



**File Number:** EXR0256

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**Applicant:** Department for Education (PR-00006069) for Keithcot Farm Children's Centre for Early Childhood Development and Parenting (SE-00010523)

**Date of application:** 24 July 2019

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### **Reasons for decision**

#### **The Law:**

The ACECQA Board determined and published the Excellent rating criteria in accordance with section 153(1) of the National Law. Under section 153, ACECQA must assess services in accordance with the published criteria to determine whether the service meets the Excellent rating and must take into account advice from the regulatory authority.

ACECQA must award the Excellent rating or refuse to give that rating (section 155(1)). The power to award or refuse the Excellent rating has been delegated to me by the ACECQA Board under section 246(1)(c) of the National Law.

#### **Assessment against the criteria**

Keithcot Farm Children's Centre for Early Childhood Development and Parenting (KFCCECDP) will be assessed against and must satisfy the three criteria to be awarded the Excellent rating.

#### **Evidence before me:**

I have considered the evidence before me, including:

- the application for the Excellent rating and its supporting statements and evidence
- the assessment and rating report
- advice from your regulatory authority
- notes from a teleconference conducted by an ACECQA officer with KFCCECDP on 8 August 2019.



***Criterion 1 — The service exemplifies and promotes exceptional education and care that improves outcomes for children and families across at least three themes.***

For a service to meet criterion 1, it must demonstrate that it exemplifies and promotes exceptional education and care against at least three of the five excellence themes. This requires applicants to nominate at least three excellence themes, explain how each theme is supported and promoted through the service's practices, and provide evidence that demonstrates how those practices, programs or partnerships improve outcomes at the highest level for participating children and families.

Keithcot Farm Children's Centre for Early Childhood Development and Parenting nominated to be assessed against the following themes:

- Collaborative partnerships with professional, community or research organisations
- Commitment to children that respects, reflects and celebrates culture and diversity, including place of origin
- Inclusive partnerships with children and families
- Positive workplace culture, organisational values, support of educators and sustained commitment to professional development
- Practice and environments that enhance children's learning and growth

**Evidence provided – Theme 1**

**Collaborative partnerships with professional, community or research organisations.**

Within its application, KFCCECDP offered the following evidence of practice at the highest level:

- In 2011, the service's approved provider, the Department for Education (DFE) identified a need to engage earlier with families to provide support, education and early intervention, as well as building relationships within the community. In response, DFE engaged with Allied Health from South Australia (SA) Health and the 'Allied Health in Children's Centres program' commenced. This included the service providing access to a Speech Pathologist (SP) and Occupational Therapist (OT). The service acknowledges this access is also open to other services with the same approved provider, but they have been tailored within the service via targeted programs to support the specific needs of its children and families and the local community. The service references the following partnership examples:



- Supporting SA Allied Health goals of increased community engagement through assisting community members in accessing health care professionals and navigating health and support systems.
- SP and OT available at the service for a day and a half each week.  
This includes:
  - SP provides literacy, language and signing supports and assistance with complications related to eating and drinking.
  - OT who supports the strengthening of children's fine and gross motor skills, concentration, emotional development and self-regulation skills through play-based learning.
- Families can request a one on one consultation.
- Provision of family and educator information sessions by the SP and OT to promote positive child development. Recent examples include:
  - Term 2, 2018: 'Getting Little Fingers Ready', a practical information session about fine motor skill development for two to six year olds.
  - Term 3, 2018: free toilet training workshop for families with children aged birth to six years of age and run by the OT. The sessions focused on the developmental stages of toileting, signs of readiness and strategies for toilet training success.
  - Term 2, 2019: 'Let's talk about meal times'. Addressing fussy eating and reducing mealtime stress.
  - Term 2 and 3, 2019: 'Getting ready for reading and writing'. Addressing foundations for learning, emergent literacy skills and motor skills through practical experiences.
  - Term 2 and 3, 2019: 'Being big with feelings'. Four workshops for families and carers to address emotional supports and understandings for young children.
- Family assistance to access external ongoing SP and OT services.
- Supporting staff to address health concerns with older children through outlining referral pathways, for example, providing educators with one to one discussions and professional development (PD) sessions. These relate to sensory processing, assisting children with behavioural, emotional and sensory regulation, development of resources, screening, and programming assistance.
- The SP and the OT run webinars on topics such as 'The Circle of Security' and 'Being with Big Feelings' to support families who can't attend onsite sessions.
- Introducing targeted programs in response to family and community feedback identifying a lack of programs for families with toddlers and a cross-age group of children to attend:



- 'Baby Bop Music' group introduced in July 2016. A free weekly program available each term. This was developed and is facilitated by the OT and SP for families to attend with a newborn to pre-walking babies.
- 'Baby Move and Groove' was introduced in Term 3, 2018 in response to community demand and to provide ongoing support to families whose babies had graduated from the Baby Bop program. The program was developed by the service OT and SP for families to attend with their babies who are active crawlers up until they are about two years of age and is facilitated termly. The program aims to support families to interact with their children through music movement and play. An additional session was added in Term 1, 2019 in response to the extensive waitlist and increasing requests from families.
- 'The Wonderful World of Toddlers' and 'Being Big with Feelings'. These free two hour seminars are provided by Parenting SA, senior OTs and the service OT. Sessions occurred in February 2017, October 2018 and August 2019.

