2014 Highlights

More children’s centres completed and officially recognised

Since 2005, South Australia has been developing a network of children’s centres for early childhood development and parenting for children from the antenatal phase to age eight, and their families. As at December 31 2014 there were 42 children’s centres completed and operational across the State.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clare Valley, Kalaya and Lockleys</th>
<th>Aldinga Beach Children’s Centre</th>
<th>Ardtornish Children’s Centre</th>
<th>Goolwa Children’s Centre</th>
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<td>were officially recognised as children’s centres for early childhood development and parenting in 2014. In addition the construction of Aldinga Beach, Ardtornish and Goolwa children’s centres was completed.</td>
<td>was constructed on the grounds of the Aldinga Beach B-7 School. The centre offers preschool, occasional care and playgroups, and an on-site CaFHS clinic, parenting, health and community programs, and consultation and administration space.</td>
<td>was constructed on the site of the former John Francis Clark Memorial Kindergarten, adjacent to the Ardtornish Primary School. The centre offers preschool, occasional care and playgroups, and offers parenting, health and community programs, and consultation and administration space.</td>
<td>was rebuilt to accommodate the existing preschool and long day care programs. The centre offers playgroups and parenting, health and community programs, an on-site CaFHS clinic, and consultation and administration space. In addition services were expanded in 2014 with the appointment of a family services coordinator.</td>
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Official centre openings

Official openings and celebrations were held in 2014 for Ardtornish, Clare Valley, Darlington, Gilles Plains, Goolwa, Kalaya, Lockleys and Port Pirie West children’s centres.

Antenatal services

In 2014 the partnership between DECD and SA Health was expanded to deliver midwife-led antenatal services at Trinity Gardens Children’s Centre. Services continued at Cowandilla, John Hartley School B-7, Ocean View College and Parafield Gardens children’s centres. These services enable pregnant women and their partners to attend antenatal appointments with experienced midwives in a local early childhood setting.

Expansion of services in children’s centres

In 2014 work began to support the expansion of services in existing children’s centres. This expansion will provide increased family service coordinators and allied health services including speech pathology, occupational therapy and an early intervention program to increase prevention and early detection of developmental concerns in our youngest children.
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Children’s centre model and programs

Vision

Children’s centres support children and families to achieve the best possible learning, health and wellbeing outcomes in a universal setting with targeted responses for children and families who may require additional support.

The South Australian Government has established 42 children’s centres comprising 38 children’s centres for early childhood development and parenting (children’s centres) and four children and family centres across metropolitan and regional South Australia.

Children’s centres for early childhood development and parenting are a collaborative early childhood initiative that brings together care, education, health, community development activities and family services for children from the antenatal phase to age eight and their families.

An interagency partnership approach ensures the work connected with children’s centres contributes to the priority population outcomes in the following ways:

1. Children have optimal health, learning and development.
2. Parents provide strong foundations for their children’s healthy development and wellbeing.
3. Communities are child and family friendly.
4. Aboriginal children are safe, healthy, culturally strong and confident.

Programs and services

While each children’s centre differs according to their community strengths and needs, a range of services and programs are common across all centres, including:

- care and education
  - preschool
  - long day care or occasional care
  - playgroups
- health programs and information
- family support programs and services
- community development activities.

Decisions regarding services offered in each centre are made by the local leadership team and key partner agencies. These include government agencies, non-government and community-based organisations, parents, community members and staff.
Staff

Children’s centres bring together a multidisciplinary workforce with a range of professional backgrounds, expertise, and knowledge, united by a shared commitment that children and families will experience seamless service delivery.

Staff in each children’s centre includes a director or head of school early years, early childhood teachers and educators, and a community development coordinator (CDC). Community development coordinators work in partnership with other agencies to offer a range of programs and services, and support parents and families to actively participate in all the activities of the children’s centre.

In some centres staff will also include:

» family services coordinators (FSC) who support the improvement of outcomes for families experiencing parenting difficulties and child development issues
» allied health staff such as occupational therapists and speech pathologists who build the capacity of staff and parents to improve children’s developmental outcomes by providing prevention and early intervention services
» Child and Family Health Service (CaFHS) clinic staff including maternal health nurses who provide health checks.

