript{14} Gascoyne Development Commission – Gascoyne Regional Development Plan 2010-2020
The town sits on the edge of the longest river in WA, the Gascoyne River. The river supports a thriving horticultural district (the Gascoyne Food Bowl) that supplies a variety of fruit and vegetables to Perth and the regions. Other industries include mining (salt), fishing, pastoralism (mainly beef and sheep), construction, retail and tourism.

Many large infrastructure projects have been undertaken during 2014 including: revitalisation of the main street and Fascine area; construction of the long awaited Police and Justice Complex at a cost of $13 million; and currently being undertaken, redevelopment of the Carnarvon Health Campus costing $26.8 million.\(^\text{15}\)

Carnarvon has a large government workforce servicing the town and region in areas of health; policing and justice; education; children and family services; housing; Aboriginal services; environment and agriculture services; sport and recreation; and more. Much of the large government workforce is transient and remains in the town only for the term of their contract. Other government services are provided via outreach with staff based in larger centres such as Geraldton or Perth. For example, the Department of Education’s Midwest Education Regional Office is based in Geraldton and is responsible for the entire Midwest Gascoyne region.

Non-government and community organisations provide a significant amount of service provision to the Carnarvon community. Some services are provided via outreach due to difficulties in finding people living in the town with the required skills for the job. An example of an outreach service is the Parents and Community Engagement (PaCE) program. The program has been delivered in Carnarvon, and in the Mungullah and Burringurrah Communities. The Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre provides the service through regular visits to the region, as well as employing local Aboriginal tutors a few hours each week to work directly with families.

Education providers include: the Durack Institute of Technology (TAFE); Carnarvon Community College (public) - Kindergarten to Year 12; St Mary’s Star of the Sea Catholic School - Kindergarten to Year 10; and the Carnarvon Christian School - Kindergarten to Year 7. The Australian Government has included Carnarvon in its Remote Schools Attendance Strategy initiative to address poor school attendance.

Granny Glasgow Education and Care Inc. is the only education and care provider in the town and has been operating in Carnarvon since 1986. They are licensed to provide long day care for up to 42 children per day. This will increase to 60 places once building extensions are complete in 2015. Currently 10 Aboriginal children attend the service.

Children’s services in the community include: a Playgroup; Police and Community Youth Centre (PCYC); Public Library activities; a Toy Library; and a range of sporting activities.

The township of Carnarvon encompasses the Mungullah Community Aboriginal Corporation just seven kilometres from town where community housing (currently 46 houses), recreation and education facilities are provided. Children’s services delivered in the community include the Best Start program; the Parents and Learning (PaL) Program;

regular Child Health Clinic’s; a program for new parents; and just recently, a homework program. Residents and members of Mungullah come from many surrounding areas and bring with them the cultural diversity from each area. Approximately 130 people live in Mungullah; however this can more than double at special times. Approximately 50 school age children live in the community. There is a special significance and links with the Burringurrah Community for cultural and family reasons. Burringurrah is located 480km inland from Carnarvon, near Mt Augustus in the Shire of Upper Gascoyne. Many families and communities members travel between both places and reside in both communities. 16

Shire of Exmouth

The Shire of Exmouth LGA covers an area of 6,261 km². The town is situated over 1200 km north of Perth with its closest neighbour being Carnarvon 368 km to the south with the larger regional centre of Geraldton 834 km away. It has a population of 2,393 and includes 278 children aged from birth to four years, and 403 children between five and twelve years of age.

Over 6,000 hectares of the Shire is World Heritage listed and encompasses the beautiful Ningaloo Coast, Cape Range National Park, the Murion Islands and other small coastal parks. Ningaloo Reef is one of only a few places in the world where whale sharks appear in significant numbers each year from March to September. Visitors flock to Exmouth to swim with the whale sharks and enjoy outdoor activities amidst the unparalleled natural landscapes and seascapes. The population can swell to well over 6000 during the tourist season from May to October.

Needless to say, tourism is a major industry for the Shire along with fishing; pastoralism; aquaculture; light engineering; government services; defence; and industries to support the offshore oil and gas industry. 17

Exmouth, similar to Carnarvon has a significant Federal and State government workforce. Some services based in Exmouth include: health; police; federal police; naval communications; environment and conservation; fisheries; meteorology; and transport.

The Exmouth Health Campus is currently undergoing redevelopment funded by the State Government’s Royalties for Regions program. Community and Child Health services will be co-located on site once construction is completed in late 2015.

16 Mungullah Community Aboriginal Corporation is self-managed under the auspices of ORIC (Federal Office of the Registrar of Aboriginal Communities) http://www.mungullah.org
Education providers include: the Durack Institute of Technology (TAFE) and Exmouth District High School, catering for children from Kindergarten to Year 12.

The Bernice McLeod Early Learning Centre is the town’s only education and care service providing 24 approved places for children from birth to five years of age. Out of School Child Care and Vacation Care is provided by Hayley’s Holiday Fun Care which opened in early 2014 and is licensed for 24 places for children aged five to twelve years.

Services for children and families include a Public Library; Toy Library; a Playgroup; and a Police and Community Youth Centre (PCYC).

Shire of Shark Bay

Aerial view of the town of Denham and surrounds. Photo courtesy: Shire of Shark Bay

The LGA of the Shire of Shark Bay is 25,423 km² in size and is administered from the town of Denham. Denham is 331 km from Carnarvon to the north and 411 km to Geraldton to the south. Residents live in a variety of locations scattered across the Shark Bay region including the Billabong and Overlander roadhouses, on pastoral stations, and at Useless Loop, a closed mining town.

Population is approximately 857 with 60 children aged from birth to four years and 72 between five and twelve years (ABS 2011).

Its coastline forms part of the Coral Coast of WA and is well known for the popular tourist spot of Monkey Mia, one of the most reliable places to view and interact with wild dolphins on a daily basis. The unusual colonies of Stromatolites, the dugong (sea cow) population and vast sea-grass beds which are the largest and richest in the world (4,800 km²), is the reason this area was listed in 1991 as a
significant World Heritage area. Shark Bay has three Marine Parks: Shark Bay Marine Park; Francois Peron National Park; Dirk Hartog National Park.

The natural beauty, diverse range of outdoor activities and being World Heritage listed, makes tourism a major industry for the Shire. Other key industries include fishing (renowned for Shark Bay Whiting), along with pastoralism, mining (salt) and conservation and land management which all provide employment for residents.

Community facilities in the town of Denham include: the Shark Bay World Heritage Discovery Centre; a Recreation Centre; Silver Chain Health Centre; Doctor service twice per week (from Carnarvon); and the Shark Bay Community Resource Centre (CRC).

The Shark Bay CRC provides an invaluable range of services to residents and visitors some of which include: a business service centre; Centrelink agency; a monthly newsletter; free computer access for a range of government information services; computer access to Ngala, a provider of early parenting and childhood services; and facilitation of children’s activities.

Shark Bay School caters for children from Kindergarten to Year 12 with secondary students accessing the majority of their curriculum through the School of Isolated and Distance Education (SIDE).

A Family Day Care Service (FDC) operates in the town utilising a Shire owned building known as In-Venue FDC.

Programs for children under four years of age such as rhyme time and kindy gym are coordinated by staff from the CRC. CRC staff deliver after school and school holiday programs for children. The Shire provides the recreation centre free of charge, the coordinators wages and funds for resources.

Shire of Upper Gascoyne

The Shire of Upper Gascoyne is one of Western Australia’s most remote LGA’s covering an area of some 46,602 km². The Shire encompasses Gascoyne Junction township, Woodgamia Aboriginal Community, and Burringurrah Aboriginal Community. The Shire estimates a resident population of 200 persons which has declined since the 2011 census due mainly to a decline in numbers at the Burringurrah Aboriginal Community. The ABS 2011 indicated 28 children were aged between birth and four years and 36 aged between five and twelve years.

Gascoyne Junction is the administrative centre for the Shire and is a 180 km drive from Carnarvon. The Shire has 1,773 km of unsealed roads that are subject to flooding which can isolate the community, especially Burringurrah, for weeks at a time during cyclone season in the north.

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19 Source : Shark Bay CRC http://www.sharkbay.crc.net.au/OurCRC/AboutUs/Pages/default.aspx
Visitors come to explore and enjoy the Shires two magnificent National Parks, the Kennedy Range National Park stretching 90km in length and rising 100 metres above the valley, and Mount Augustus National Park. Mt Augustus is the world’s largest monocline and is 8 km long, 3 km wide, 858 metres high and 1,105 metres above sea level.

As is similar for the whole of the Gascoyne region, the Shire of Upper Gascoyne’s unique landscape and natural features makes tourism a key industry for the Shire. 2014 saw the Shire develop a new tourist precinct after the devastating one-in-one hundred year floods in 2010 destroyed the historic Junction Hotel and the adjacent services.

Other industries include pastoralism, with 35 cattle stations spread across the Shire and some mining exploration.

Pivotal to the community and visitors is the Gascoyne Junction Community Resource Centre. They provide a range of services including: access to technology; tourist information; library services; production of the newsletter; and other general services.

The Gascoyne Junction Remote Community School caters for students from Kindergarten to Year 10 with high school being provided through the Schools of Isolated Distance Education (SIDE) program. During 2014 six students were enrolled, four of in Year 1 to Year 7. The school provides a school readiness program for three year olds and runs a playgroup each week.

The Burringurrah Remote Aboriginal Community is just over 350 km east of Gascoyne Junction, 480km from Carnarvon to the west and 310 km from Meekatharra to the south-

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21 The Western Australian Community Resource Network (WACRN) comprises over 100 Community Resource Centres (CRCs) located in rural, remote and regional communities across the state. As incorporated not-for-profit organisations, CRCs are independently owned and operated by local people who understand and know the people in their community.
The community is situated 51km from Mt Augustus or Burringurrah as it is known by the local Wajarri Aboriginal people. Many members of the community move between Carnarvon and the Mungullah Community and towns of the Murchison region.

As reported on the Department of Education’s Schools Online website the Burringurrah Remote Community School is the nucleus of the community and caters for children from Pre-Kindergarten to Year 12. Currently 40 students are enrolled with 28 children in classes ranging from Pre-Kindergarten to Year 7. Numbers do fluctuate as family transience is a significant factor of life in this community. The community’s Health Nurse was monitoring the number of people in the community each day and on the 06th Aug 2014 the count was 89 people which is significantly lower than in previous years.

The Burringurrah Multi-Functional Police Facility opened in August 2011 and services the Upper Gascoyne Region. It had an early focus on making connections with families and children of all ages to positively influence behaviour and take a proactive approach in addressing issues. Visiting services have been encouraged to use the facility and work with its staff. It includes an office and housing for the Department for Child Protection and Family Support. This position has not been consistently staffed.

The community has a well maintained pool which has a ‘no school, no pool policy’ and a local shop and petrol pump. Many residents find it more affordable to travel to Carnarvon or Meekatharra to stock up on supplies due to the high cost of goods sold at the shop.

Over the years, the community has been serviced by a wide range of government departments, agencies and not-for-profit organisations. Since 2014 the community has seen a decrease in population and, of visiting services.
Background and Methodology

Mapping children and parent services across a region the size of the Gascoyne has been a major undertaking with distance between LGA’s one factor.

The methodology involved several phases commencing with looking at the region’s LGA’s, the Australian Bureau of Statistics Statistical Areas and the demographics of each LGA. It also included a comprehensive desktop research to locate relevant reports on the region; identify local and regional service providers and stakeholders; and plan engagement with them.

Mapping of current services and coverage gaps involved gathering a range of perspectives and data. This information provided an understanding of the demand and supply balance for children’s services in each LGA in the Gascoyne. Financial sustainability, specific difficulties faced and initiatives used by service providers to address these issues was collated. Customer/service user perspectives and perceptions were gathered to gain an understanding of coverage, service accessibility and customer satisfaction.

Throughout the project a participatory approach was implemented. A participatory approach is one in which everyone who has a stake in the children’s services either as a service provider, service user or a community member has a voice, either in person or by representation. Everyone’s participation was welcomed and assisted greatly in developing an understanding of the region and services provision from their perspective. Consultation was initially carried out by phone and email, followed by meetings face to face, one on one, or in small groups. Some conversations were recorded (subject to consent being given), to ensure facts and content of discussion was correctly collated. The method was an effective way of gathering data with face to face consultations providing invaluable feedback. The process was lengthy and required significant travel and substantial review of data.

Through service provider consultation, the attributes that drive strong performance of children’s services in each LGA were assessed. This was achieved by looking at linkages and partnerships between service providers and the community, Local Government, local employers, sporting and religious groups and education providers. A rating scale was utilised to determine the strength and sustainability of service provision.