The service references the Allied Health partnership in complimenting its existing staff skillset and building their capacity to respond to community and child needs.

Additionally, the service references early family access to specialists and pre and postnatal programs in supporting the local community to have increased awareness of child development, growing confidence in identifying gaps and in fostering continued participation within service programs.

- Commenced a partnership with the City of Tea Tree Gully Council in 2017, when it first became a Children's Centre for Early Childhood Development and Parenting. The service references before the building extensions were completed in 2017, it didn't have space to run the Allied Health programs on site. The Council supported the service through the provision of the following spaces for program facilitation and school holiday programs:
  - Greenwith Community Centre with capacity for 50 to 250 people.
  - Jubilee Community Centre, which includes a secured playground and three rooms to cater for 20, 50, or 100 people.
  - Tea Tree Gully Library.
  - Tea Tree Gully Toy Library.
  - Tea Tree Gully Kinder Gym.
  - Illyarrie Reserve, including two playgrounds and barbeque facilities.



Council feedback acknowledges the partnership as a way to overcome the difficulty of making meaningful connections with local families and to reduce duplication of community programs. For example:

- The service supported the Council in the co-facilitation of the 'Raising Babies' program. The service used existing contacts to organise weekly guest speakers including:
  - Allied Health SP and OT, who presented on reading, speaking, singing and rhyme for babies and the importance of supporting babies through the stages of eating and sleeping.
  - Kidsafe Australia, who presented on baby safety and first aid skills in the home.

The service also references receiving local Council community grants which provided funding to:

- Build a parent library to support family access to resources including books, flyers and brochures on safe sleeping, home safety, nutrition, mental health, child development and grief.
  - Build a chicken coop to support a sustainable focus in the service, including the reuse of food waste.
- Partnership with the South Australian School for Visually Impaired (SASVI). The service references a child in 2018 who experiences myopic stigmatism. To support educators with their limited knowledge of the condition and increased participation by the child, the service organised the following:
    - April 2018, referred the child's family to SASVI and contacted Keithcot Farm Primary School (KFPS) regarding the child's strengths and required areas of support before transitioning to school.
    - A teacher from SASVI to visit the service on five different occasions from June to November 2018.
    - The SASVI teacher assisted educators to implement strategies to increase the child's participation within the program. For example:
      - Making books available for the child to take home for close viewing before introducing at group time.
      - Introducing a routine where the child looked closely at the book before and following group storytime.
    - September 2018, organised for the KFPS deputy principal to meet the SASVI advisory teacher at the service alongside the family, director and child's primary educator.
    - November 2018, organised with KFPS for the SASVI advisory teacher to accompany the child and his peers on two school transition visits.



- Following the school transition visits, SAVSI advised KFPS on required supports such as:
  - School Support Officer (SSO) to assist when handwriting, reading and mathematics are introduced.
  - Default enlarged font and icons on class computers.
  - Assistance and modification during physical education experiences to support depth perception.
  - Scanning technique training to support safe orientation and mobility throughout the school environment.
  - Supports to locate friends in the playground.

Feedback from KFPS indicates that SASVI monthly visits commenced in February 2019 and are still ongoing. Additionally, KFPS acknowledged the role of the service in introducing them to SASVI, leading to high levels of support being organised before the child commenced school. This included the planning of class placement, SSO support required and the deputy principal, class teacher and SSO participating in training at SASVI regarding understandings around vision impairment, resource use and accommodations.

### **Analysis**

To demonstrate excellence under the theme of collaborative partnerships with professional, community or research organisations, services will demonstrate how they have reflected upon the assessed strengths, needs and priorities of children and families, and developed targeted strategies in partnership with external organisations in response to these in a way that improves outcomes for the children and families.

KFCCECDP has developed exceptional collaborative partnerships with professional and community organisations. For example, its collaboration with Allied Health has improved educators' practices and outcomes for its children, families and community members by providing access to health specialists and targeted programs and workshops. Through working with Allied Health, the service has contributed to DFE initiatives to improve outcomes for community members at the highest level. The service has been instrumental in fostering opportunities for early and ongoing participation of community members in health and education programs. Both the Allied Health and SASVI partnerships demonstrate that the service is proactive yet sensitive in its responses to family, child and community needs and circumstances.

The service's work with the City of Tea Tree Gully Council demonstrates a commitment to community incentives including increased engagement through the



organisation of events and shared spaces, the knowledge and skills of local family members has been enhanced and community relationship building has been supported.

### **Considerations for continuous improvement**

As part of its continuous improvement journey, I encourage the service to build new partnerships in which children can lead, collaborate and engage with members of the community, following their interests, aspirations and needs.

The service may also benefit from establishing partnerships which compliment yet extend on the promotion of increased health, wellbeing and educational outcomes for its children, families and community members.

### **Decision**

I am of the view that the service has achieved excellence under this theme.