The children’s centre leadership team is led by the director or head of school early years and comprises the CDC, FSC, allied health staff, assistant director, assistant principal or principal.

This leadership team has shared responsibility for integrated service delivery reflective of the community and:

» contributes to the development of the centre vision and values
» monitors, reports and contributes to the achievement of the National Quality Standards
» develops program and service priorities
» develops strategies for encouraging broad communication and participation
» considers and resolves operational issues including staffing and facilities
» monitors service outcomes to continuously improve services
» determines and provides common training and professional development
» shares and analyses relevant data and research, including the Australian Early Development Census.
Four children and family centres have been established in South Australia providing early childhood programs and services for Aboriginal children from the antenatal phase to eight, and their families.

Children and family centres have a strong focus on supporting Aboriginal families with young children and reflect a philosophy of acknowledgement, engagement and inclusion of Aboriginal history, culture and community. Open to all members of the community, services include preschool, occasional care, Learning Together programs, playgroups and a range of parenting and health programs.

The centres include:

- Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre at Christie’s Beach
- Ngura Yadurrin Children and Family Centre at Ceduna
- Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre at Whyalla
- Ernabella Children and Family Centre in the APY Lands.
Planning in children’s centres

All work connected with children’s centres contributes to the priority population outcomes identified in the Outcomes framework, is guided by the National Quality Framework and informed by community engagement and profiling.

The Outcomes framework

The Outcomes framework is a statewide population-level framework and a shared commitment to integrated planning and implementation at the state, regional and local levels. The community population outcomes are:

1. Children have optimal health, learning and development
2. Parents provide strong foundations for their children’s healthy development and wellbeing
3. Communities are child and family friendly
4. Aboriginal children are safe, culturally strong and confident.

At the local level, children’s centres use the population-level framework to identify local priorities and interagency implementation strategies that will contribute to improved outcomes for children and families.

National Quality Framework (NQF)

The NQF is an agreement between all Australian governments to work together to provide better educational and developmental outcomes for children attending education and care services. Research shows that access to quality education and care services can provide better health, education and employment outcomes later in life.

The NQF raises quality through regulation of the National Quality Standard (NQS) and drives continuous improvement and consistency to improve education and care services across the nation. It also provides clear and comprehensive information for families about services for their children.

The NQS comprises seven quality areas:

» Educational program and practice
» Children’s health and safety
» Physical environment
» Staffing arrangements
» Relationships with children
» Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
» Leadership and service management.

The NQS helps services improve in the areas that impact on children’s development and assists in providing better outcomes for children. The standard includes the Early Years Learning framework, a curriculum framework to guide staff in developing programs for children.

All children’s centres are guided by the NQF and apply the NQS. During 2014, three children’s centres underwent the assessment and rating cycle of which, all three services were rated as ‘Exceeding’ the NQS. All children’s centres continued their self-review process and revised their quality improvement plan for a second year, as part of the ongoing quality improvement cycle.
Early childhood services program

In January 2014 the Early Learning, Partnership and Planning unit was formed, consisting of 16 early childhood leaders (ELCs) amongst other personnel. The ECL positions were created to lead statewide early childhood priorities within the education and child development (ECD) local partnerships in order to contribute to the achievement of DECD’s strategic priorities.

The Early Childhood Services program consists of seven evidence-based priorities that contribute to improving the lives of South Australian children. The ECLs have a key role in implementing the priorities within the local partnerships.

The priorities are:

» Improving preschool attendance
» Developing early childhood leadership
» Quality early childhood services
» Continuity of learning and transition
» Children’s centres – a hub for community
» Engaging families in their children’s learning
» Redeveloped preschool outdoor learning environments.

Specific projects have been devised for each of these priority areas. Throughout 2015 project teams will develop particular resources to support partnerships and sites to engage with these priorities. Children’s centres will have significant engagement in these projects given their connection with the community and their role as leaders in the field. Gawler and District College B-12, Lake Windermere B-7 School and Mount Gambier children’s centres will be involved in the Children’s Centres – A Hub For A Community project.