Data collated through research, engagement and consultation, assisted in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of current service provision from a service provider and service user perspective. Opportunities and threats that may impact on future outcomes for children’s services were also identified along with analyses of the trends and issues unique to the each LGA and the Gascoyne as a whole.

The Gascoyne Children’s Services Plan has been developed thanks to the participation of a wide range of people in each LGA. The participatory approach was invaluable throughout each phase and has informed the recommendations provided in this plan. Appendix A contains a list of stakeholders involved in the consultation process.
Desktop Review
Information was gathered from websites and reports from a range of sources which have been acknowledged throughout the document in the footnotes and in the references section and include:

Federal Government:
- Australian Bureau of Statistics
- Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (Indigenous Advancement Strategy)
- Australian Early Development Census

National Independent Authority:
- Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority website

State Government:
- Gascoyne Development Commission 2010 – 2020 Plan and other information sourced from their website
- WA Government Department of Regional Development, Living in the Regions 2013 State report
- The Department of Indigenous Affairs Mapping and Gap Analysis of Human Services for Indigenous People in the Murchison Gascoyne (2010)
- Department of Local Government and Communities
- Department for Child Protection and Family Support
- Department of Education
- Department of Training and Workforce Development

Local Government:
- Shires of Carnarvon, Exmouth, Shark Bay and Upper Gascoyne

Service Providers:
- Bright Stars Family Day Care
- Granny Glasgow Education and Care
- Bernice McLeod Early Learning Centre (CSSU)
- Gascoyne Schools

Not-for-Profit Organisations:
- Child Inclusive Learning and Development Australia (Child Australia)
- West Australian Community Resource Network
- West Australian Council of Social Service Inc. (Early Years Networks Project: Research and Report Nov 2014)
- Playgroup WA Incorporated
- Children’s Services Support Unit Incorporated (CSSU)

Mapping and Service Coverage
The Gascoyne is an isolated region with relatively small urban centres and hundreds of kilometres between each centre. The Gascoyne is often referred to in conjunction with
the Mid West with regular travel, family connections and service provider synergies between communities.

During the mapping of services in the Gascoyne, it was evident many government, non-government, and community organisations responsible for service provision and regulatory control were located outside the region. Some are located in Geraldton, the largest regional centre in the Mid West Gascoyne, with others based in Perth.

Examples include:
- The Education and Care Regulatory Unit\(^{22}\) (ECRU) is responsible for approval, assessment and rating of education and care services. The Children’s Services Officers provide support to the education and care sector. Previously officers were based in Geraldton and serviced the Mid West Gascoyne. They are now based in Perth and contact is mainly by phone or email.

- Bright Stars Family Day Care\(^{23}\) is based in Geraldton and coordinates support to educators across the Mid West, Gascoyne and as far north as the Pilbara as regional boundaries no longer apply.

- Child Australia’s\(^{24}\) Professional Support Coordinators who deliver and/or facilitate professional development and support to eligible Early Childcare and Education and Care (ECEC) services are based in Perth.


\(^{23}\) The Approved Provider for Bright Stars Family Day Care is the City of Greater Geraldton. [http://fdc.cgg.wa.gov.au/](http://fdc.cgg.wa.gov.au/)
Exmouth, the most northerly LGA in the Gascoyne, is over 1200 km north of Perth and more than 800 km from Geraldton. Distance between support services and ECEC providers in the Gascoyne may result in a feeling of isolation due to irregular face to face support. Although some professional learning opportunities are delivered in the region and can be accessed via video link or through online modules, access is limited compared to those available to providers in larger regional centres and cities.

Children’s services represented in the Gascoyne

Many children’s services are available to families in Western Australia and are generally categorised by service type and then service sub-types. The tables below identify the different services, their sub-types, service name if applicable, and where they are provided in the region. Following each table, the service sub-types are defined to provide a greater understanding of the difference between services. A summary follows each section providing information of the services represented in the Gascoyne and how they are tracking towards meeting the needs of the region.

Approved/Regulated Education and Care services

The services listed in the table below must adhere to the National Quality Framework (NQF). The NQF is the result of an agreement between all Australian governments to work together to provide better educational and developmental outcomes for children using education and care services. 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services Type</th>
<th>Service Sub-Type</th>
<th>Service Name</th>
<th>LGA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approved/Regulated Education and Care services</td>
<td>Long Day Care (LDC)</td>
<td>Granny Glasgow Education and Care</td>
<td>Carnarvon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bernice McLeod Early Learning Centre</td>
<td>Exmouth</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) and Vacation Care (VC)</td>
<td>Hayley’s Holiday Fun Care</td>
<td>Exmouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family Day Care (FDC)</td>
<td>Bright Stars FDC (In Venue)</td>
<td>Shark Bay</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services Type</th>
<th>Service Sub-Type</th>
<th>Service Name</th>
<th>LGA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other Sub-Types in this category</td>
<td>Crèche</td>
<td>Durack Institute of Technology</td>
<td>Carnarvon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Occasional Care; In-home Care, Mobile services</td>
<td></td>
<td>NIL currently reported in the Gascoyne</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above approved/regulated services are defined as follows:

- Long Day Care/Child care is care for children under school age, in premises specially built or adapted for child care. Private operators, local councils, community organisations, employers and non-profit organisations may run Long Day Care centres.

- Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) and Vacation Care (VC) is supervised care and recreation for school aged children before and after school, on pupil free days and during school holidays (VC).

- Family Day Care (FDC) is a network of experienced carers or educators who provide care and developmental activities in their own homes for other people’s children. Family Day Care is primarily for children who have not yet started school. It can also provide care for school children up to 12 years old. Care is flexible and can be tailored to suit each family's needs including care outside normal working hours and, if needed, overnight care.

In Venue FDC is care delivered in a facility other than a family home—usually in a school or community hall. Originally they were only located in regional and remote areas where no other care was available or possible within reasonable travelling distance for families. This rule no longer applies and many are now situated in towns or cities.26

Other Sub-Types in this category:

- A Crèche is a supervised play area for small children found on site of places such as educational institutes or gym’s. Experienced and qualified carers provide supervision while parents/carers undertake training, workshops or activities. Parents/carers must remain on-site at all times.

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26 Family Day Care is an approved form of child care that is provided in the family day care educators own home. Family day care educators are early childhood education and care professionals, registered with a family day care service that is responsible for approving, supporting, training and advising its educators. Source: [http://www.familydaycareaustralia.com.au/index.php/main/About%20Family%20Day%20Care#M39](http://www.familydaycareaustralia.com.au/index.php/main/About%20Family%20Day%20Care#M39)
• Occasional Care Services provide short periods of care for children under school age. Families can access occasional care on either a regular or irregular basis.

• In-Home Care is a flexible form of child care where care is provided in the child's home by an approved carer.

• Mobile Child Care services visit rural and remote areas and may provide flexible children's sessions, including playgroups, Vacation Care, on-farm care, parenting support, toy and video lending libraries, and parent resource library services.27

Approved/Regulated Education and Care Services in the Gascoyne

In Carnarvon, Granny Glasgow Education and Care Incorporated is a community based organisation approved to provide for up to 42 LDC places per day. They are currently running at capacity with a three to six month waitlist. Once building extensions are complete in 2015 capacity will increase to 60 places. The service has been assessed and rated as working towards National Quality Standards against the seven quality areas of the National Quality Standard and the Education and Care Services National Regulations.28

Exmouth’s Bernice McLeod Early Learning Centre (ELC) is approved for 24 LDC places per day and operating at capacity with a three to six month waitlist. The service operates from a building provided by the Shire at a peppercorn rent. The centre is owned and operated by the Children’s Services Support Unit (CSSU) Incorporated, a not-for-profit organisation which operates 22 services across WA and the Northern Territory.29 Bernice McLeod ELC has been assessed and rated as meeting National Quality Standards against three quality areas, and exceeding standards against four quality standards of the National Quality Standard and the Education and Care Services National Regulations.30

Exmouth has a privately run OSHC and VC service - Hayley’s Holiday Fun Care which opened in early 2014. They provide a range of educational activities after school and during the school holidays for primary school age children. They are presently based on school grounds at Exmouth District High School which allows for a seamless school-to-childcare service.

At the time of mapping services, the only FDC service operating in the Gascoyne was the Bright Stars Family Day Care service in the township of Denham, in the Shire of Shark Bay. The service operates from a Shire owned building classified as an In-Venue FDC service. At times, the service runs below the allowable capacity of four children.

under school age, the main age group for this particular service. The service manages to remain viable and continue providing a service to the community because of the affordable rent charged by the Shire.

Currently no FDC services are operating in Carnarvon or Exmouth. FDC operated in these locations several years ago. Consultations indicate that factors that affect the ongoing provision of FDC services are:

- The educator’s children have commenced school and they no longer wish to work in FDC; they have transferred out of the town due to their partner’s contract concluding or have been posted to another town (common in jobs such as the police force).
- Compliance with the new regulations and qualification requirements.
- FDC educators must now have, or are actively working towards a Certificate III in Children’s Services; meet national standards in regards to maintaining quality learning programs; attend periodically training to maintain their skills and knowledge and up to date with current policy.
- Premises need to comply with strict safety requirements.

Another issue that has been reported as affecting the establishment of FDC’s in regional areas is house ownership. In the situation where the property is being rented, landlords may not approve a FDC business running from the house or agree to the safety modifications required. In regional areas a significant amount of housing is provided for government workers through the Government Regional Officers Housing (GROH) Program. The GROH tenancy agreement states “The tenant will use their GROH home solely as a dwelling, unless written consent is received from the owners, the tenant’s agency and the Local Government Authority.” 31 However, the Coordinator of Bright Stars Family Day Care reports that exceptions have been approved following negotiation between the FDC Educator Support Service and GROH.

The closest FDC Educator Support Service to towns in the Gascoyne is Bright Stars Family Day Care, with the provider being the City of Greater Geraldton. They currently provide support services in Shark Bay, throughout the Mid West and as far north as the Pilbara Region. 32

A Crèche is provided at the Durack Institute of Technology in Carnarvon to encourage parents to enrol in parent based courses. The Co-ordinator has a Diploma of Children’s Services and other staff have, or are working towards, a Certificate III in Children’s Services. They can cater to a maximum of 12 children per day aged between eight weeks and 5 years of age and are currently meeting demand. Parents must remain on site at all times their child is in care.

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31 Source: Government of WA Department of Housing

32 Bright Stars Family Day Care is owned and operated by the City of Greater Geraldton. Their FDC Coordination Unit provides support for educators throughout the Midwest and regional towns including Denham in the Shire of Shark Bay and as far away as Karratha in the north of WA. http://fdc.cgg.wa.gov.au/
Other Care

Other Care services refer to services that operate under informal arrangements and are not regulated under the NQF.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services Type</th>
<th>Service Sub-Type</th>
<th>Service Name</th>
<th>LGA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other Care</td>
<td>Nanny Care</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>ALL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Au Pair Care</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relative Care</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informal Care, e.g. Baby sitting</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The above sub-types are defined as follows:

- Nanny - employed by the family on either a live-in or live-out basis to undertake all tasks related to the care of children.

- Au Pair - foreign national in Australia for up to a year and primarily for the purpose of cultural exchange and to experience Australian life. Most live with the host family or are accommodated elsewhere. They receive an allowance in exchange for child care and household duties. Most are required to have had some previous child care experience supported by references, however qualifications are not required.

- Relative Care – a family member provides supervision and care.

- Informal Care (Babysitter) - provides supervisory, custodial care of children on an irregular full time or part-time basis.33

Other Care Services in the Gascoyne

Through consultation, it was evident many families had relocated to the Gascoyne region for work and lacked extended family support for the care of their children. In situations where both parents are employed and may be required to undertake shift work, the services of a Nanny or Au Pair provide flexible, convenient and affordable child care particularly if families have more than one child. It is also seen an opportunity for cultural exchange where the family and the Au Pair learn about each other’s culture and language. Through community consultation with parents at playgroups and with

children’s service providers it was evident that the services of Au Pairs were being tapped into by families in the Gascoyne. Discussion revealed that at least four families in Carnarvon currently employ Au Pair’s and do so on a regular basis.

Some of the Au Pairs were actively participating in playgroup and library activities with their small charges. A search on the internet reveals quite a few Australian and international agencies providing Au Pair services. In some cases care may be arranged privately. Au Pairs do not require any formal education and care qualification. Some previous experience of working with children is required as is a Working with Children Check.