### **Evidence provided – Theme 2**

#### **Commitment to children that respects, reflects and celebrates culture and diversity, including place of origin.**

In relation to the theme commitment to children that respects, reflects and celebrates culture and diversity, including place of origin, the service identified the following notable examples that are reflective of services operating at the Exceeding National Quality Standard level:

- The service references strategically recruiting staff with diverse cultural backgrounds, who have introduced aspects of their culture, including phrases and songs. Additionally, the service states when required, such staff provide families support with completing enrolment forms and developing understandings of daily routines, policies and practices.
- The service states, when necessary, the Community Development Co-ordinator (CDC) accesses interpretive services to support Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) families during interactions with community services.
- The service referencing the offering of authentic cultural experiences through cooking, music, art, storytelling and dramatic play.
- Families are consulted before purchasing resources to support cultural sensitivity in its displays, information to be provided for families and included in children's educational programs.



- The service references regularly inviting a representative from 'Culture for Kids' to facilitate children's workshops with children, focused on language and the extension of learning and respect for Indigenous culture and history.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags are displayed within the service foyer.
- The service has large murals in its outdoor environment that were painted in collaboration with a local Aboriginal artist.
- The service references challenging bias with children to support all children and families to have a strong sense of connection and belonging.
- The service references providing the Early Childhood Australia (ECA) code of ethics to all its families upon enrolment. The document is discussed with all staff during induction and bi-annual performance conversations.
- Access of bi-lingual support through the DFE for CALD families and families with English as a second language.

### **Analysis**

To meet the theme of commitment to children that respects, reflects and celebrates culture and diversity, including place of origin, services must demonstrate their commitment to culture and diversity, how they respect, reflect and celebrate culture and diversity, including place of origin at the highest level that improves outcomes for the children and families.

Within its application, KFCCECDP has provided a range of examples of practice that are reflective of services operating at the Exceeding National Quality Standard level, but not considered exceptional for this theme.

### **Considerations for continuous improvement**

To improve under this theme, KFCCECDP could consider how it might reflect and extend upon its current practices, programs and partnerships to identify and gain a deeper understanding of the cultures represented at the service. The service may also wish to consider opportunities at the highest level to celebrate diversity with regard to the capabilities and needs of its children and families.

### **Decision**

I am of the view that the service has not achieved excellence under this theme.





### **Evidence provided – Theme 3**

#### **Inclusive partnerships with children and families**

Within its application, KFCCECDP offered the following evidence of practice at the highest level:

- The service sought family feedback through surveys and collected anecdotal evidence from participants accessing service programs offered offsite. Responses indicated families wanted a more dedicated space for universal health services. Family and community members expressed being more likely to participate in programs offered by the service onsite. In response, family members on the governing council lobbied the state government for funding. \$2million was received to extend the existing facilities. The service completed its building developments in Term 4, 2017. The service acknowledges working closely with architects during the process, including taking building ideas to families and children to discuss possible features, suitability and feedback. The service also visited other sites to talk to providers about environmental features and source potential ideas for a community space.

The following facilities were requested through family feedback and added during the developments. These include:

- A ramp to support more inclusive service access.
- Intercom and childproof gates.
- A community room, which is used as a space for the parenting programs.
- A flexible space that could be used as a crèche. Crèche care is provided during programs, sessions and seminars by familiar educators to support families with younger children to attend.
- A separate kitchen. This was requested in conjunction with the flexible space to enable families to have a cup of tea and connect with others. Families acknowledged that drop off and pick up times within the service was hectic and did not support getting to know other family members.
- Disabled toilet access with nappy change facilities.
- A consultation room to provide space for confidential discussions. Before the renovations, there was no private space for this to occur.
- Solar panels to reduce energy costs.

The service also references supporting its children through the redevelopment process. This includes:



- Showing children copies of the building and extension plans and explaining the changes that would occur. This included numerous discussions about the size of the rooms and how the rooms would change shape by both educators and tradespeople. Throughout the process, the service states it invited the electricians, plumbers and carpenters to explain to the children what they were doing, the tools they were using, and what would happen to the building. Family feedback acknowledges children speaking about specific tradespeople by name and taking their own building plans home to share.
- The service references DFE research, which acknowledges a successful education can be better supported with family engagement before the child's birth. The service had identified its family and local community members had limited antenatal and postnatal supports, and local hospital supports were not being accessed. In response, the service approached a family member, who is a midwife, about employment. The family member spoke to local General Practitioners (GP) and health centres and organised for the midwife program to be referral based and rebated through Medicare. In response:
  - January 2018, the service employed the family member as a qualified midwife for one day a fortnight.
  - A midwifery clinic with a bulk bill service is offered to families at no cost. Due to interest, and to support consistent access, the clinic increased to once a week in October 2018.
  - Community and family members can access the midwife up until their baby is six weeks of age.
  - One hour sessions are offered to discuss:
    - Breastfeeding, or alternative feeding supports.
    - Mothercraft and settling skills.
    - Mother, baby health and wellbeing checks.
    - Referral to other community programs or services.
  - The midwife and the CDC deliver targeted programs reflecting sequential developmental order to facilitate service connections from the antenatal to preschool age. This includes:
    - Prenatal 'Nurture Nest' program, which is available to pregnant women and their partners and aims to support building connections with other prenatal parents and support services. Families are welcome to return and attend during the postnatal stage. Currently, six families regularly attend the 90 minute sessions, which is a mix of pregnant women and those who have recently given birth. The service states this program has



seen attendees also attend other workshops at the service in the lead up to the birth. Local schools have also referred community members to the program.