These children’s centres will:

» identify the opportunities and approaches for children’s centres to impact on a larger group of children and families within an ECD partnership
» identify the strengths within children’s centres that will support improved outcomes for families and children in the broader community
» document how centre leadership teams effectively engage with the broader community to inform other services
» contribute to the statewide professional learning for all children’s centre teams.

Planning days

In 2014 planning days at Ardtornish and Ingle Farm children’s centres demonstrated the value of bringing partners together to develop an agreed focus and shared outcomes for families with young children. The days were organised and facilitated in conjunction with the Children’s Centres Project Team.

The proposed aims of the days included:

» gaining a deeper understanding of the children’s centre model and underlying principles
» an understanding of the demographics and issues of the local community
» identification of parenting and early childhood services in the community
» identification of key priorities to meet shared outcomes.

Ardtornish Children’s Centre identified three key priorities including increasing parent’s capacity to support their children’s health and development, building engagement with families and building parents’ understanding of transition to school.

Priorities resulting from the planning day at Ingle Farm Children’s Centre include increasing children’s language and cognitive development, building engagement with and increased support for Aboriginal families and their children and improving children’s physical health and wellbeing with a focus on dental health and emotional development.

Participants at each planning day included parents, early childhood leaders, and staff from each centre and school, Child and Family Health Service and a range of agencies.

At Ardtornish Children’s Centre agencies included Autism SA, Playgroup SA, Relationships Australia, Can Do 4Kids, Modbury Community Children’s Centre, Surrey Downs and Jubilee Community Centres, City of Tea Tree Gully, Family Day Care and Tea Tree Gully Toy Library.

Agencies at Ingle Farm Children’s Centre included Family Zone, Communities for Children, City of Salisbury, Pooraka Farm Community Centre, Disability Care and National Disability Insurance Scheme.
Qualitative evaluation of children’s centres

The Telethon Kids Institute, through the Fraser Mustard Centre, was engaged to undertake a three-year evaluation of children’s centres. The overall aims of the evaluation are to measure process and impact of integrated services in centres. The first stage of work involving focus groups and interviews was completed in 2013.

In 2014, the evaluation team sought to measure the extent to which facilitators and barriers, identified through focus groups and interviews, are impacting on the provision of integrated services in children’s centres. This work involved surveying people working in, working with, and utilising services in children’s centres. The survey findings will be reported on in 2015.

Early years system

During 2014, enhancements to the Early Years System were developed to capture data from children’s centres. Whilst preschool data is already being captured in the Early Years System, data from other services being offered by children’s centres was not being collected uniformly.

Enhancements to the Early Years System will result in:

» more efficient recording and reporting on required service usage data without replicating the same personal information provided by families
» a more efficient process for families without replication of personal information for every program or service they access
» more accurate assessment of reach and impact of children’s centres.

During 2014, information was collected from children’s centres and entered into the Early Years System in readiness for a trial of the system in early 2015. Trial participants will include Forbes, Cowandilla, O’Sullivan Beach, Ocean View, Gawler, Mount Gambier and Lake Windermere B-7 School children’s centres, Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre and Learning Together Enfield.

An information session will be provided for centre staff early in 2015.

Centre staff induction

Thirteen CDCs and FSCs and their line managers attended an induction session for staff new to children’s centres during November.

The day covered the context of children’s centres, the role of the central team, administration, line management arrangements, the role of the principal FSC, mentors and clinical supervision for FSCs. The session included an experienced CDC and FSC as guest speakers and a range of resources to assist new staff to settle into their respective roles.

Establishing integrated services

The Children’s Centres Project Team continued to work closely with centre staff, families, communities, local service agencies, architects, landscapers and staff from DECD’s Capital Programs and Asset Services to ensure that the needs and suggestions of all users were considered as part of the overall planning for integrated centres.