Community noticeboards, social media and community networks confirm informal child care in the form of Babysitting is another service being utilised by parents, not just for an evening out but for more regular day time care. Babysitters may or may not have child care qualifications, a Working with Children check, first aid, anaphylaxis training, public liability and other requirements regulated education and care providers must have. The use of unregulated care such as babysitters is more prevalent in towns where there is a lack of availability of regulated care. This is indeed the situation in both Exmouth and Carnarvon where childcare options are limited.

**Child, Parent, Family and Community Support Services**

The services listed below include community networks, parenting programs, child health clinics and services and programs that support families.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services Type</th>
<th>Service Sub-Type</th>
<th>Service Name</th>
<th>LGA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child, parent, family and community support</td>
<td>Early Years Network</td>
<td>Gascoyne Early Years Network</td>
<td>Carnarvon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting Services</td>
<td>Parent Support Program</td>
<td>Carnarvon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Best Beginnings</td>
<td>Carnarvon</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Young Parent’s Support Program</td>
<td>Carnarvon (Mungullah)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Health Services (medical services that provide child health services)</td>
<td>Carnarvon Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation (CMSAC)</td>
<td>Carnarvon</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carnarvon Child Health Centre</td>
<td>Carnarvon</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exmouth Child Health Centre</td>
<td>Exmouth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services Type</td>
<td>Service Sub-Type</td>
<td>Service Name</td>
<td>LGA</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shark Bay Silver Chain (used by visiting child health providers)</td>
<td>Shark Bay</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CMSAC – visiting Doctor</td>
<td>Upper Gascoyne Junction</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Remote Health Nurse provides some child health services</td>
<td>Upper Gascoyne (Burringurrah)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Sub-Types in the category</td>
<td>Child and Parent Centres; Child and Family Centres</td>
<td>Disability Services Commission – Local Area Coordinator</td>
<td>NIL services provided in the Gascoyne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Support Services</td>
<td></td>
<td>Midwest Community Living Association</td>
<td>Gascoyne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Perth Regional Home Care Services</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inclusion Support</td>
<td></td>
<td>Child Australia: Inclusion and Professional Support Program; and Rural Inclusion Support Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family support through playgroups</td>
<td></td>
<td>Playgroup WA - Enhanced Transition to School Project - Playgroups to Schools</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Definition of the above Service Sub-Types:**

- Early Years Networks are typically made up of parents, local government, those who work with children including education and childcare educators, child health, libraries, schools, not-for-profit community organisations and government
agencies. They collaborate to develop a strategic framework to help meet the needs of young children aged from birth to eight years and their families.

- Parenting Services include the Parenting Support Program. The program works with parents of school age children who are displaying criminal and anti-social behaviour and are truanting (only if this is happening with one or both of the above behaviours). The program empowers parents to develop strategies to improve their child’s behaviour. Best Beginnings is a home visiting service for families of new infants and up to two years of age. A referral is required before birth or before the baby is 3 months old. It involves regular home visits by trained professionals who provide support, advice, information, connections and practical help. The aim is to improve child health and wellbeing, parent and family functioning and social support networks.34 Both programs are delivered by the Department for Child Protection and Family Support.

- Child Health Centres are staffed by registered nurses with qualifications in child and family health. They provide a range of services in partnership with parents and carers of babies and young children up to the age of four years. Community Child Health Nurses can assess children’s health and development as well as provide information about many aspects of parenting, maternal and family health and healthy lifestyles.35

- Child and Parent Centres (CPCs) are located on schools sites in areas with higher than average concentrations of developmentally vulnerable children. A CPCs purpose is to improve access to a range of early learning, parenting, child and maternal health and well-being programs and services that provide support to families with young children from birth to eight years with a focus on children from birth to four years of age.36 Currently there are 16 CPCs located across WA.

- Children and Family Centres (CFCs) are a Council of Australian Governments Closing the Gap Initiative. They offer a range of early learning, parenting, child and maternal health, and well-being programs and services including approved child care to predominantly Aboriginal families with children aged from pre-birth to eight years of age. Services are managed, coordinated and scheduled by not-for-profit organisations. They are situated in areas based on the number of Aboriginal children located in the area, availability or lack of existing services, the degree of disadvantage and the likelihood of the centres being fully utilised.37

- Disability Support Services work with parents of children with disabilities to find the right combination of services to meet their child’s needs. They assist parents to link with respite services, support networks and other families.

37 More information on CFCs can be obtained on the Department of Education website.
Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP) provides an integrated approach to meeting the inclusion and professional support needs of child care services. The program is provided by Child Inclusive Learning and Development Australia (Child Australia). The aim of the IPSP is to promote and maintain high quality, inclusive education and care, for all children in eligible early childhood education and care settings by working with education and care providers.

Child Australia are the providers of the Rural Inclusion Support Program (RISP), a program designed to support eligible education and care centres in rural Western Australia to support the inclusion of children with additional needs such as: Disability (including under assessment for a disability); Culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds; Refugee or humanitarian backgrounds; and Indigenous backgrounds.

Enhanced Transition to School Project - Playgroups to Schools is an exciting new partnership between Playgroup WA and schools. It is supported by the Department of Education, the Association of Independent Schools, the Catholic Education Office and the Department of Local Government and Communities through Commonwealth funding which is part of the National Partnership on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education. The focus of the Enhanced Transition to School Project is to enhance confidence among all families in their role as their children’s first ‘teachers’ through enriched home learning experiences that facilitate enduring home/school collaboration. This collaboration will contribute to the project’s purposes:

- to establish or consolidate community led and (in some cases) supported playgroups hosted on or near school sites;
- to provide those playgroups with evidence-based resources and support; and
- to strengthen relationships between schools and playgroups in order to optimise children’s transition to school.

The Project commenced in mid-September 2014 and will initially focus on mapping existing playgroups, existing levels and modes of playgroup-school engagement, and identifying gaps and unmet demand. This will include consulting schools and playgroup families during Term 4, 2014 and Term 1, 2015.

**Child, Parent, Family and Community Support Services Represented in the Gascoyne**

The Gascoyne Early Years Network (GEYN) was formerly known as the Carnarvon Early Years Reference Group and was one of the first networks to be established under

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the Early Years Strategy in 2002. Initiatives the network undertook were informed by results of the Australian Early Development Index research in 2004 and 2009. The GEYN continues to meet monthly and has a broad state government agency representation and includes the Department of Local Government and Communities and the Child Development Service (allied health services). It is strongly supported by the Shire of Carnarvon, through the Carnarvon library. Each year during Children’s Week, the network coordinates activities to engage with parents and children.

WA Country Health Service provides Child Health Centres in Carnarvon and Exmouth and run a range of peri and post-natal programs for mothers and their babies. They coordinate the Child Development Service (CDS) made up of professionals and allied health services. It is a multi-disciplinary group formed of staff experienced in child health. The Gascoyne Early Years Network (GEYN) presently links with this service.

The Carnarvon Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation (CMSAC) is an Indigenous specific medical practice. They run a range of peri, post-natal and birth to 12 year old programs with a focus on health. They operate a child health clinic at Mungullah Community each week. In the Mungullah community a Young Parent Program for parents up to the age of 30 recently commenced (December 2014). Participants are either first time parents or soon will be, or have very young children and may be struggling to embrace parenthood. Professional speakers are invited along to sessions to provide information on child rearing, offer advice and inform parents of the services available.

In the Shire of Upper Gascoyne CMSAC provides all residents with an outreach clinic with a Doctor visiting Gascoyne Junction every fortnight. Recent funding cuts reduced their ability to provide a weekly service and a Child Health Clinic no longer operates. CMSAC and the Shire of Upper Gascoyne have expressed concern about only having Royal Flying Doctor Services in case of emergencies and no regular support for families. The Burringurrah Remote Community has a Remote Health Nurse residing in the community. The nurse carries out child health checks in the course of their duties and can update the child’s record book.

The Shire of Shark Bay has a Silver Chain Clinic situated in the township of Denham where a fly in fly out Doctor is based when visiting. Supported by the Shire, the twice weekly service is coordinated by the Carnarvon Health Campus. The service includes monthly visits by the Child Health Nurse who also visits the closed mining town of Useless Loop every second month.

The Disability Services Commission funds a range of support services for individuals, families and carers. A Local Area Coordinator (LAC) is based in Carnarvon and services the four LGAs on an as need basis. The LAC has local knowledge and works with family and carers to help them access funding and support services.40

Child Inclusive Learning and Development Australia (Child Australia) is a not for profit organisation providing a range of services such as the IPSP and RISP mentioned

above. They service the Gascoyne region from Perth and Geraldton on a regular/as need basis. They work with education and care providers to build their capacity, provide professional development and resources and support services to develop inclusive environments for children with additional needs.

The Midwest Community Living Association, based in Geraldton provides services in the Gascoyne via phone and email, with one of their key areas being as a respite brokerage service. Regional Home Care Service (RHCS), the country arm of Perth Home Care, has an office in Geraldton and provides services to the Gascoyne. They partner with Inclusion WA and provide support during the school holidays for school aged children. A support worker enables a child or youth to attend vacation holiday programs that are provided for the community along with sporting activities and any other activities the child would like to participate in. Clients must be registered with the Disability Services Commission to receive this support.

Based in Carnarvon, and servicing the whole of Gascoyne, is the Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre. The service is for people with disabilities from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The aim of advocacy is to safeguard the rights and interests of people with disabilities in accessing appropriate community services and address matters of grievance, discrimination and abuse.41

Enhanced Transition to School Project - Playgroups to Schools42 has not yet commenced projects in the Gascoyne region but plans to do so in 2015.

Children’s Activity Groups

The table below lists a range of children’s activity groups. Participating in activity groups provides an opportunity for children to play and develop social competence; communication skills; language and cognitive skills; emotional maturity; and enhances physical health and wellbeing. Parents attend with their children and have the opportunity to engage with other parents and to actively participate in the running of the group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services Type</th>
<th>Service Sub-Type</th>
<th>Service Name</th>
<th>LGA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Activity Groups</td>
<td>Playgroups</td>
<td>Carnarvon Playgroup (PG)</td>
<td>Carnarvon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ninny Jinnas PG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Poinciana PG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mungullah PG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gascoyne Junction RCS PG</td>
<td>Upper Gascoyne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Exmouth Playgroup</td>
<td>Exmouth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services Type</th>
<th>Service Sub-Type</th>
<th>Service Name</th>
<th>LGA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toy Libraries</td>
<td>Carnarvon and Exmouth Toy Library</td>
<td>Carnarvon Exmouth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Programs</td>
<td>Better Beginnings program</td>
<td>Carnarvon Exmouth Shark Bay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Library Activities</td>
<td>Rhyme Time Story Time</td>
<td>Carnarvon Exmouth Shark Bay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Definition of the above Service Sub-Types:**

- **Playgroups**\(^{43}\) are a place where families can create their own locally based friends and social networks, share ideas and parenting experiences. Children have the opportunity to play and learn and develop social skills in a safe and caring environment. Many types of playgroups exist based on the interest of parents. Some types of playgroups listed on Playgroup WA website are: Nature based; Fathers group; Fly in Fly Out (FIFO) families; Intergenerational; Home based. Traditionally playgroups are self-managed by the parents who use them however some playgroups are supported and have the help of a facilitator for parents who require extra support.

- **Toy Libraries**\(^{44}\) allow parents or carers to borrow a large variety of good quality toys, puzzles or games, designed to support children’s development and promote learning through play. The toys, puzzles and games may be borrowed and enjoyed at home or in a group situation – just like books from a lending library. Most toy libraries cater for children from birth to eight years and some have games and puzzles for the whole family. Generally toy libraries are run by parent members on a roster system.

- **Literacy Programs** such the Better Beginnings\(^{45}\) program has been developed by the State Library of Western Australia as a family literacy program that supports parents as their child’s first teacher. The program is delivered in partnerships with public libraries, local governments, health professionals and schools. The aim is to encourage the value of reading and sharing stories with children from birth. Reading packs are provided to parents with newborns and for children four to five years of age through schools and kindergartens or through library.

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\(^{44}\) More information can be found on the WA Association of Toy Libraries website: [http://www.toylibrary.asn.au/toy_libraries_all_about.htm](http://www.toylibrary.asn.au/toy_libraries_all_about.htm)

Children’s Library Activities include Rhyme Time and Story time for children aged from birth to pre-school. Activities are delivered in community Libraries or CRC’s and in some cases in remote schools. The National Children’s Book Week celebrations are also supported by WA libraries.

Children’s Activity Groups in the Gascoyne

Organised playgroups operate in all towns of the Gascoyne except Shark Bay, where mothers and children gather on an informal basis. Exmouth has sessions from Monday to Friday with parents having access to a range of sessions based on their interest and the age of their children. The Shire of Exmouth provides the building.