- The midwife and the CDC deliver, 'Raising Baby', a six week program for families with babies under 12 months of age. Topics include sleep, breast and bottle feeding, parenting styles, and transitioning back to work.
- The service developed a new Post Natal Connect Program in response to identified concerns for the mental health and wellbeing of mothers participating in the Nurture Nest and Raising Babies programs. It is a free weekly program offered in Term 2, 2019 for families and their babies to support and address mental health challenges that may arise due to pregnancy, birth trauma or postnatal experiences. The service references the program in supporting its families to overcome challenges including domestic violence, unemployment, social isolation and family breakdowns.

The service acknowledges in service midwife access in connecting with families much earlier within their parenting journey and remaining partnered with them. Additionally, the service references the midwife program in changing family and community perceptions that the service was only focused on preschool age children and their families.

- In response to family feedback expressing apprehension about weekends and school holidays due to social isolation, the service introduced out of operational hours events. This includes:
  - April 2018, school holiday free family yoga session.
  - Term 1, 2019:
    - Twilight stay and play session.
    - Teddy bears picnic pyjama storytime facilitated by the SP and OT.
  - Term 2, 2019:
    - Pyjama storytime event to celebrate the National Simultaneous Storytime.
    - George Wildlife Farm family picnic lunch event organised as part of National Families Week celebrations.
    - Dad's group, beef and burger night.
    - Ladies night out, dessert night.



The service references through the events, families are now building rapport, swapping phone numbers and making plans to catch up independently of the service.

- Introduction of free or subsidised programs that respond to family and community need. These include:
  - Term 2, 2018:
    - Family yoga session each Monday.
  - Term 4, 2018:
    - Five week infant massage course facilitated by a qualified massage therapist.
  - Term 1, 2019:
    - Kids cooking club. A three week program to support families to learn how to cook meals with their children and in connecting with children during meal times.
  - Term 1, 2 and 3, 2019:
    - Coffee and chat every second Friday to support families and community members to experience 'me time', connect with others and hear about the programs on offer. The service references the program in supporting its at home or part time working families in overcoming isolation.
    - Watch, wonder and play playgroup. Designed for toddlers and their parents and carers to explore play based experiences together.
  - Term 2, 2019:
    - Monday morning mums and bubs fitness class facilitated by a personal trainer. The service introduced the program in response to family and community feedback about having a post baby body and fitness programs in the local community being expensive and inaccessible.
  - Term 2 and 3, 2019:
    - Thursday evening small group personal training sessions.
- During enrolment, families are asked to complete a child questionnaire on areas relating to strengths, interests and areas of developmental concern. Families are also asked to indicate if there are topics on parenting or child development they would like to learn more about. The Allied Health team and the leadership team draw on the family feedback to identify key areas of interest. This informs the programs and events to be included in the family and community term timetable. The Allied Health team additionally use the



- data to plan for wider community programs including Circle of Security, Getting Ready for Mealtimes, and toileting workshops.
- Long day care options introduced in January 2017, which includes:
    - All day sessions with a minimum of two days and a maximum of three days to reflect the principles of attachment theory.
    - A morning session from 7am to 12:30pm.
    - An afternoon session from 12:30pm to 6pm.
  - Development of a local services guide by the CDC that provides contacts for music programs, kinder gyms, playgroups, occasional care and family day care services, family friendly cafes, local libraries and toy libraries. This is regularly distributed to its families who are seeking connections to programs and opportunities beyond offer at the service.
  - Training and workshops for families:
    - Term 3, 2017: '9 ways to a Resilient Child', Dr Justin Coulson.
    - Term 3, 2017: 'Sleep Solution Sessions' with a sleep psychologist focused on developing strategies and addressing inconsistencies in children's sleep patterns and routines.
    - March 2018 and 2019: Triple P Positive Parenting Program sessions delivered by the approved provider on the following strategies:
      - Positive parenting.
      - Raising confident and competent children.
      - Raising resilient children.
    - Term 2, 2019: First Aid for children, 'What do I do' course. To support knowledge on CRP, choking, bleeding and burns and breaks.
    - Term 2, 2019: Kidsafe South Australia-Safety in and around the home free information session.
  - The service references each child having an Individual Learning Plan. This document is reviewed with families each term to ensure goals are developing and are developmentally appropriate. For example, a family had their child learning the alphabet as a main goal. Through a termly meeting, educators provided the family with strategies to make the goal more tangible. This included suggesting exploring environmental print with the child, to support the child's development of literacy skills rather than looking at the alphabet in isolation.

In relation to the theme inclusive partnerships with children and families, the service identified the following notable examples that are reflective of services operating at the Exceeding National Quality Standard level:

- Feedback opportunities are provided at the conclusion of each program.
- Educators set up environments in collaboration with children.



### **Analysis**

To meet this theme, a service will demonstrate that children and families not only participate in the program, but they make choices and decisions, initiate and lead their own learning, and collaborate with educators in making decisions that affect them.

KFCCECDP has developed inclusive partnerships with children and families. It is clear that the service is committed to partnering with children and families from the prenatal to the preschool age. This is evident through the various programs, workshops and out of hours events the service has organised in response to family feedback and child need.

Family decision making is evident through the successful lobbying for redevelopment funding. Through the redevelopment process, the service gained valuable insights and input from its families and children. This led to purposely built spaces and facilities, which have strengthened child and family communication, engagement and belonging with and within the service.