Central to the establishment of integrated services is the understanding that service delivery models must take account of the particular community context. Models must also be responsive to the needs of children, families and communities, ensuring a child and family focus and offer a range of services. Integrated service models seek to:

» improve access by children and families to a broader range of services and programs through collaborative relationships across providers
» offer a greater choice of service options to families
» make it easier for families to navigate systems and services
» support and actively engage families in services, programs and decision making
» ensure accountability to the family and local community as well as other key stakeholders
» strengthen the capacity of the community to enable more supportive environments for children and families
» ensure programs are responsive to local needs and circumstances.
Professional development

The Professional Development program during 2014 incorporated three leadership days facilitated by Gowrie SA for centre directors, assistant directors, and heads of school early years and early childhood leaders.

The focus of the program was transition from centre leadership to systems leadership. Systems leadership involves driving improvement and challenging each other with rigour to raise standards and influence change across centres and the early childhood sector.

Within this overarching perspective the three main ways systems leadership can operate were explored. This included centre-to-centre, working beyond centres with other services and influencing policy and service development, locally and nationally.

The leadership days also provided an opportunity for information sharing and reflection upon the connections of the DECD strategic directions and the Early Childhood Services program with the work of children’s centres.

Evaluation of the children’s centres Professional Development program offered in 2013-14 consisted of consultation with a focus group of staff from across the disciplines employed in the centres. Important elements of the program were identified:

» multi-disciplinary team presence at the professional learning days
» a focus on learning rather than information delivery
» opportunity for learning between events
» opportunities for centre teams to share practice with others.

A new model for 2015 was proposed for implementation from Term 1 2015. The model consists of four partnership-based groups comprising directors, heads of school early years, CDCs, FSCs, allied health staff, assistant directors and early childhood leaders and members of Early Childhood Services which will meet in terms 1, 2 and 4 with a statewide gathering in Term 3.
Outcomes report

1. Children have optimal health, learning and development

Children’s physical and psychological health and wellbeing is a critical foundation for their learning, and in turn successful learning outcomes promote a child’s sense of wellbeing. Support for parents and children during the early years promotes healthy development and lays the foundations for achieving optimal outcomes in adulthood.

Health services in children’s centres

Families utilising children’s centres have access to a range of SA Health services including:

» health promotion materials and activities
» CaFHS clinics located at C.a.F.E. Enfield, il nido, Gawler, Aldinga Beach, Cowandilla, Ingle Farm, Woodcroft Heights and Goolwa children’s centres
» CaFHS visiting services
» primary health care services
» Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
» antenatal clinics at Cowandilla, John Hartley School B-7, Ocean View College, Parafield Gardens and Trinity Gardens children’s centres.

Paediatric services

During 2014 John Hartley School B-7, Blair Athol North School B-7, and Trinity Gardens children’s centres commenced partnerships with Sunshine Paediatrics to provide general paediatric outpatients services on site. Parafield Gardens and Elizabeth Grove Community Campus children’s centres continued their partnerships.

Sunshine Paediatrics is a unique practice aimed to bring the best healthcare to children and their families as close to them as is practical. Services were offered fortnightly at each centre by highly experienced general paediatricians and registered nurses with extensive experience in behavioural and developmental needs.
Allied health program
The Allied Health in Children’s Centres program provides speech pathology and occupational therapy. These two professions have been identified as having key roles in providing early intervention services to promote optimal child development outcomes. These roles complement other staff employed in centres, including community development coordinators and family services coordinators.

In 2014 the Allied Health in Children’s Centres program continued to be delivered in partnership with SA Health. Twenty allied health staff across eight full-time equivalent positions delivered the program in 16 centres across the State. The staff were funded by DECD and employed by SA Health. The aim of the program is to build the capacity of staff, parents, carers and the community of the centre to promote children’s healthy development by providing prevention and early intervention services.

The Allied Health in Children’s Centres program was recognised in 2014 by the Premier of South Australia for outstanding contribution to the public sector. The program attracted formal recognition for its many achievements in promoting children’s healthy development. Many families have accessed these valuable services through their local children’s centre.