Parents in Carnarvon have the choice of five playgroups, each with a slightly different focus. Two mainstream (traditional run) sessions operate on a Monday and Thursday and a supported session operates on Wednesdays. All operate from a Shire owned building with a broad range of families attending the different sessions. Mungullah Community has a supported playgroup operating each Wednesday from the Best Start building. New to Carnarvon in October 2014 is the intergenerational playgroup called Poinciana Playgroup. It is hosted onsite at Poinciana Lodge, an aged care facility attached to the Carnarvon Health Campus. A weekly session provides an opportunity for the aged and the young to come together and interact. A maximum of nine parents and their children can attend at any one time.

Although Playgroup WA supports services and establishes playgroups in Western Australia, not all playgroups are registered with them. In the Gascoyne their records of community participation in registered playgroups is included in the table below, indicating opportunities to improve participation in playgroups and/or registration of Playgroups to enable them to access further support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town name</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Families</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Families</th>
<th>Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brockman</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carnarvon</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carnarvon East</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coral Bay</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denham</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exmouth</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gascoyne Junction</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monkey Mia</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Toy Libraries are available in both Exmouth and Carnarvon for parents and children to utilise. Some toy libraries have a paid coordinator but regardless of this, members are expected to contribute their time in the form of helping out in the library on a roster basis, attending the Annual General Meeting, and assisting in fundraising activities such as sausage sizzles or chocolate drives.

Literacy Programs such as the Better Beginnings program is being provided by Local Government through the libraries in each of the Shires except the Shire of Upper Gascoyne. The Gascoyne Junction Remote Community School however, is tapping into an alternative program called Books in Homes Program. The program runs in Terms one, two and four of each year and operates through community groups, playgroups, early childhood centres, preschools and schools. The program is for children from 0-12 years old. A child has the opportunity to select three free books in each of the terms listed above to take home and share with their families.

Libraries in Carnarvon, Exmouth and Shark Bay are providing Story time and Rhyme Time activities for children 0-5 years on a weekly basis. The Shark Bay service is provided through the local CRC. The Carnarvon Library has recently commenced providing an additional Story Time session for Aboriginal and culturally diverse families. The activities not only encourage parents to read to their children but also to become more comfortable in visiting and utilising library services.

**Aboriginal Specific Services**

The table below list services specific and appropriate for Aboriginal children and families. They can be tailored to meet the specific needs of the children participating in the programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services Type</th>
<th>Service Sub-Type</th>
<th>Service Name</th>
<th>LGA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Specific Services</td>
<td>Homework Programs</td>
<td>Department for Child Protection and Family Support</td>
<td>Carnarvon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CMSAC</td>
<td>Carnarvon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Playgroups (PG)</td>
<td>Mungullah PG</td>
<td>Carnarvon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Burringurrah PG Gascoyne Junction PG</td>
<td>Upper Gascoyne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Best Start Program</td>
<td>Mungullah Best Start Program</td>
<td>Carnarvon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literacy Programs</th>
<th>Parent and Community Engagement - Parents and Learning Program</th>
<th>Carnarvon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Parents in Tune with Education Program</td>
<td>Carnarvon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Remote School Attendance Strategy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Description of the above Service Sub-Types:

- Homework Programs offer one on one or small group classes for children requiring extra support with their school work.

- Playgroups – see previous Sub-Type description.

- The Best Start Program\(^{48}\) aims to improve life opportunities for Aboriginal children 0-5 years of age. The program develops and delivers age appropriate activities and promotes information sessions and projects that will improve health, educational opportunities, social and cultural development.

- Literacy Programs include library activities and the Better Beginnings program as mentioned above. An Aboriginal specific literacy program developed by Napranum Parents and Learning Group (Queensland) is the Parents and Learning (PaL) program\(^{49}\). The PaL program has been developed for parents and family members to use with their preschool and school age children aged from four to six years. It is primarily a resource based program and has two levels comprising of 56 kits. Each PaL kit contains a high quality picture storybook and related educational activities. Parents and/or extended family members work closely with their child, reading story books and playing the accompanying games. The PaL program makes quality literature and educational resources accessible to families at home and promotes learning as an important fun filled activity to participate in.

- Parents in Tune with Education (PiTE) project aims to increase parents understanding and skills to enable them to support their children’s participation in school. The program focuses on Aboriginal children and families. It aims to enable children from birth to twelve, young people aged between 13 and18, and parents and caregivers to develop supportive, safe and nurturing family relationships that support children involved with the education process. The

\(^{48}\) The Best Start Program is provided through the Department of Local Government and Communities with local providers.

\(^{49}\) PaL is an early childhood parent engagement program owned, developed and implemented by Indigenous people. It builds capacity in Indigenous communities by supporting parents and family members to become engaged in their young children’s learning. PaL is a two-year home based program, which focuses on early literacy and numeracy, and on parents as teachers of their own children and, parents teaching other parents. The program is funded through the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.
program is funded by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Government of Australia.

- Remote School Attendance Strategy commenced in Term 1 2014 and is about School Engagement Officers working with schools, families, parents, and community organisations to ensure all children go to school every day. It is designed to be driven by the community to suit local needs.

**Aboriginal Specific Services in the Gascoyne**

Services for Aboriginal children are concentrated in the Carnarvon and Upper Gascoyne Shires where the Aboriginal population is greater.

Although not an Aboriginal specific program, homework classes are provided twice weekly by the Education Officer at the Department for Child Protection and Family Support in Carnarvon. This service is specifically for pre-primary to Year 7 children who are in care. Only a maximum of eight children are able to receive this service at any one time due to the complex needs many present with. Currently all children attending classes are Aboriginal with many having missed a substantial amount of school. The Education Officer reported that the children’s carers are fully supportive of the homework classes with more classes requested, than can be provided. A homework class has recently commenced (December 2014) at Mungullah Community once per week for primary school age students with up to seven children currently attending.

Mungullah Playgroup is coordinated by the Best Start coordinator from the Department of Local Government and Communities and operates each Wednesday from purpose built premises at the village. Parent and children attendance fluctuates each week and the building is considered underutilised.

The Carnarvon Library is providing an additional Story Time session to encourage Aboriginal families to attend. The group is smaller and is supported by the Best Beginnings coordinator who encourages parents/carers they are currently working with to attend the activity. Transport to the venue and social and emotional support is provided to their clients if needed.

Under the Parents and Community Engagement Program, the Parents and Learning (PaL) program has been delivered since 2012 by the Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre. A total of ten participants graduated in 2014. Participants completed level one and two over a two year period. Support was provided by two Aboriginal tutors based in Carnarvon and Mungullah.

The Parents in Tune with Education project is delivered by the Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre across the Mid West Gascoyne and has included the town of Carnarvon and the Mungullah and Burringurrah Aboriginal communities. Participation

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50 Source: The Australian Government Remote School Attendance Strategy
51 PaCE is a community driven programme for parents and carers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. It supports initiatives that assist families and communities to ‘reach-in’ to schools and other educational settings (including early childhood centres/preschools) to engage in their children’s education. The Parental and Community Engagement Programme (PaCE) | Department of Education
by parents, children and schools resulted in resources being developed featuring parents and children.\textsuperscript{52}

At a Remote School Attendance Strategy Forum facilitated in Carnarvon in June 2014, Engagement Officers identified the need to work with families with children in the early years, including having access to locations that families feel comfortable visiting, where they can engage in educational activities with their children.

**Other Services**

The table below lists other children’s services provided in the towns in the region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services Type</th>
<th>Service Sub-Type</th>
<th>Service Name</th>
<th>LGA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other (Any other service as defined by the community)</td>
<td>3 Year Old Kindergarten</td>
<td>‘Little Stars’ St Mary’s Star of the Sea Catholic School</td>
<td>Carnarvon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Carnarvon Christian School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Carnarvon Community College</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Burringurrah Community School Gascoyne Junction RC School</td>
<td>Upper Gascoyne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Holiday Activities</td>
<td>Police and Community Youth Centre (PCYC) and Shire of Carnarvon</td>
<td></td>
<td>Carnarvon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shire of Exmouth</td>
<td></td>
<td>Exmouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hayley’s Holiday Fun Care</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shark Bay CRC through the Shire of Shark Bay</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shark Bay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement - Music and Dance</td>
<td>Toddler Jam</td>
<td></td>
<td>Carnarvon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gymnastics</td>
<td>Kindy Gym, Tiny Tots or Toddler Gym</td>
<td></td>
<td>Carnarvon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other Children’s Services in the Gascoyne**

\textsuperscript{52} Source: Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre: [http://edcentre.wa.edu.au/aboriginal-parenting-programs/](http://edcentre.wa.edu.au/aboriginal-parenting-programs/). Funding is provided by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Government of Australia.
The above list of services, although not exhaustive, has been mentioned as they show the variety of activities and programs for children from 0-12 years being provided in each Local Government Area.

In WA Kindergarten is not compulsory, however it helps give children the best start at school as they learn important early numeracy, literacy and social skills. Children can start kindergarten if turning four years old by 30 June of the year they attend. Some schools offer a three year old kindergarten and may be funded to provide the service while other schools must pass the cost onto parents. Three year old kindergarten operates at schools in Carnarvon, Shark Bay and at the Gascoyne Junction Remote Community School. The Burringurrah Community School encourages parents of three year olds to bring their children along to join in with the Kindergarten to Year 2 classes on Monday to Thursdays. Exmouth District High School is not currently funded to provide three year old kindergarten.

School holiday programs are delivered by the Shire of Exmouth and by the Shark Bay CRC, on behalf of the Shire and through Hayley’s Holiday Fun Care, a privately operated childcare service. The Carnarvon Police and Community Youth Centre (PCYC) provide daily activities throughout the school holidays in conjunction with the Shire.

Carnarvon PCYC and Shark Bay CRC also provide gym classes for three and four year olds.

In Carnarvon, the Church of Christ provides the Toddler Jam Program, a program delivered by many local church organisations across Australia. Sessions vary and include: story time; nursery rhymes; music and dancing; percussion fun; and games. The program creates an opportunity for children to participate in a group setting where they learn about concepts such as colours, animals, counting, sequencing and following instructions. The program aims to stimulate children’s intellectual, emotional and social growth through music appreciation.

Australian Early Development Census - Gascoyne Results

To further understand the needs of children in the Gascoyne, the results of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) 2012 was taken into account. The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) collects data on how Australian children are performing in a range of areas such as physical health and wellbeing; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive skills; and communication skills and general knowledge.

The results of the AEDC 2012 indicate that across all domains of development, the Gascoyne region has significantly more children identified as developmentally vulnerable when compared to Western Australia and Australia. Figures are not available for the more remote communities including Burringurrah, Shark Bay and Gascoyne.

54 The Australian Early Development Census, formerly known as the Australian Early Development Index is an Australian Government Initiative. The next census will take place in 2015 Source: http://www.aedc.gov.au/
Junction due to the low number of children. However other evidence suggests that these areas have children with high levels of vulnerability.

**Percentage of Children Developmentally Vulnerable**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOMAIN</th>
<th>CARNARVON</th>
<th>EXMOUTH</th>
<th>WESTERN AUSTRALIA</th>
<th>AUSTRALIA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical health and wellbeing</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social competence</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional maturity</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language and cognitive skills</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication skills and general knowledge</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the sub-domain physical readiness for the school day, 23.3% of children in Carnarvon are vulnerable. 40.7% are developmentally vulnerable across one or more domains and 24.4% developmentally vulnerable across two or more domains. In Exmouth 27.8% are developmentally vulnerable across one or more domains and 25% developmentally vulnerable across two or more domains. This compares to Western Australia at 21.5% and 10.1% respectively and 22% and 10.8% for Australia. These figures further highlight the need for increased access to and uptake of pre-compulsory education and care.

In Carnarvon AEDC data has been collected since 2004. Following the collection of data in 2015 Carnarvon will have five data sets – 2004, 2008, 2009, 2012 and 2015. This will enable the community to compare all available data as one tool to assist in planning service provision for children and families. Since 2004 data indicates that in the domains of emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills and communication skills and general knowledge there has been a significant increase in vulnerability. There has also been a significant increase in the number and percentage of children who are vulnerable in two or more domains of development (from 14.6% to 25.3%). Education and care services and other service providers will be able to use this data to identify programs that can build on strengths and address levels of vulnerability.

Nationally AEDC data indicates Aboriginal children are twice as likely to be vulnerable as non-Aboriginal children and children who reside in remote communities or come from a background of socio-economic disadvantage are also more likely to be vulnerable. These figures raise concerns about children arriving at school ready to learn.

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importance of building the capacity of families in the Gascoyne to support their children’s development before they go to school and then supporting them to remain engaged cannot be underestimated.