Through these initiatives, the service demonstrates its responsiveness to family need and its commitment to family and community education and involvement within the service.

### **Considerations for continuous improvement**

As part of its continuous improvement journey, I encourage the service to further consider how it can develop and share examples of its inclusive partnerships with children to support their insights, opinions and decision making within the service.

### **Decision**

I am of the view that the service has achieved excellence under this theme.

### **Evidence provided – Theme 4**

#### **Positive workplace culture, organisational values, support of educators and sustained commitment to professional development.**

Within its application, KFCCECDP offered the following evidence of practice at the highest level:

- The service has a multidisciplinary team of 30+ members. This includes:
  - Educators who work for the state government within the preschool program.
  - Educators who are employed by the governing council of the long day care program.



- Allied Health staff form part of the service's leadership team.
- The CDC role, introduced in 2007. This includes analysing Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) to ensure family programs, services and events reflect current community needs. The role focuses on developing social and emotional wellbeing in response to data which identified children in the local area experiencing high levels of vulnerability.
- Midwife.
- Administrative staff.
- During the redevelopment, across team collaboration occurred regarding building design and features. Staff were consulted about what they valued and priority was given to curriculum preparation areas suitable for collaborative planning, discussion and reliable information technology.

Additional design elements include a comfortable staff room with access to cooking facilities and storage due to inadequate space within the previous room. Adult bathrooms with showers were also added.

- Professional development:
  - February 2019, Movement Matters physiotherapy training accessed by the assistant director, seven educators and a child's family. This was in response to supporting manual handling procedures for a child experiencing significant physical and neurological needs. The service references the training in supporting its staff to apply the correct knowledge and techniques and skills to meet the child's needs when using specialist equipment such as the Jenx Bee Chair and Monkey standing frame and walker.
  - The service references supporting educators who lacked confidence with mathematical experience and language through accessing 'Let's Count' through The Smith Family in March and May 2019. The PD was focused on numeracy within the environment and engaging families to develop numeracy within the home through routine experiences. From the training, educators developed take home resources and experiences for families. This included a matching and comparison experience using different types of patterned socks. The service received family feedback regarding children's abilities to recognise patterns such as stripes and spots, being able to repeat and sequence patterns and notice differences.
  - The service references the training in supporting its educators to gain confidence with maths experiences and an increased use of mathematical language with children. For example, educators asking



- children "Should we use a long tooth or a short tooth comb to brush the doll's hair?"
- The SP and OT staff to address health concerns with older children through outlining referral pathways. For example, providing educators with one to one discussions and PD sessions relating to sensory processing, assisting children with behavioural, emotional and sensory regulation, development of resources, screening, and programming assistance.
  - Health and wellbeing initiatives:
    - The service references making the conscious decision to meet as a team during the day within paid work time rather than after hours. To support this, the governing council developed a budget supporting the use of relief staff during meetings and PD to ensure minimal interruptions to the program. This includes:
      - Weekly programming meetings with across service representation. This includes program reflection, planning discussion and future possibilities for planning. Content from these meetings informs the emerging program.
      - Program review meetings which are held every three weeks with representation from preschool, long day care, Allied Health and CDC staff.
      - Termly overview meetings which includes DFE and Child Development strategic plan priorities of numeracy, literacy and the child protection curriculum.
      - A staff member from the Allied Health team, long day care and preschool program will attend PD together. The service states this supports access of information across all programs and future decision making to be a collaborative effort.
    - The service employs a personal trainer to run a subsidised group fitness class once a week for staff.
    - The service is closed for three weeks over the Christmas and New Year period. The service was successful in getting its governing council to provide long day care staff with three weeks of paid annual leave during this time. This was to address differences in leave between staff in the long day care and preschool program.
    - Permanent staff receive special paid leave in addition to their annual leave in recognition of their work within a complex setting.
    - The CDC and OT are not counted in educator to child ratios.
  - Long standing employees with 23 years of combined service.
  - The service references the qualifications of staff members including:
    - Certificate III and Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care.





- Advanced Diploma of Strategic Leadership.
- Bachelor of Applied science (Speech Pathology/Occupational Therapy).
- Bachelor of Early Childhood Education.
- Bachelor of Nursing.

The service references a staff member who is also a single mum, undertaking her Masters of Special Education. The staff member expressed needing more time to complete their studies but being financially unable to take the leave. The service provided the staff member with paid time off to complete their studies. The service references the educator providing information and programs on special education during its professional learning days.

Notable examples of practice in relation to the theme positive workplace culture, organisational values, support of educators and sustained commitment to professional development that are reflective of services operating at the Exceeding National Quality Standard level include:

- The service designed and developed a 'Processing the Speaker' template which staff utilise following PD. This includes speaker comments, educator follow up, measure of outcomes and template discussion at weekly team meeting.
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP) access is provided to all staff.
- Flexible staff rosters and negotiation of staff hours to support family, study and personal commitments.
- The service references facilitating an environment where staff can be open and honest with each other.
- Bi-annual performance conversations occur between every team member and the director and assistant director. This includes discussion on their role, goal achievement, and how their work aligns with service values, philosophy and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) priorities. Future PD and possible opportunities are planned together in response to these conversations.
- Use of ACECQA Quest for Quality Cards Knowledge Game within professional learning days.