From mid-2014 planning began on expansion of the Allied Health in Children’s Centres program as part of the SA Government’s commitment to expand services in existing children’s centres. The expansion will provide additional speech pathology and occupational therapy services in 32 children’s centres to increase prevention and early detection of developmental concerns in our youngest children.

Enhanced partnership with Child and Family Health Service
A project commenced in 2013 to review how the CaFHS ‘Blue Book’ could increase knowledge of child development, earlier identification of developmental issues and be used by educators to discuss concerns about children’s development with parents and refer families to CaFHS when concerns are identified. In 2014 recommendations from the project were implemented in a phased approach, starting with children’s centres. These include:

» a plan to improve the knowledge of the ‘Blue Book’ within CaFHS
» processes embedded in CaFHS to ensure a ‘Blue Book’ is accessible for families in exceptional circumstances
» CaFHS nurses collaborate with early childhood services staff to promote the use of the ‘Blue Book’
» CaFHS and DECD preschool screening policies and procedures are amended to implement the project
» the provision of standard material to support the implementation.

An evaluation will be conducted in Term 2 of 2015 to inform the phase two rollout in family day care.
SA Dental Service
SA Dental Service worked collaboratively with children’s centres during 2014 to screen preschool children for tooth decay.
SA Dental Service developed a simple screening tool to assist in the identification and referral of children suffering from tooth decay. When identified early, preventive interventions, such as the application of fluoride, can be undertaken to prevent the progress of decay.
During 2014, SA Dental Service staff visited most metropolitan children’s centres to screen children for tooth decay, to promote free dental visits for preschool children and increase awareness of the importance of oral health. Data shows an increase in the number of referrals of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children to dental services. In 2014, 14% of children referred into the program were Aboriginal.

Preschool
All children’s centres offer preschool, a planned sessional educational program, providing 15 hours access for children in the year before they start formal schooling. Aboriginal children and children under the Guardianship of the Minister are able to attend from three years of age.
Preschool programs are designed and delivered by qualified teachers using the approved national curriculum framework, the Early Years Learning framework. The framework has a specific emphasis on play-based learning and recognises the importance of children having a strong sense of identity and wellbeing, being confident and involved learners, effective communicators and being connected with their world.

Inclusive preschool programs
Inclusive Preschool programs (IPP) provide a localised and inclusive model of preschool education for children with disabilities and high support needs. Children may have severe multiple disabilities, autism, global developmental delay or a combination of physical, social and cognitive needs. The programs cater for up to six children who attend 15 hours per week with staffing of a teacher and early childhood worker.

Inclusive Preschool programs operate at Elsie Ey, Kirton Point, Tinyeri and Parks children’s centres.
The programs provide families with a preschool education option for their child that has specialised educational expertise. The general preschool program is inclusive of children attending the IPP and meets their individual learning needs, within a modified environment.

Hearing impairment program
The Inclusive Preschool Program For Aboriginal Children With Impaired Hearing commenced in February 2014 as a pilot to improve speech, language and hearing outcomes for preschool-aged Aboriginal children with fluctuating conductive hearing impairment.
Due to high numbers of children with a hearing impairment, Kalaya Children’s Centre was chosen as a hub centre and:
- staff were engaged to implement the program and work collaboratively with preschool staff to support the learning of children with hearing impairment
- an intensive speech and language program was fully integrated and delivered within the existing preschool program
- the centre provided an outreach service at four neighbouring preschool programs.

An interim evaluation found the pilot a valuable program that addressed needs that were previously not well met. The program will continue to be implemented across additional centres in 2015.
Preschool outdoor learning project

In early 2014 the SA Government announced an initiative to redevelop the outdoor learning areas of 20 preschools. Initially this involves five demonstration sites including Sturt Street Children’s Centre. The demonstration sites are considered concept leaders and support other preschool educators across the State to actively engage children, families and the local community in connecting with nature.

Community development coordinators (CDC) local to the demonstration sites are contributing to this project using the breadth of their community engagement skills and experience. The CDCs from il nido, Aldinga Beach, Gilles Plains and Mount Gambier children’s centres are working collaboratively with the site leader, Natural Resource Management and the architect to engage and consult with children, families, staff and the community to inform the design and creation of the outdoor learning space.