Consultation and Engagement

In preparing the Gascoyne Children’s Services Plan face to face consultation and engagement was considered to be most effective for gathering data for this vast and diverse region. A significant number of service providers, parents and community members were consulted in this manner (refer to Appendix A).

Information gathered from service providers included: the type and purpose of the service they deliver; who their service is for; the geographical area they cover; level of demand for their service; and if there is an unmet need. They spoke of linkages, collaboration and partnerships with other service providers and with local government and community organisations. Ongoing funding for community programs was a key topic as was the future sustainability of current services.

An important component of understanding service provision of education and care services in the Gascoyne involved consulting with a cross section of the community. They included parents, grandparents, carers and community members. A participatory approach was adopted during face to face engagement through attendances at playgroups, library activities and other children’s activities. All were users of children’s services in some capacity. They were asked to share their opinion and thoughts in regards to quality, availability and options of childcare and children’s services. In Carnarvon, social media was also utilised to a small degree, to enable reaching a broader demographic.

A range of employers and local business owners were consulted to gain another perspective as to the needs of the community in regards to childcare. Along with health, education and childcare services are an important factor in workforce development in any town or region. Attracting and retaining a skilled workforce often depends on what services are available for families with children.

Consultations were conducted with program staff from the Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre as GRCEC have delivered programs in the Gascoyne for many years. For example, the Local Champions within Local Communities program was delivered in 2011 and 2013/14. The program aim was to assist communities understand the results of the Australian Early Development Index and promote activities to improve outcomes for young children.

GRCEC has conducted projects in Burringurrah and Carnarvon under the Parental and Community Engagement (PaCE) program. The main objectives of the program was to enhance the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to: engage with schools and education providers in order to support improved educational outcomes for their children; and to build strong leadership that supports high expectations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students’ educational outcomes. The Parents and
Learning (PaL) program, also under the PaCE program, has been delivered since 2013 and is still ongoing in 2015 in the Mungullah Community and in Carnarvon.

In 2013 GRCEC received a Regional Community Child Care Development Fund Strategic Grant to deliver the Midwest Regional Networking and Professional Development Project, facilitating a successful conference held on the 2nd and 3rd November 2013. The conference entitled “Connecting the Dots” was aimed at improving quality of services, especially in relation to early childhood reform initiatives such as the National Quality Framework and Early Years Learning Framework; and linking together parents, educators, schools and service providers from across the Mid West, Gascoyne and Pilbara.

**SWOT Analysis**

Broad consultation and engagement assisted in identifying strengths and opportunities in the region along with perceived weaknesses with current service provision, and possible threats to new services that may develop in the future.

The tables below are a summary of the identified Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) for the development and sustainability of children’s services in the Gascoyne Region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Opportunities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Strong linkages between child and parent support services in each community.</td>
<td>- Large government workforce providing a diverse range of services to the community that need access to education and care services. More women entering the workforce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Established Gascoyne Early Years Network.</td>
<td>- Appropriate service development could engage Aboriginal families in early childhood education and learning programs and activities that are culturally sensitive and of high quality, both as program participants and in the delivery of services.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Many parents are accessing services.</td>
<td>- Provision of services that are responsive and innovative, including providing more flexible opening hours to meet needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Provision of more childcare availability due to expansion of education and care centre (2015) in Carnarvon.</td>
<td>- Surveys indicate liveability, amenity and lifestyle are rated highly across the Gascoyne. If widely promoted this may result in an increase in population, contributing to more sustainable services and a potential increase in services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Mungullah Aboriginal Community facilities provide space for family and children’s activities.</td>
<td>- Potential for Family Day Care (FDC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Gascoyne LGA’s support education and care services and programs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strengths</td>
<td>Opportunities</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Opening hours suit most families.</td>
<td>• businesses to be considered (and investigated) as an appropriate model in Exmouth, Carnarvon and the Mungullah Aboriginal Community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Quality education and care services, playgroups and other children’s programs and activities contribute to enriching the lives of children and families, and to enhancing children’s development. Exmouth LDC (Bernice McLeod ELC) rated as meeting or exceeding Quality Standards.</td>
<td>• Demand for an Out of School Childcare and Vacation Care Centre in Carnarvon indicates that such a service would be sustainable and needs support to implement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strong Aboriginal culture well represented in the communities.</td>
<td>• Potential to access support to strengthen the Gascoyne Early Years Network to help identify purpose and goals of the group, for example through WACOSS project, Carnarvon governance structures, Strategic Framework development and succession planning.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• LGA’s outside Carnarvon could be engaged in the Gascoyne Early Years Network to strengthen connections between services.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• A Gascoyne Family Services Guide could better inform families of services.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Provision of professional learning opportunities through on-line learning and webinars to enhance quality of education and care services and other providers of children’s services, combined with utilising local expertise and regional training providers.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• AEDC data will be collected in 2015 meaning Carnarvon will have 5 data sets, providing an opportunity to identify trends, issues and priorities. ECEC providers and the wider community can be provided with this data to assist in planning and develop strategies to meet local needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Growth in availability of places for long day care in Exmouth and more flexible hours for working parents.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Partnership development across sectors to increase access and quality of education and care services.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Potential for funding from Royalties for Regions to support the implementation of recommendations.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Increased knowledge of needs through AEDC that can be used as a platform to address priorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strengths</strong></td>
<td><strong>Opportunities</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promote career pathways in ECEC services and provide opportunities to undertake face to face study in the region.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gain leverage from the Remote Schools Attendance Strategy and Indigenous Advancement Strategy to support early childhood service development and delivery for Aboriginal children and families.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Link with Playgroup WA to access support services for playgroups and link with the Enhanced Transition to School Project - Playgroups to Schools initiative to provide resources and support and optimise children’s transition to school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Weaknesses</strong></th>
<th><strong>Threats</strong></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance of quality services and ability to keep up to date with regulations and standards.</td>
<td>Transience of government workforce affecting the sustainability of services and the loss of key drivers in the community to support services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill shortage in ECEC workforce.</td>
<td>Ability to attract and retain workers, including qualified people in family and children’s services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High costs for operations, ongoing maintenance and rentals for existing services across the region.</td>
<td>Impact of lack of education and care services on businesses as parents try to juggle work and care needs due to lack of places and operating hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited interaction between Aboriginal, non-Aboriginal and ethnic families.</td>
<td>Cost for families to utilise services.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limited education and care options across the region.</td>
<td>Unemployment levels, especially high levels of unemployment for Aboriginal people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECEC services staff turnover causing disconnect between service users and community, particularly in regards to parenting programs.</td>
<td>Availability of suitable FDC premises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long waitlists at available Long Day Care services.</td>
<td>Reduction in Shire revenue resulting in inability to provide shire buildings at sustainable rents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening hours do not meet the needs of all parents.</td>
<td>Limited funding opportunities that can assist in developing quality services and responding to needs especially for vulnerable families and children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of places in ECEC in LDC in Carnarvon and Exmouth, OSHC in Carnarvon.</td>
<td>Unregulated childcare services that may impact on viability of centre based services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECEC and other support services for families and local providers and staff are located a significant distance from service providers in the region.</td>
<td>Availability of culturally aware and qualified education and care staff to work in an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaknesses</td>
<td>Threats</td>
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<tr>
<td>especially in Carnarvon.</td>
<td>Aboriginal community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited uptake of early childhood education programs by Aboriginal families.</td>
<td>Risk of underutilisation of new services developed due to transience and a history of lack of engagement of families with services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AEDC data indicates high levels of vulnerability.</td>
<td>Capacity and ability to meet the needs of the high numbers of vulnerable children and their families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEYN limited to Carnarvon.</td>
<td>Community and family issues that impact on viability and safety in remote communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of clarity around purpose and responsibilities of GEYN and the ability of busy people to commit.</td>
<td>WACOSS not accessing funding to support EYNs or GEYN not taking up the offer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families not well informed about services.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited training and professional development opportunities within communities and the ability to release staff to attend.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats**

A strength for both Carnarvon and Exmouth is their large professional government workforce providing the community with access to a range of services and bringing new families and children to the region. Conversely, it may also be considered a weakness or threat as generally they are a transient workforce only staying in the region for the length of their contract. Establishing relationships and trust in the community develops over time and changes of staff may cause disconnection between service users, other service providers and the community as a whole.

A transient workforce population is potentially a threat to the financial viability and sustainability of new family day care’s or outside school hours and vacation care initiatives. Similarly early year’s groups that rely on parent, community and service provider volunteers such as playgroups, toy libraries and early year’s networks can also be impacted when key drivers relocate from the region.

The Gascoyne Early Years Network (GEYN) has operated since 2002 and members include local government, child and allied health services and some government agencies based in Carnarvon. It has a broad membership base and includes government service providers. The impact of key drivers leaving the region may reduce the effectiveness and direction of the GEYN with continuity and knowledge lost. There is an opportunity to address this through working with GEYN around issues such as succession planning. There also appears to be little involvement with the other LGA’s in the Gascoyne, parents, community organisations, schools or childcare providers.

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In 2014 the West Australian Council of Social Service (WACOSS) conducted a project with the aim of developing a model of support for the Early Years networks in WA and explore options for sustaining this model of support.\(^57\) Information in the report advised “the strengths of the networks lay in members’ commitment to the philosophy of collaboration, their passion and enthusiasm and the wealth of collective early years and community knowledge”. Challenges to EYN’s included the limited capacity of members due to their core role taking precedence. There were also challenges in getting greater involvement from community members, education and care services, schools and local government. This reflects the situation in the Gascoyne.

The report (WACOSS, p.5) revealed that EYN’s would benefit from support in:

- “Developing a clear purpose and a strategic framework;”
- Identifying key stakeholders and recruiting and retaining members;
- Promoting the importance of the early years to organisations in order to facilitate an increase in member’s capacity to participate in the group;
- Identifying key network roles and who can fulfil these - with an emphasis on shared responsibility and succession planning;
- Identifying and accessing funding to support the network’s strategic direction; Networking and sharing information between Early Years Groups”.

WACOSS has developed a program model: the *Early Years Network Support Program (EYNSP)*. The program aims to provide a baseline level of support that networks can access to enable them to become or remain sustainable and fulfil their full potential. Delivery of the program is depended on the success of WACOSS receiving funding for the two year pilot. Subject to success of funding, the EYNSP presents an opportunity for the GEYN to tap into a support program that will benefit from support to re-establish a clear strategic direction that will be inclusive of a wider range of stakeholders and include the whole of region. If this project does not eventuate it will be important to consider other strategies to ensure support is provided to the GEYN. This may be addressed through the Mid West Gascoyne Human Services Regional Managers Group (MWGHSMRG) with the potential for the GEYN to come under the umbrella of the focus group structure. In Carnarvon the MWGHSMRG’s various sub groups meet monthly to share information and resources and address issues in the community pertaining to each groups focus.

Developing a framework that is agreeable to all members of the GEYN can support sustainability. Excellent models are available for community groups to consider adopting. For example, the Platforms Service Redevelopment Framework, developed by the Royal Children’s Hospital Centre for Community Child Health\(^58\) states “communities are well placed and have a vested interest to support their children’s development. To do this communities need services: that work together; are engaged with and respond to the needs of the community; that plan and evaluate their work with the intended outcomes in mind; and local leadership”. The Platforms framework is based


on compelling research about the importance of the early years and their impact on the life.

Linking early year's groups to support initiatives and services will enhance service delivery across the sector and build the capacity of volunteers – both service provider and parent volunteers.

Parents interviewed indicated high rent and the cost of living in remote regions such as the Gascoyne require families to have a dual income stream. As more women and both parents join the workforce, the need for more available regulated quality childcare will grow. Importantly, this includes before and after school childcare and vacation care for primary school aged children as well as early year's childcare. Limited education and childcare options in Exmouth and Carnarvon may have a detrimental effect on attracting and retaining a skilled workforce.

Carnarvon, the central hub and administrative centre of the Gascoyne region had a population of 455 children from newborn’s to four years of age at the time of the Census in 2011. The existing education and care centre in Carnarvon can cater for up to 42 children from newborns to four years of age at any one time. The service has a three to six month waitlist. Building extensions due for completion in 2015 will result in an additional 18 places, increasing the total approved places to 60. The service operates from 7.30am to 5.30pm which caters for parents working normal hours. Provision of care outside these hours is not available and the facility does not meet the requirements for school age children.

Exmouth, with a population of 278 children aged from birth to four years at the time of Census in 2011 has one Long Day Care Centre. The service is approved to offer education and care for 24 children from birth to four years of age at any one time. Currently there is a three to six month waitlist. The service operates from a Shire owned building at a very affordable rent. The size of the building may restrict future growth. Operating hours are from 8.00am to 4.00pm which suits most workers. Parent interviews indicated these hours did not reflect their needs or those of their employers.

Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) and Vacation Care (VC) for primary school aged children was a key issue raised by parents interviewed and by some employers. Exmouth has one OSHC and VC service which opened in April 2014. The sustainability of this service is at risk due to high rental costs. With a population of 403 children aged between five and twelve years of age (Census 2011), parents consulted indicated a need for the service and that it was essential it continued operating. The proprietor is investigating options.

Carnarvon had 690 children aged between five and twelve years of age at the time of the 2011 Census however no OSHS or VC services operate in the town. This was cited as being of significant concern by workers and employers consulted. Both parties explained the need to negotiate flexible working hours to coincide with school drop-off and pick-up times and confirmed employer flexibility was the key to retaining staff.

School holidays present an even greater problem for employers and the working population of Carnarvon. Consultations with parents revealed how they juggle holidays
with their partner and rarely have the opportunity to holiday as a family. Some parents
advised they flew grandparents to the town, often at great expense to care for their
children throughout the school holidays. Some grandparents travelled from Perth or
interstate and in several cases, from overseas. One employer spoke of how most of
their working mothers vied for leave during school holidays in order to care for their
children. In some cases this could impact on the employees business or the capacity of
agencies to deliver services.

The establishment of Family Day Care (FDC) services in Exmouth and Carnarvon,
including one in the Mungullah community, may go some way towards addressing
limited childcare options for parents. A FDC educator works with small groups of no
more than four children under school age and is permitted an additional three children of
school age. Locating interested educators with suitable premises will be challenging
especially if the property is rented. A solution working in other towns of the Midwest and
Pilbara, is establishing Family Day Care centres in underutilised community owned
(Shire) buildings. For example the Shire of Shark Bay supports the community by
providing a building for the town’s only Family Day Care service. The low rent charged,
ensures the service remains viable. This model is known as In-Venue FDC and presents
a potential solution in some communities where much of the housing is rented and the
population transient. Once established the facility and resources remain, and, subject to
an agreement with the Shire, would enable ongoing sustainability if there was a change
in educator.

Pivotal to any existing ECEC service and to the future development of new ECEC
initiatives, is attracting and retaining qualified centre managers and educators. These
skills are listed as a Priority 1 in the Western Australian Work Force Development Skills
Shortage list. The transient nature of the Gascoyne workforce, together with limited
options for face to face education and training options in this field, will impact on the
future viability of ECEC services in the region.

Ensuring the Gascoyne attracts and retains skilled educators is crucial to supporting
workforce development and service provision. Although the ECEC services in Carnarvon
and Exmouth generally report they have a stable workforce, recent information from one
centre advised they had just lost four reasonably long term staff due to relocation out of
the region. Difficulties are reported in finding qualified replacement staff and/or finding
people willing to accept the job and undertake training to become qualified. This is an
issue for other children and family service providers.

In 2012 as part of the Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Plan 2012-14 Midwest
Gascoyne (RESJ) an Early Childhood and Child Care Industry Roundtable was held.
Workforce challenges identified during the Roundtable included: the recruitment and
retention of early education and child care staff; linkages between services and training
providers; and ensuring existing staff have current skills (including literacy and
numeracy); and qualifications to meet the needs of the industry. There is a need to work
with education providers and government agencies to ensure training programs are

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59 Government of Western Australia Department of Training and Workforce Development, State Priority Occupation
60 The full RESJ report can be accessed on the following website:
delivered to build a skilled workforce who can provide quality services for families and children.

Educators are required to have, or, be working towards a qualification in Children’s Services. Training is provided online through various education and training organisations and through the Durack Institute of Technology (DIT). The DIT deliver face to face training at their Geraldton campus however, this delivery mode is not available in the Gascoyne. A challenge in finding a lecturer who is either living in the region or is willing to relocate to the region is an issue that affect many regional education providers.

Of importance for ECEC educators is to ensure they have access to high quality professional development (PD). Online PD’s are available and some face to face deliveries are provided in the towns. On line delivery does not replace quality professional learning in a forum, workshop or conference situation. Interaction with other ECEC providers is important and assists in generating a sense of comradery and passion in staff. The lack of face to face training can have an impact on the number of people having the ability to enter the ECEC sector which will in turn, further impact on the availability of ECEC educators in the region.

In 2013 the Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre facilitated a partnership to provide Connecting the Dots Conference – what does it take to grow a child? in Geraldton. It was attended by ECEC delegates from the Midwest Gascoyne and Pilbara. A broad range of high quality guest speakers brought attendees up to date about new childcare regulations, current research and innovative ideas. Feedback indicated that it was a valuable experience for attendees and should be repeated. 92.5% indicated overall satisfaction with the Conference and 70% indicated they would attend pre and post conference workshops. The most relevant topics identified by delegates were around children’s development, particularly brain development. They gained new ideas from sessions around the learning environment, school tours, practical activity sessions and a panel discussion. Workshops about the outdoor environment and nature play and engagement in modelled activities were rated highly for practical implementation. A conference provides the opportunity to interact with other educators, learn about the most up to date information, and listen to key note speakers who are leaders in their field. Face to face professional development opportunities are highly regarded by educators.

Participation by Aboriginal children in non-compulsory early childhood education programs continues to be limited. Getting more Aboriginal children into early learning programs and school ready has been identified a regional priority and of particular significance in Carnarvon due to the high numbers of vulnerable children as evidenced in AEDC results.

A comprehensive mapping and gap analysis of human services for Aboriginal people in the Murchison-Gascoyne region was undertaken in 2010 through a study commissioned by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (then called the Department of Indigenous Affairs). While some recommendations of the report were progressed, the high level of

61 Information on Connecting the Dots Conference can be found on the Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre website: http://edcentre.wa.edu.au/
support to implement recommendations from the report was not secured. However, the consultations to form the report were intensive and very inclusive of the Aboriginal community. As such, the Mapping and Gap Analysis (MAGA) of Human Services for Indigenous People in the Murchison-Gascoyne has informed the Gascoyne Children’s Services Plan. Findings from the MAGA report listed early childhood development for Aboriginal children as a priority.

Strategies included:

- establishing sustainable programs for children aged from birth to four years to ensure children commence school on a par with non-Aboriginal children;
- expanding the capacity of Aboriginal agencies to provide early childhood services to Aboriginal people; and
- providing culturally sensitive, high quality pre-compulsory programs for Aboriginal children.

A Closing the Gap report was conducted for the Australian Government Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the Australian Institute of Family Studies: Early childhood and education services for Indigenous children prior to starting school Resource sheet no. 7 for the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse. Of particular interest was a recommendation for “High-quality non-parental care options (programs operating under the National Early Childhood Quality Framework such as child care, family day care, preschool, occasional care, playgroups) offering children learning experiences that many families find difficult to duplicate.”

In the Mungullah Aboriginal Community the building used for playgroup and Best Start program is underutilised and could be suitable as an In-Venue FDC service. Establishing a FDC service or a similar model in the community would be an opportunity to:

- Build the capacity and confidence of a community member/s to run a service;
- Provide quality child care for working parents;
- Enable parents to undertake workshops or training;
- Allow the implementation of appropriate early learning and school readiness programs;
- Provide care for children after school.

The Australian Government states it has a commitment “to make getting children to school, adults into work, and building safe communities the key priorities of policy for Indigenous Australians.” One of five key programs under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) is the Children and Schooling Programme. This programme focuses on getting children to school, improving education outcomes including Year 12 attainment, improving youth transition to vocational and higher education and work, as well as,

supporting families to give children a good start in life through improved early childhood development, care, education and school readiness.

Another program under the IAS is the Culture and Capability Programme. The aim of the program is to support Indigenous Australians to maintain their culture, participate equally in the economic and social life of the nation and ensure that Indigenous organisations are capable of delivering quality services to their clients. The Jobs, Land and Economy Program\(^65\) aims to get adults into work, foster viable Indigenous business and assist Indigenous people to generate economic and social benefits from land and sea use and native title rights, particularly in remote areas. This provides an opportunity to investigate financial support through this fund to establish ECEC services. Establishing onsite education and care services at the Mungullah community would create opportunities to engage community members in an enterprise that would go towards meeting the unmet demands of families in the community. It would also assist in getting vulnerable children into early learning programs that will help them adjust to school quicker and contribute towards closing the gap for Aboriginal people.

The viability of a FDC service or other children’s activities in the Mungullah community may be impacted by the underutilisation of services due to a lack of engagement or interest by parents; cost to parents; lack of perceived or considered need for the service; and/or transience between communities. Some families travel between the Mungullah and Burringurrah communities, to towns in the Mid West, and/or further north for cultural and family reasons. It will be important to consult and engage with Aboriginal leaders and community members to ensure services are appropriate, are considered a need and will be supported if established in the community.

The key to the effectiveness of the Remote Schools Attendance Strategy is the effectiveness of the School Engagement Supervisors (SESs) and Officers (SEOs). Being local Aboriginal people living and working in the community, they can be role models and catalysts for change. As they work collaboratively with schools and other services they can help create a more cohesive community. At a series of workshops/forums it was very evident that the SEOs and SESs had a strong focus on lifting attendance and were committed to this task, which included supporting families prior to their children commencing formal schooling. They were able to clearly identify issues in the community, such as alcohol and substance misuse and family/community relationship breakdown and family violence and ongoing negative relationships with schools, police and child protection services that were impacting on families and children’s readiness and keeping children from school. They were also able to identify strategies that would make a difference.

SEO/SESs identified the need for parents to have opportunities to participate in non-threatening, centre based activities where they could learn about the importance of education informally. By engaging SEO/SESs in this process and other local Aboriginal people it will help them feel valued at the same time as providing them with the training and support they need, helping them connect with disengaged families in a positive way.

\(^65\) Source: Australian Indigenous Advancement Strategy Guidelines
The four Local Government Areas of the Gascoyne are quite diverse however a sense of connectedness between service providers and the community is apparent. Although not always perceived as collaborating effectively together, there was an awareness of each other’s programs and how they could connect or refer.

A strength of each of the LGA’s in the Gascoyne is the support local governments are providing to ensure children’s services are sustainable and meet the needs of the community. Although the list is not exhaustive, LGA’s in the Gascoyne are providing the following services for families:

- The Shire of Shark Bay provides a building for the provision of FDC; funds the Community Resource Centre (CRC) staff to deliver children’s activities usually delivered by a library such as rhyme time and story time; fund CRC staff to provide after school and school holidays activities.

- The Shire of Exmouth provides a building for the childcare centre and for the playgroup; organises school holiday activities; and runs children’s library activities.

- The Shire of Carnarvon runs a range of children’s activities at the library; sits on the GEYN; provides a building for playgroup sessions and contributes funding to the PCYC to run children’s school holiday activities.

- The Shire of Gascoyne is vast with residents spread far and wide. Through the CRC activities for families are initiated however the school is better placed to provide playgroup sessions and early childhood education activities.

A directory of children’s activities, schools, childcare, and playgroups are listed on each Shire website. There are a multitude of children’s services provided by community organisations and state and federal governments. Locating these services could be improved by working in partnership with all stakeholders to develop a one stop directory inclusive of all families and children’s services.

**Regional Trends and Issues**

Analysis of data collected through research, engagement and consultation has enabled regional trends and issues to be identified. The result is a list of recommendations to support and enhance the provision of services for families and children in the Gascoyne.

The Gascoyne is a diverse region with a population spread across remote communities’ significant distances apart. A substantial majority of people live in the LGA of Carnarvon therefore much of the focus is on addressing needs in that community. Exmouth, the second largest LGA in the region has well utilised education and care services and services for families and children such as playgroups. They could benefit from additional choice in the type of childcare services offered. It is important to support Exmouth and
other communities to link into established networks and access opportunities for professional development to ensure quality of care.

The region has a high proportion of Aboriginal people, concentrated in Carnarvon and the Upper Gascoyne. The region has a rich Indigenous history and strong culture that needs to be acknowledged and nurtured. Aboriginal engagement and participation in culturally sensitive early childhood services as participants and service provider is an identified priority for the region.

Limited Aboriginal engagement and participation in early childhood education and care services, programs and activities

The results of the AEDC\textsuperscript{66} indicate that across all domains of development, the Gascoyne region has significantly more children identified as developmentally vulnerable when compared to Western Australia and Australia. Aboriginal children are twice as likely to be vulnerable as non-Aboriginal children and children who reside in remote communities or come from a background of socio-economic disadvantage are also more likely to be vulnerable. In Carnarvon AEDC data has been collected since 2004, with five data collection points. The overall trend is a significant increase in levels of vulnerability across three of the five domains of development and in the number and percentage of children who are developmentally vulnerable in one of more domain.\textsuperscript{67} Sharing these results with Aboriginal families and communities is important to increase understanding of the AEDC, what it means to the community and potential strategies to address concerns.