### **Analysis**

To meet the theme positive workplace culture, organisational values, support of educators and sustained commitment to professional development, a service will demonstrate an exceptional commitment to its staff members. This may be through equal and inclusive involvement, employment conditions and staff supports. These will reflect the service's organisational values and demonstrate how it has



responded to the circumstances of the children and families and tailored professional development strategies for each educator that meets these circumstances in a way that demonstratively improves outcomes for these children and families at the highest level.

Within its application, it is evident that KFCCECDP values its educators and that there is a strong commitment to positive workplace culture. Promoting the health and wellbeing of staff is evident through initiatives such as weekly access to a personal trainer, hosting all work meetings within service operation hours and including additional leave entitlements over the Christmas period. Such initiatives also demonstrate flexible and equitable working conditions for its staff.

It is also evident that PD is sought to build on staff knowledge and is tailored to support child and family needs through improving practices, resources, and increasing opportunities for learning and communication.

#### **Considerations for continuous improvement**

To improve under this theme, the service may wish to consider how it could identify and target further opportunities for professional development that respond to the particular strengths, capabilities and priorities of the children and families that access the service, and consider how targeted professional development might improve outcomes for the children and families accessing the service.

#### **Decision**

I am of the view that the service has achieved excellence under this theme.

#### **Evidence provided – Theme 5**

##### **Practice and environments that enhance children's learning and growth.**

Within its application, KFCCECDP offered the following evidence of exceptional practice and learning environments specifically targeted at the interests, strengths, capabilities, needs or circumstances of the children and families:

- The service has interconnected rooms and a shared outdoor space to support children's flexibility and freedom of movement between different rooms, environments and peer groups. The service references children's access and engagement with different children, groupings and play experiences best supports their social and emotional development needs rather than having experiences and environments defined by age or groupings.
- The service provides families with a statement of learning in Term 2 and 4 in addition to formative and summative assessment documentation.



- Preschool age children participate in Screening of Phonological Awareness (SPA) at the start and the end of the year. This supports service and Allied Health staff to track children's language development and review the effectiveness of language resources and supports.

In relation to the theme practice and environments that enhance children's learning and growth, the service identified the following notable examples that are reflective of services operating at the Exceeding National Quality Standard level:

- The service states it provides a rich environment with meaningful interactions where children's voices are sought, heard and acted upon.
- The service prioritises having safe and engaging environments for all children.
- The service conducted an across service review of its children's lunch routine. It engaged its OT to provide evidence based PD for all staff in relation to meal times. In response, large tables, crockery and utensils were purchased to support independence, social skills, self-regulation, risk taking and problem solving. The service references the routine change in:
  - Providing children with choices about where and who they sit with.
  - Food selection.
  - Providing choice with the relaxation activities children participate in after lunch.
- Sustainable practices:
  - The service has a worm farm. Fruit and vegetable scraps are fed to the worms and worm wee is used to fertilise the garden areas.
  - Children are supported to sort rubbish into coloured bins for general rubbish and recycling paper and craft materials.
  - Newly installed water tanks are used to water plants and for children's water play.
- The service uses the 'You can do it' social confidence program cross the service to support children's social and emotional wellbeing.
- The service provides planned and spontaneous tours for families wanting to visit.
- An orientation process is provided for families accessing the long day care program.
- The service conducts formal and informal meetings throughout the year with its major feeder school, KFPS.
- The service implements the 'Keeping Safe Child Protection Curriculum'.



### **Analysis**

To meet the theme practice and environments that enhance children's learning and growth, services must demonstrate how their commitment to practice and environments exemplifies and promotes exceptional education and care, and show evidence of how these practices have improved outcomes for children and families at the highest level.

Within its application, the service provided minimal evidence and explanations for this theme. Therefore, service has not identified how its practices and programs provide an environment that exemplifies and promotes exceptional education and care, and how these have improved outcomes for children and families at the highest level.

### **Considerations for continuous improvement**

To improve under this theme, the service could consider extending its practices and programs or introducing further programs and practices specifically targeted at the identified interests, needs or circumstances of its children and families. The service could then monitor and evaluate the impact these practices are having on children and families, and show how adjustments are made to ensure outcomes are explicitly improved at the highest level.

### **Decision**

I am of the view that the service has not achieved excellence under this theme.

### **Conclusion for criterion 1**

I have considered and analysed the evidence before me, and as KFCCECDP has achieved excellence against the required three themes, I am of the view that the service meets criterion 1.

### ***Criterion 2 – The service demonstrates leadership that contributes to the development of a community, a local area, or the wider education and care sector***

The Excellent rating criteria state that successful applications will show how the service takes the initiative to develop and model exceptional practice that improves outcomes for children and families, and willingly shares this to inspire and educate others. An applicant needs to demonstrate how the service's leadership contributes to the development of a community, local area or the wider education and care sector.