The demonstration sites are due for completion 30 June 2015. During 2015-2017 a further 15 sites’ outdoor learning areas will be redeveloped with the continued support of local CDC expertise.

Playgroups

Playgroups in children’s centres offer an interactive and fun opportunity for children and parents to play and learn together. They also assist the development of relationships with professionals, local networks and connections for families. Some playgroups are facilitated by parents and some are supported by an early childhood professional such as a teacher, early childhood worker, speech pathologist, occupational therapist, or a combination of these.

Playgroups allow professionals to interact with children and families in an informal non-clinical environment and provide support, information and advice regarding children’s health, learning and development in a group play-based setting.

All children’s centres offer playgroups. Some examples of playgroups offered during 2014 include:

» Community Playgroup, offered weekly for families to interact and socialise interact in a play based setting
» Multicultural Playgroup, offered weekly in partnership with Uniting Care Wesley Bowden for families who are new arrivals
» Playtime with Dads Playgroup, held monthly on Saturday mornings using everyday objects and materials for activities
» Play Connect Playgroup, a supported weekly group for parents who have children within the Autism Spectrum Disorder
» Nunga Playgroup, a supported weekly group for local Aboriginal families facilitated in partnership with Uniting Care Wesley, Indigenous Parenting Support Service
» Baby Playgroup, held fortnightly and facilitated by Anglicare, Centacare and attended by a CaFHS nurse
» CanDo4Kids Playgroup, a weekly supported playgroup for parents with children with sight or hearing impairment.
Recognition and awards

During 2014 five children’s centres were recognised for a range of contributions.

Ingle Farm Children’s Centre received a commendation in the Council of Educational Facility Planners International Awards and was praised by judges as a “beautiful natural learning space”.

The judges recognised the centre’s design as a “comprehensive reflection of the Reggio Emilia philosophy.” The influence of Professor Carla Rinaldi is evident in the centre along with the Reggio Emilia ideas enriching children’s learning. A number of educational facilities were nominated, including Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre.

Parks Children’s Centre was awarded the Children’s Week Play Award by the Children’s Week Association of SA. The award recognises significant contributions to the development of children’s play. The centre won the award for their outdoor environment which enhances play and learning for children and families.

Our Big Backyard is a nature-based play program encouraging children under 12 to ‘get back to nature’. A pilot of the program, developed in partnership between Aldinga Beach Children’s Centre, City of Onkaparinga and the Natural Resource Management Board, encourages family connectedness through play and exploration, and use of and care for the natural environment. The innovative project won a Children’s Week Award from the Children’s Week Association of SA, for its contribution to the needs, interests and welfare of children.


Staff from Save the Children collaborated with the centre adapting the Global Peace School ideas to the early years curriculum and set a precedence for other early childhood services to follow.

Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre received the inaugural Bob Such Award for Design for Social Benefit during the Australian Civic Trust Official Awards Brickbats Ceremony at Parliament House in December 2014. The award is a testament to the hard work and innovation of the design team.
Family services

The Family Services program is a targeted service within a universal setting designed to support vulnerable families and strengthen and enhance family and community capacity in responding to children.

Family services coordinators (FSC) work alongside child care, early childhood education and school staff, health workers and other services to help families develop and maintain safe, caring, connected and resilient relationships. FSCs:

» support parents to access support within their own community
» work with families to increase their parenting capacity and early childhood development skills and knowledge, specifically in understanding the importance of relationships with children
» increase children and families’ access to a range of interconnected, high quality learning, health and support services
» contribute to building children’s centres expertise in responding to children experiencing the effects of trauma, abuse and neglect
» provide short-term counselling to identify and respond to personal and family issues
» connect families with appropriate services such as, mental health, housing, drug and alcohol, domestic violence and provide follow up, advocacy and work in partnership with the family and other services.

In 2014, the SA Government committed to expanding services in children’s centres, including the Family Services program. Recruitment commenced mid-year with staff starting in Term 4 and more expected to start Term 1 2015. The expanded program will consist of 28.5 full-time equivalent positions in 32 children’s centres.