The continuation of programs such as Best Start and PaL is vital to children in the Gascoyne as is taking active steps to encourage Aboriginal parents to send their children to pre-compulsory programs. It is important to work in partnership with Aboriginal families, children’s service providers and community organisations to identify appropriate models of early childhood education and care that will encourage Aboriginal parents to engage their children in early learning programs and to be engaged in service delivery.

Encouraging schools in Carnarvon to link into Playgroup WA’s \textit{Enhanced Transition to School Project - Playgroups to Schools} initiative may strengthen relationships between Aboriginal parents and schools. The project aims to optimise children’s transition to school by establishing community led or, in some cases, supported playgroups hosted on or near school sites.

\textsuperscript{66} The Australian Early Childhood Census - 2010 Gascoyne results \url{http://www.aedc.gov.au/data/data-explorer?id=42876}

\textsuperscript{67} Source: Telethon Kids Institute, Australian Early Development Census, Pilot Community Profile, 2004-2012, Carnarvon, Western Australia, consultation session at Australian Early Development Census Conference, Adelaide, 20 February 2015
Government policies change over time and can provide new opportunities for communities. The Australian Government’s Indigenous Advancement Strategy \textsuperscript{68} potentially provides such an opportunity for the Gascoyne region. Successful implementation of this strategy in the Gascoyne region will benefit Aboriginal people by increasing engagement and participation in early childhood programs and activities. It may also encourage small business enterprises such as the establishment of a Family Day Care service specific to the needs of the Aboriginal community, for example in the Mungullah community. Similarly the Remote Schools Attendance Strategy provides an opportunity to build the capacity of local Aboriginal people and engage families to better support their children’ development and school readiness.

**Limited availability of flexible quality education and care options for families**

The population of the Gascoyne region is expected to increase with a projection of 11,500 people by 2026 and an aspirational target of 20,000. \textsuperscript{69} To attract, retain and support a potential population increase and meet workforce development needs, the provision of quality education and care services is essential.

Ensuring the Gascoyne attracts and retains skilled childcare educators is crucial to supporting workforce development and service provision. Although the ECEC services in Carnarvon and Exmouth generally report they have a stable workforce, recent information from one centre advised they had just lost four reasonably long term staff due to relocation out of the region. Difficulties are reported in finding qualified replacement staff and/or finding people willing to accept the job and undertake training to become qualified. This is an issue for other children and family service providers.

The Gascoyne’s two largest towns, Carnarvon and Exmouth are where the majority of the population live and work. Limited options of child care are relevant to both towns and services are running at capacity with long waitlists. Carnarvon, the central administrative centre for the Gascoyne and with a large government workforce, lacks an out of school and vacation care service leaving parents to juggle home and work and school holidays without an alternative option. Family Day Care services are not currently operating in either town which further limits parent’s options for a regulated childcare service for their children.

During consultation it was evident that many families move to the region for work and don’t have the benefit of an extended family close by to assist with child care. Therefore, ensuring parents have access to quality childcare options is important for future growth of the region as well as to support children’s developmental needs.

It is important to work in partnership with stakeholders, local government, education providers and families to consider ways to address the issue.


Challenges in developing connected and sustainable early years groups

Supporting children to have the best start in life is a whole of community responsibility. Playgroups and early year’s networks play an important role in the community and are generally run by volunteers.

Playgroups provide opportunities for parents, carers and grandparents to engage with each other and for children aged from birth to school age to interact and play whilst developing their social, emotional, language and communication skills.

Early Years Networks (EYN) promote the importance of early brain development and positive experiences for young children. They aim to coordinate and support local activities and projects to support families with very young children from birth to eight years of age. Involvement from community members, education and care services, schools and local government in EYN’s can play an important role in ensuring early childhood programs and activities are meeting the needs of children and families in the community.

The Gascoyne Early Years Network (GEYN) has been operating since 2002 and members include local government, child and allied health services and some government agencies based in Carnarvon. The large professional government workforce is transient by necessity and nature. Membership of community networks such as the Gascoyne Early Years Network can be impacted by the contractual changes of staff and the ebb and flow of commitment, responsibility and passion. There appears to be little involvement with the other LGA’s in the Gascoyne, parents, community organisations, schools or childcare providers. There is potential to broaden the Network, improve structures and increase collaboration.

Playgroups and EYN’s rely on volunteers to carry out a myriad of tasks. They can include: writing funding applications; accounts management; program and activity promotion; activity coordination; event planning; attendance at meetings; record keeping; minute taking; maintenance of equipment and games; and communication tasks, just to name a few.

Family responsibilities, core work commitments and key drivers leaving the town/region are factors that can have an impact on the sustainability of volunteer groups. Currently connections to organisations that offer support to early year’s groups is limited.

The GEYN would benefit from support provided through the Early Years Network Support Service planned by WACOSS or alternative strategies to be investigated with the Mid West Gascoyne Human Services Regional Managers Group. The implementation of the Platforms framework would assist in involving the whole of community and region in planning ECEC services.

70 More information on the Platforms Service Redevelopment Framework can be found on http://www.rch.org.au/ccch/consultancy/Platforms/
Similarly playgroups in the Gascoyne would benefit from face to face support offered by Playgroup WA for playgroups throughout WA to assist in building member’s skills and capacity and good governance practices to ensure sustainability.

**Difficulties in locating and connecting to children’s services, programs and activities**

In the Gascoyne, information about Children’s services can be found across a number of websites including those of: local governments in each Shire; Department of Health; Department of Local Government and Communities; Department of Child Protection and Family Support; Midwest Regional Education Office; Carnarvon Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation to mention a few.

Families and service providers, particularly those who are new to the region, are likely to find it difficult to locate services and key contacts. In the process of developing the Gascoyne Children’s Services Plan, it revealed a myriad of children’s services that at first, were not easy to find.

The LGA of Mandurah, in collaboration with partners and strongly supported by the Peel Early Years Group, has developed *The Mandurah Families Guide*, a directory that brings all the services together in one resource. Interest has been shown by the Shire of Carnarvon in developing a similar resource.

**Ability to attract and retain a qualified and skilled education and care workforce**

The early childhood education and care sector provide a fun, safe and supportive environment for children to learn and grow. Services in the Gascoyne play an integral role in supporting their communities and so educators need to provide quality education and care. To achieve this, the Gascoyne region needs qualified educators who have access to professional development and training suited to their needs. Knowledge of child development and knowledge of their own community, including AEDC results will assist in quality planning and service delivery.

The 2012 Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Plan 2012-14 Midwest Gascoyne (RESJ)\(^71\), Early Childhood and Child Care Industry Roundtable identified the recruitment and retention of early education and child care staff; linkages between services and training providers; and ensuring existing staff have current skills (including literacy and numeracy); and qualifications to meet the needs of the industry as priorities. The West Australian Government’s Work Force Development State Priority Occupation List dated July 2014\(^72\) lists Child care centre managers and child care workers as a State Priority 1.


To ensure the Gascoyne region is prepared for growth, it is important to consider plans to grow the pool of qualified education and care workers in the region; maintain and upskill the existing workforce; and develop succession plans. This will require working with education and training providers; ECEC providers; job service providers and career advisors to promote children’s services as a positive career pathway along with the delivery of appropriate face to face education and training courses followed by opportunities for on the job work experience and mentoring. Promotion and access to on-line courses could incorporate some face to face support.

To continue to maintain and upskill the existing ECEC workforce, professional learning opportunities both locally and in larger regional centres such as Geraldton should be made more available with funding provided to allow attendance by all staff at these events.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Five key areas were identified as priorities to address through the Gascoyne Children’s Services Plan. These areas will inform the development of an Implementation Plan with specific strategies and activities intended to achieve the outcomes listed below.

1. More Aboriginal families in Carnarvon engage and participate in early childhood services, programs and activities

Increasing the number of Aboriginal children accessing early learning programs and being school ready is a regional priority. This is of particular significance in Carnarvon due to the reported numbers of vulnerable children and limited connection of families to pre-compulsory education and care services. Improving children’s development and wellbeing and supporting those in a parenting role is vital. Providing information about the importance of children’s development in the early years and supporting families to access culturally sensitive education and care and other services will contribute to strengthening families and communities. Aboriginal family engagement in activities, programs and services will help build solid foundations for children as they transition to and through school.

Recommendation:

1.1 Work in partnership with local Aboriginal people and gain leverage from existing service providers, education providers and other relevant stakeholders to provide
opportunities for families to participate in activities that build their understanding and capacity to engage with education and care services, early learning programs, schools and other organisations and agencies.

1.2 Partner with Playgroup WA and schools to encourage take up of the Enhanced Transition to Schools Project to increase the connectedness of Aboriginal families and children to schools from an early age.

1.3 Link with the Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre’s (GRCEC) Aboriginal and Remote Children’s Services Team and stakeholders to engage Aboriginal parents in:
   - The Parents and Learning (PaL) Program, a home based program, which focuses on early literacy and numeracy and builds the capacity of local people to become educators for their family and community, as well as a link to other services
   - The Every Child Every Day Project, developing resources such as children’s books, information posters or storyboards, newsletters, DVD’s or YouTube clips about the importance of engagement and participation in activities, programs and services in the early years
   - ‘Yarning’ sessions involving doll/toy making while discussing early brain development, the AEDC domains and children’s transition to and through school

1.4 Establish the feasibility of and support for establishing an In-Venue Family Day Care (FDC) service or similar education and care model in the Mungullah Aboriginal Community that will:
   - Provide access to appropriate, flexible and qualified education and care in the Mungullah community
   - Create an opportunity to engage children in early learning activities that will assist with their development and school readiness
   - Provide parents and carers with an education and care service to support them to engage in parenting activities, resource development, employment and/or training

2. Families in Carnarvon and Exmouth have access to flexible quality education and care services

There are limited available education and care options, including for school aged children in Carnarvon and Exmouth. With a predicted increase in population and a need to retain people in these communities for extended periods, planning is required to establish more sustainable education and care services for the future.
Recommendation:
2.1 Engage with the Exmouth and Carnarvon communities to promote the benefits of Family Day Care (FDC) as a home based business enterprise with the aim of meeting the demand for additional services.
2.2 Utilise different forms of media to raise the profile of FDC educators and increase awareness of an alternative childcare model.
2.3 Investigate the feasibility of an In-Venue FDC in Exmouth, Carnarvon and the Mungullah Community as an alternative to a home based FDC service.
2.4 Work with the school community in Carnarvon to determine the support and feasibility of providing an Outside School Hours Care and Vacation Care service on school grounds or alternative suitable site.

3. Early years groups are supported, connected and sustainable

Supporting children to have the best start in life is a whole of community responsibility. Playgroups and early year's networks play an important role in the community and are generally run by volunteers.

Playgroups provide opportunities for parents, carers and grandparents to engage with each other and for children aged from birth to school age to interact and play whilst developing their social, emotional, language and communication skills.

Early Years Networks (EYN) promote the importance of early brain development and positive experiences for young children. They aim to coordinate and support local activities and projects to support families with very young children from birth to eight years of age.

Playgroups and EYN's rely on volunteers to carry out a myriad of tasks and family responsibilities, core work commitments and key drivers leaving the town/region are factors that can have an impact on the sustainability of volunteer groups.

Currently connections to organisations that offer support to early years groups in the Gascoyne are limited.

The Gascoyne Early Years Network (GEYN) would benefit from support to re-establish a clear strategic direction that will be inclusive of a wider range of stakeholders and include the whole of region. Playgroups in the Gascoyne would benefit from face to face support to ensure they have strategies in place to remain viable and sustainable.

Recommendation:
3.1 Work with the GEYN to adopt a framework that will assist the network to:
   - Access support services available to the EYN's to assist in identifying a purpose and long term strategic direction with roles and responsibilities of each member organisation clarified
• Remain resilient and sustainable through changing capacity of service providers
• Manage succession planning when key drivers leave the region
• Enhance community involvement and inclusiveness of stakeholders across the region
• Strengthen connections between services

3.2 Enable the sharing of good news stories, best practice and program information between the GEYN members

3.3 Support the network to apply for funding opportunities such as the Early Years Activities Grants Program for events/activities during National Families Week.

3.4 Work in partnership with the GEYN to increase community awareness and market the value of the children’s services sector by promoting programs and good news stories via print media (community and school newsletters); social media, short video clips and face to face delivery at children and family events; and parent and stakeholder workshops.

3.5 Support Playgroup WA to deliver a series of workshops in the region to build the capacity of playgroups and develop good governance practices to ensure sustainability.