Within its application, KFCCECDP offered the following evidence of practice at the highest level:

- The director takes a lead role in the Golden Way partnership which includes two secondary schools, four primary schools, and four DFE preschools. This includes:
  - School leaders addressed concerns about SSO's support for increasing numbers of children with dyslexia without specific training. In response, in September 2018, in conjunction with the Specific Learning Difficulties Association of South Australia (SPELD), the service provided an in-house seminar on supporting students with dyslexia. This was attended by families and numerous SSOs. Due to interest, the service again co-presented the seminar for a local school's professional learning development day.
  - Preschool leaders expressed concerns regarding lack of onsite SP access and having families with children on long waiting lists for SPs and intervention services. In response, the director spoke to the in service SP and they co-organised the following:
    - Term 1 2018, an in service workshop was presented to preschools partnership members and their staff on contemporary screening tools that educators could use within their service to determine whether children may need to access to ongoing speech pathology. The workshop also explained the supports a child might need, including clarity of speech. The fellow partnership preschools are currently using the screening tools and have begun basic screening processes while they wait for a SP to commence at their service.
    - The workshop was repeated in June 2018 with 25 educators from across the DFE partnership participating.
- Mentorship to new leaders at local early education services, this includes:
  - The service director is currently supporting the new director of a local service, Il Nido, through email, phone and service visits. Recently, the director was contacted for advice regarding an unscheduled service closure day. The director advised speaking to the governing council, and consideration of waiving the fee for that day due to the inconvenience experienced by families.
- Provision of community support, this includes:
  - The service was contacted by a local school leader regarding concerns for family and child wellbeing due to a lack of regular school attendance. The service used their connections through other services to organise for the school principal and family to have meetings with a community family practitioner onsite to discuss



- support options. In response, the family has received subsidised school fees and school uniforms. Feedback acknowledges the child is attending school more regularly.
- The service director has been invited by the approved provider to join a 'Champions group'. Currently, this includes reviewing the state wide preschool improvement plan to align with the new school improvement plan.
  - The calendar of programs and information sessions developed by the CDC reflects both service family and community need. The service ensures programs are accessible and responsive to community members and advertises the events across local schools and services.
  - The CDC is recognised as a trainer in Strategies for Managing Abuse Related Trauma (SMART), provided by the Australian Childhood Foundation. In response to local school feedback regarding new teachers having gaps in trauma knowledge:
    - The CDC in conjunction with a colleague from a neighbouring school became key providers of the SMART program and provided training across the DFE partnership for teams including:
      - Children's centre whole team.
      - Leadership and teachers from four local preschools.
      - Fifty school support officers from all sites across the partnership, occurred April 2019.
  - The service led the application for the DFE, 'Parents in Education Week' (PIE) grant in 2017. The service states the application was successful, which supported funding of large scale free events calendar including speakers such as Dr Justin Coulson on learning strategies to assist children to develop resilience.
  - Organising free and reduced rate large scale events in response to community knowledge gaps, interests and issues identified through community and partnership feedback. For example:
    - May 2017: 'Me time and we time: Balancing work and family'. Presented by Leap South Australia.
    - September 2017: '9 ways to a resilient child', with Dr Justin Coulson.
    - February 2018: 'Sibling Rivalry: What's it about? And how to reshape it'. An evening with Mark Le Messurier.
    - July 2018: 'How to persevere', an evening with Mark Le Messurier
    - September 2018: 'What is Dyslexia and how can you help at home?' an evening with Sandy Russo.
    - February 2019: 'A diagnosis of ASD and its impact on your family', an evening with Mark Le Messurier.



- Community development through the offering of mixed age programs. This includes:
  - In response to Mark Le Messurier training, and feedback from network groups that no local schools were running his 'What's the buzz' school age social skills program, the service introduced the once a week after school hours program in Term 1, 2019. Due to a long waiting list and high levels of interest across the wider community, the service negotiated with the facilitators of the program to run a second session. Groups now run for the seven to nine age group and the nine to 12 age group. The service references children from various local schools attending the program and local Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) staff bringing children after school whose parents are working but would like them to participate. The service received written feedback from a family member. This highlighted how program participation had supported their child to experience less anxiety during conversations, being able to start conversations and ask questions within conversations and an increased ability to remember tasks and people.
  - Term 1, 2019:
    - Chill, Connect and Create hub. A one hour weekly program offered to children aged four to 10 years with a focus on art, relaxation and developing new friendships.
    - Kids Cooking Club. A ninety minute weekly program for children aged three to 10 years and their families. Children and families are supported to cook and share a meal together. The service additionally runs the program in school holidays in response to community feedback that holidays can be an isolating time.

Within its application, KFCCECDP offered the following notable examples of practice that demonstrates leadership at the Exceeding National Quality Standard level:

- The assistant director is an executive member of the Children's Week Committee.
- The assistant director is a member of the Community Children's Centre of South Australia (CCCSA). This includes providing professional development to ensure policies and practices across the community reflect current legislation and evidence based practice.
- Service programs are advertised through email distribution lists, Facebook pages, the service website, medical clinics, schools, community organisations and community boards.



### **Analysis**

For a service to meet criterion 2, it must demonstrate through evidence of how the service's leadership contributes to the development of a community, local area or the wider education and care sector. An important aspect of this criterion is demonstrating how a service's leadership guides, influences and inspires change.

KFCCECDP demonstrates its commitment to leading the wider education and care sector through the provision of workshops, training opportunities, guest speakers and social skills programs. In doing so, the service responds to gaps in community needs, supports accessibility of services and programs and proactively shares its resources and facilities.