During 2014 the Family Services program assisted more vulnerable families with greater access to services including, Circle of Security and Bringing Up Great Kids parenting programs. These programs aim to increase parents’ capacity to support their children’s healthy development, safety and wellbeing.

Several FSCs attended the Australian Childhood Foundation Trauma Conference in Melbourne. Two staff presented a session at the conference entitled, Young Children Going Home – Family Contact Playgroups: How can Early Childhood Services and Families SA together help Children Removed from Care Return Safely Home?

FSCs also completed accreditation as Marte Meo practitioners and advanced to therapist status. Marte Meo is a communications approach to support children’s development.

The two senior FSCs continued to provide clinical supervision and case support to FSCs, support to centre leaders regarding complex families and induction of new staff. They also provided advice and support at the strategic level and had a key role in implementing strategies across statewide programs including Family Contact programs in partnership with Families SA and sharing information as part of the Multi Agency Protection Service for protecting children in domestic violence situations.
Family contact

The Family Contact playgroup is a partnership between Families SA and family services coordinators in children’s centres. The purpose of the playgroup is to provide parents of young children who have been removed from their care with the opportunity to develop parenting capabilities and facilitate the safe return of their children. Parents can benefit from these playgroups through social interaction, making friends, sharing experiences, learning new parenting skills and building networks with their wider community. The program will continue to be implemented across additional centres in 2015.

Parenting programs

The diversity of parenting programs being offered in children’s centres reflects the partnerships that have been developed across agencies and non-government organisations by the CDCs and the FSCs.

Programs focus on areas of parenting capacity and children’s development that concern and interest families. These include literacy, behaviour management, food, nutrition and exercise and caring for children’s developmental, learning and health needs.

Some examples of parenting programs offered at children’s centres during 2014 include:

» Acorn Parent-Infant Attachment Group, a 14 week support group run by Anglicare SA in partnership with SA Health, for mothers with mental health difficulties to strengthen their relationships with their children aged birth to three years

» Three choices and emotional coaching, a workshop offered by Centacare Aldinga for parents to reflect on parenting and how to support connected relationships with their children

» Grandparents as Parents, a monthly peers support group for carers in the community raising their grandchildren

» Foster Parents Group, a peer support group that meets as required

» Getting to know your baby, a six week course offered by CaFHS for new parents covering a range of topics such as feeding, settling, massage, safety, common illness, developmental stages and play

» Hunting and Gathering Dads Cooking Group, offered weekly opportunities to share experiences, build relationships and focus on child development.
Adult education

Evidence shows that parents’ educational achievements can influence their children’s outcomes in a number of ways. As a result, opportunities for parents to undergo adult education through children’s centres have been created. Some examples include:

» English Conversation Classes, a weekly program for parents from a non-English speaking background, facilitated in partnership with the Pooraka Farm Community Centre and The Paddocks Centre

» Introduction to Health and Community Services, a 10-week accredited program offering further education and employment pathways, offered by Salisbury South East Training in partnership with the Pooraka Farm Community Centre and TAFE SA

» Learning Together SACE study groups, outreach groups for young parents studying child development and parenting

» Living and Learning Well Through Literacy, an education program for women from non-English speaking backgrounds to learn more about the English language and living and working in Australia, offered in partnership with Thebarton Senior College and the Junction Community Centre

» Adult Foundation Work Skills programs, offered by Salisbury West Training, including introduction to working with children and introduction to office work

» Certificate III in Children’s Services, offered in collaboration with local schools.

Learning together

Learning Together programs focus on involving families in their children’s learning and emphasising the importance of children’s oral language development. The programs also focus on parents reading to children from an early age, the development of children’s strong dispositions to learning, attachment and the critical role that parents play in supporting their children.

Learning Together programs work in collaboration with the following children’s centres: C.a.F.E Enfield, Port Augusta, O’Sullivan Beach, Port Pirie West, Woodville Gardens School B-7, Blair Athol North School B-7, John Hartley School B-7 and Lake Windemere, plus Taikurrendi, Gabmididi Manoo and Ngura Yadurirn children and family centres.