4. Families are able to locate and connect to children’s services, activities and programs in their community

Families and service providers, especially those new to the region may find it difficult to locate, access and link with children’s services, activities and programs, or make contact with key people.

Recommendation:

4.1 Work with the LGA’s, community organisations and service providers to develop a comprehensive online and printable one stop Children’s Services Directory listing a range of services such as:

• Health and wellbeing of parents – services to support parents
• Health and wellbeing of children – child and general health clinics; counselling
• Things to do and where to go - location of parks; community events; and facilities
• Education and care services
• Services for children and families and education providers: Playgroups; schools; kindergartens; library activities; community based services and support programs
• Gascoyne Children’s Services Plan line information
• Websites and helpful information
5. The Gascoyne region attracts and retains a qualified and skilled education and care workforce

The national shortage of qualified education and care workers extends into the Gascoyne region with reported difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified educators. The situation is further impacted by the lack of available face to face education and training opportunities in children’s services delivered in the region with on-line delivery currently the only option.

Young people and jobseekers may be unaware of the range of career pathways available in children’s services and that future job prospects are positive due to a national skills shortage for this sector.

Opportunities for children’s services and education and care providers to access quality face to face professional learning is limited due to cost and distance from major regional towns.

Recommendation:
5.1 Promote opportunities for educators to attend a regional education and care conference.
5.2 Support the delivery of professional learning opportunities in the Gascoyne.
5.3 Work in partnership with training providers and the children’s services sector to:
   - Increase the pool of qualified education and care workers to meet the needs of a growing industry
   - Advocate for the funding and delivery of face to face courses in Carnarvon and Exmouth in Certificate III and IV in Children’s Services, particularly, but not exclusively, for Aboriginal people
5.4 Promote early childhood education and care services as a positive career pathway choice for high school students and jobseekers:
   - Facilitate information sessions/workshops to targeted groups
   - Develop a local resource such as a series of short video clips promoting the importance of early childhood development and career pathways that will make a difference to families in the Gascoyne community
   - Conduct onsite visits to education and care centres such as Granny Glasgow Education and Care and the Durack Institute of Technology
   - Source and promote work experience opportunities
   - Provide information on small business guidelines
Regional Plan

Regional Trend or Issue:

1. Limited Aboriginal engagement and participation in early childhood services, programs and activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended Action</th>
<th>Resources Required</th>
<th>Priority</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Work in partnership with local Aboriginal people and gain leverage from existing service providers, education providers and other relevant stakeholders to provide opportunities for families to participate in activities that build their understanding and capacity to engage with education and care services, early learning programs, schools and other organisations and agencies.</td>
<td>RCSP Staff time; Workshops-Venue Hire, Catering; Travel – accommodation and vehicle costs; Technology - computer, printing, digital camera; Bus Hire; Guest speakers; Other agency resources.</td>
<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2 Partner with Playgroup WA and schools to encourage take up of the Enhanced Transition to Schools Project to increase the connectedness of Aboriginal families and children to schools from an early age.</td>
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<td>1.3 Link with the Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre’s (GRCEC) Aboriginal and Remote Children’s Services Team and stakeholders to engage Aboriginal parents in:</td>
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<td>• The Parents and Learning (PaL) Program, a home based program, which focuses on early literacy and numeracy and builds the capacity of local people to become educators for their family and community, as well as a link to other services</td>
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<td>• The Every Child Every Day Project, developing resources such as children’s books, information posters or storyboards, newsletters, DVD’s or YouTube clips about the importance of engagement and participation in activities, programs and services in the early years</td>
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<td>• ‘Yarning’ sessions involving doll/toy making while discussing early brain</td>
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</table>
Regional Trend or Issue:

1. Limited Aboriginal engagement and participation in early childhood services, programs and activities

| Development, the AEDC domains and children’s transition to and through school |

1.4 Establish the feasibility of and support for establishing an In-Venue Family Day Care (FDC) service or similar education and care model in the Mungullah Aboriginal Community that will:

- Provide access to appropriate, flexible and qualified education and care in the Mungullah community
- Create an opportunity to engage children in early learning activities that will assist with their development and school readiness
- Provide parents and carers with an education and care service and facility to support them to engage in parenting activities, resource development, employment and/or training

Collaboration / Responsibilities: Regional Development Officers Gascoyne; Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre – Indigenous Remote Children’s Services Team; Child Australia; Department of Local Government and Communities Parenting Coordinator; Durack Institute of Technology; Shire of Carnarvon – Library Services; Mungullah Community Aboriginal Corporation; Small Business Gascoyne; Granny Glasgow Education and Care; City of Greater Geraldton – Bright Stars FDC; Carnarvon Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation, Playgroup WA.

Regional Trend or Issue:

2. Limited availability of flexible quality education and care options for families

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<tr>
<td>2.1 Engage with the Exmouth and Carnarvon communities to promote the benefits of Family Day Care (FDC) as a home based business enterprise</td>
<td>Gascoyne Children’s Services Plan</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regional Trend or Issue:

2. Limited availability of flexible quality education and care options for families

- with the aim of meeting the demand for additional services for families.
- Utilise different forms of media to raise the profile of FDC educators and increase awareness of an alternative childcare model.
- Investigate the feasibility of an In-Venue FDC in Exmouth, Carnarvon and the Mungullah Community as an alternative to a home based service.
- Work with the school community in Carnarvon to determine support for and feasibility of providing an Outside School Hours Care and Vacation Care service on school grounds or alternative suitable site.

Regional Trend or Issue:

3. Challenges in developing connected and sustainable early years groups

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| 3.1 Work in partnership to adopt a framework that will assist the GEYN to:  
  - Access support services available to the EYN’s to assist in identifying a purpose and a long term strategic direction with roles and responsibilities of each member organisation clarified  
  - Remain resilient through the changing capacity of service providers  
  - Manage succession planning when key staff time; Travel – accommodation and vehicle costs x 3/5 visits; Info sessions – venue hire x 2, catering; Technology – computer, printing. | Facilitator Costs GRCSP Staff time x 55 hours; Admin support. Travel – accommodation and vehicle costs x 3/5 visits; Info sessions – venue hire x 1, catering; Technology – | Medium |
Regional Trend or Issue:

3. Challenges in developing connected and sustainable early years groups

Drivers leave the region
- Encourage community involvement and inclusiveness of stakeholders across the region
- Strengthen connections between services

3.2 Enable the sharing of good news stories, best practice and program information between the GEYN members.

3.3 Support the network to apply for funding opportunities such as the Early Years Activities Grants Program for events/activities during National Families Week.

3.4 Work in partnership with the GEYN to increase community awareness of the value of the children’s services sector by promoting programs and good news stories via print media (community and school newsletters); social media and face to face delivery at children and family events; parent and stakeholder workshops.

3.5 Support Playgroup WA to deliver a series of workshops in the region to build the capacity of Playgroups and develop good governance practices to ensure sustainability.

Collaboration / Responsibilities: Shire of Carnarvon Library Services; Service providers; WA Country Health; Education and Care providers; Schools; WACOSS; RDO

Regional Trend or Issue:

4. Difficulties in locating and connecting to children’s services, programs and activities

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<tr>
<td>4.1 Work with the LGA’s, community organisations and service providers to develop a comprehensive online and printable one stop Children’s Services Directory listing a range of services such as:</td>
<td>Staff time x 55 hours; Technology-computer; Travel</td>
<td>Low</td>
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</table>
Regional Trend or Issue:

4. Difficulties in locating and connecting to children’s services, programs and activities

- Health and wellbeing of parents – services to support parents
- Health and wellbeing of children – child and general health clinics; counselling
- Things to do and where to go - location of parks; community events; and facilities
- Education and care services
- Crises Line
- Websites and helpful information

– accommodation and vehicle;

Collaboration / Responsibilities: Gascoyne Service providers; Local Government; Gascoyne Development Commission; Regional Development Australia; Gascoyne Early Years Network.

Regional Trend or Issue:

5. Ability to attract and retain a qualified and skilled education and care workforce

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<tr>
<td>5.1 Promote opportunities for educators to attend a regional education and care conference.</td>
<td>Staff time x 55 hours; Technology – computer; Admin support.</td>
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<td>5.2 Support the delivery of professional learning opportunities in the Gascoyne.</td>
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<td>5.3 Work in partnership with training providers and children’s services sector to:</td>
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<td>- Increase the pool of qualified education and care workers to meet the needs of a growing industry.</td>
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<td>- Investigate options for the funding and delivery of face to face courses in Carnarvon in Certificate III and IV in Children’s Services, particularly, but not exclusively, for Aboriginal people.</td>
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<td>5.4 Promote early childhood education and care</td>
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</table>
Regional Trend or Issue:

5. Ability to attract and retain a qualified and skilled education and care workforce services as a positive career pathway choice for high school students and jobseekers:

- Facilitate information sessions/workshops to targeted group
- Develop a local resource such as series of short video clips promoting the importance of early childhood development and career pathways in children’s services that will make a difference to families in the Gascoyne community
- Conduct on-site visits to Granny Glasgow Education and Care and the Durack Institute of Technology
- Source and promote work experience opportunities
- Provide information on small business guidelines

Collaboration / Responsibilities: Regional Development Officer – Gascoyne; Education and Care Sector; Education and Care Regulatory Unit; Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre; Child Australia; Durack Institute of Technology; Registered Training Organisation – Gascoyne Assett Maintenance; Joblink Midwest – Workforce Development Centre

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http://www.rch.org.au/ccch/consultancy/Platforms/


Government of Western Australia Department of Education School OnLine, viewed September 2014. 
http://www.det.wa.edu.au/schoolsonline/home.do


Appendix A

Gascoyne Consultation List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>POSITION</th>
<th>ORGANISATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vicki Kempton and</td>
<td>Best Start Coordinator</td>
<td>Department of Local Government and Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire Anderson</td>
<td>Parenting Coordinator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janine Oxenham</td>
<td>Aboriginal community member and Parenting Coordinator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fawn Law-Davis</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Granny Glasgow Education and Care Inc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandy Barbara</td>
<td>Coordinator Poinciana Playgroup</td>
<td>WA Country Health Carnarvon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shane Van Styn</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Carnarvon Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camille Mallard</td>
<td>Coordinator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanie Verboon</td>
<td>Aboriginal Child Health Care Nurse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine Cox</td>
<td>Education Officer</td>
<td>Depart of Child Protection and Family Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacquie Taylor and Catherine Bedford</td>
<td>Coordinator - Parent and Community Engagement (PaCE)Program and Parents and Learning (PaL) Program</td>
<td>Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dianne Nyman</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>St Mary's Star of the Sea Catholic School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurika Pietersen</td>
<td>Responsible Parenting Program Coordinator</td>
<td>Depart of Child Protection and Family Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle Gates</td>
<td>Best Beginnings Coordinator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melissa Ryan</td>
<td>Creche Coordinator</td>
<td>Durack Institute of Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tami Maitre</td>
<td>Training Director – Carnarvon Campus</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAME</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minh Henderson</td>
<td>Librarian program coordinator and Gascoyne Early Years Network member</td>
<td>Carnarvon Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheryl Weston</td>
<td>A/g Coordinator Library Services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caroline McGarry</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Bernice McLeod Child Care Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauren Rampling and Jaci Cutler</td>
<td>Community Development Officers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coordinator</td>
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<td>Hayley Pines</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alfred Iasky</td>
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<td>Parent Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Karen McDowell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Debra Roberts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jamie Burton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharyn Burvill</td>
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<td>Christine Polakiewicz</td>
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<td>Cheryl Ridgeway</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stephen Farrington</td>
<td>Nurse – Burringurrah Aboriginal Community Nursing Post</td>
<td>WA Country Health Services - Midwest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Margaret Rowe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jill Dwyer</td>
<td>Project Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toni Hibbert</td>
<td>Project Officer and</td>
<td>Gascoyne Development Commission</td>
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<td>Robert O'Donnell</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Amy Stewart</td>
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<td>Catriona Nixon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dianne Wilson</td>
<td>Children's Services Officer, Education and</td>
<td>Department of Local Government and Communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Janette Merendino</td>
<td>Parenting WA Coordinator</td>
<td>Department of Local Government and Communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dianne Mazzucato</td>
<td>Project Manager Enhance Transitions to School</td>
<td>Play Groups WA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leisha Norling</td>
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<td>Mungullah Aboriginal Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amy Flaherty</td>
<td>Senior Occupational Therapist Child</td>
<td>WA Country Health Service - Gascoyne Population Health</td>
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<td>Chris Hall</td>
<td>Coordinator Children’s Week activities</td>
<td>WA Country Health Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helen Creed</td>
<td>Policy Manager Vulnerable People</td>
<td>Western Australian Council of Social Service Inc</td>
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