The service actively responds to opportunities to share its practices and is receptive to training and mentoring educators and support staff across the wider education sector. The provision of programs, events and training opportunities for various age ranges and educational settings highlights the service's commitment to the improvement and development of its community members, specifically those identified as most vulnerable and in need.

### **Considerations for continuous improvement**

I encourage KFCCECDP to continue to look for ways in which the service can influence and guide the broader sector and take a leadership role within its local area, community, or within the sector. To do this, KFCCECDP might consider analysing its practices and partnerships, accessing or participating in research and looking for opportunities to share high quality examples more broadly. The service could also identify ways in which it is positioned to influence and develop the community, local area and broader education and care sector, and how it might assess and measure the impact of its initiatives.

### **Conclusion for criterion 2**

In my view, KFCCECDP has demonstrated visionary leadership through its outstanding efforts to develop the community and the wider sector through advocacy, training and inspiring best practice in early childhood education.

Therefore, it is my view that KFCCECDP has met criterion 2.

### ***Criterion 3 – The service demonstrates commitment to sustained Excellent practice through continuous improvement and comprehensive forward planning***

The Excellent rating criteria state that successful applicants will embrace the





responsibility of maintaining excellence and evolving on practice. The criteria recognise the importance of pursuing opportunities for further improvement, and the need for services to demonstrate how exceptional practice and leadership will be sustained over the three year rating period.

Evidence that demonstrates the service has engaged in critical reflection that has informed practice and improved outcomes for children and families at the highest level:

- The service references being in the process of lobbying the State Government for a family practitioner with a social work degree and relevant experience to further support its vulnerable families.
- The service is investigating extending the time of the SP to further support conversations and the education of staff and families regarding language development. This is in response to addressing increased screen time being accessed by children.
- In response to increasing interest in community events focused on social skills and supports, the service is looking at ways to provide increased assistance and understandings for its families. This includes introducing programs focused on:
  - Navigating the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).
  - Practical strategies to support the parenting of children's diverse and complex needs.
  - Family management of their own health and wellbeing.
- In response to local community needs where fathers are undertaking an increased role in parenting, addressing this and the shortage of support services to meet father's and their health and wellbeing needs. The service is currently investigating services to respond to these needs. This includes:
  - The CDC is a member of the Northern Men's Wellbeing Network and accesses service providers including:
    - The Smith Family.
    - Northern Child and Mental Health Services.
    - South Australia Police.
    - Local Member of Parliament.
    - Children's Centre CDC's from the Northern area.
  - The service is in the process of the following:
    - Connecting with two local fathers' groups, 'Dad's Group Incorporated' and 'Man with a Pram' to facilitate supports and resources.
    - Organising for the chair of the Northern Men's Wellbeing Network to visit the service in a consulting capacity. The service links this



- initiative with the DFE strategy to engage with families from pre - birth.
- Due to interest, the service is running the 'What's the buzz' program for school age children for new groups during Term 3 and 4 of 2019.
  - The service references that 1% of the local population identifies as Aboriginal yet the service currently has no families enrolled that identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. The service references further utilising its connections with local Aboriginal families through existing networks operating early childhood programs to explore the voice, perspective, wants and needs of Aboriginal families and to respond through the introduction of programs or services that meet those needs. This includes making connections with Marringa Turtpandi, Muna Paedindi and Nunkawaarin Yunti Aboriginal Health Services.

Evidence of a commitment to sustained practice through continuous improvement reflective of services operating at the Exceeding National Quality Standard level:

- Use of an annual parent survey to gain feedback regarding family views and suggestions about identifying service improvements.
- Continual improvements to the service website to communicate service thinking and practices with its immediate and wider community.

### **Analysis**

For a service to meet criterion 3, it must demonstrate a commitment to sustained Excellent practice through continuous improvement and comprehensive forward planning. An important aspect of this criterion is demonstrating how the service will embrace the responsibility of maintaining excellence and pursuing opportunities for further improvement, how it will sustain exceptional practice and leadership, and continue to improve outcomes for children and families over the three year rating period.

Within its application, KFCCECDP has shared its philosophy, Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and QIP review. These documents describe the values and beliefs of the service and reference a number of plans that it has in place to sustain its practices. I note many of the plans KFCCECDP refers to in its application are very broad.

### **Considerations for continuous improvement**

To improve under this criterion, KFCCECDP could consider developing plans for improvement in concise stages to address changing needs. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities may help to achieve successful strategies and identify opportunities for children's voices and family collaboration. The service could also



benefit from developing systems and processes to document forward planning, track progress and collect evidence of impact or change.

**Conclusion for criterion 3**

Based on the information provided, KFCCECDP has demonstrated its commitment to sustained Excellent practice through a range of methods that drive continuous improvement.

**Overall conclusion**

I would like to congratulate and acknowledge the commitment to exceptional quality education and care that KFCCECDP has shown in order to achieve this rating.

Under section 153(2), I have assessed the application from the Department for Education in accordance with the Excellent rating criteria and have determined that the service has met the three Excellent rating criteria.

For this reason, under section 155(1)(a), I have decided to award the Excellent rating to KFCCECDP.

As a result, the overall rating of KFCCECDP changes to Excellent.

**SIGNED**

Gabrielle Sinclair

Chief Executive Officer, ACECQA

19 September 2019