Learning Together @ Home enhances the capacity of families to support young children’s learning and development through play, typically through home visiting or involvement with groups. The program is available to families with children aged birth to four years. Those who are not connected with other community, family or children’s services are a priority. Learning Together @ Home is offered through C.a.F.E. Enfield, Forbes, Clare Valley, Port Augusta and Kirton Point children’s centres.
3. Communities are child and family friendly

**Community development program**

Children’s centres strengthen the capacity of the community to provide more supportive environments for children and families. Community development coordinators (CDCs) are appointed at each children’s centre to develop partnerships within the community and with other agencies, and to encourage and support parents and families to actively participate in all the activities of the children’s centre.

CDCs work in partnership with other agencies to offer a range of programs and services including:

- playgroups for parents and carers
- parenting programs including child development, early literacy, song time, music and movement, baby massage, support groups and cooking
- community events such as family fun days, cultural events, celebrations and barbeques
- personal development to enhance literacy, career pathways, skill development, volunteering, TAFE and SACE studies.

CDCs plan and coordinate family and community programs that enhance parenting and community capacity. During 2014 CDCs continued to:

- connect families with services and supports that will best meet their needs
- support families to increase their knowledge and skills about parenting and childhood development
- support parents to develop personally and build their leadership skills
- support families to link up with other families and be involved in community activities and programs
- encourage families and staff to have a strong voice about the programs and services offered
- help children and families access high quality services.

**Volunteering**

As part of building community capacity, a volunteering program is initiated in children’s centres supported by the CDC. Parents, caregivers and community members are encouraged and provided with relevant training to take on volunteering roles within the children’s centre. Roles may include gardening, interpreting, mentoring, administration, program support and facilitation of playgroups and programs.

The following examples demonstrate the range of volunteering throughout 2014.

- Parent volunteers helped develop a Fun and Friends program, which supports children living with a disability or chronic health and their family. Parents actively participated, facilitating and evaluating the program with one parent gaining employment with DECD and now facilitates the program in partnership with another parent volunteer.

- A parent volunteered as chairperson of the governing council and actively volunteered with projects such as mosaics, occupational therapy student placements, fundraising and office support.

- Community members volunteered in a weekly playgroup with one member advancing to study a Certificate III in Children’s Services through the Playford Alive Renewal SA project.

- Grandparent volunteers from the local community facilitated quilting, knitting and crochet groups.
Community events

To engage the community and increase community connections, promote the children’s centre and celebrate families, centres regularly host or become involved in community activities and events such as:

» community celebrations and markets
» multicultural celebrations
» family picnics and barbeques
» community art projects and gardens
» early childhood and community expos and forums.

During 2014 a range of community activities and events were hosted by centres, for example:

» a series of events during National Families Week, such as a pool party, movie night, community barbeque and family fun day, supported by Community House Port Lincoln and facilitated in partnership with Uniting Care Wesley Country SA
» a community picnic funded by Rural Health Services with support from Medicare Local, Life without Barriers and Uniting Care Wesley Country SA during Mental Health Week
» a “rough and tumble” session for dads and children facilitated by two male staff members demonstrated the developmental benefits for children, and was followed by a family barbeque and a questionnaire for dads about the services and programs of interest to them
» a community picnic with pony rides, games, shared food and a display of photos taken by children about what they liked best about living in the city was hosted in partnership with Adelaide City Council
» children participated and performed at various community events such as Close the Gap Day at Wonggangga Turtpandi, NAIDOC Week at Tarndanyangga Victoria Square and Sorry Day at Tauondi College
» OPAL Magic Harvest program supported families to plant and tend gardens onsite, with all families then planting gardens at home and two parents completing the facilitator training program.
4. Aboriginal children are safe, healthy, culturally strong and confident

Programs and services for Aboriginal families

All children’s centres have a responsibility to build a culturally supportive environment, to engage Aboriginal children and families in their programs and events and support families to access services. Some examples of this include the following:

- Nukkah Ya Porlis Play, Grow And Learn, a support group for families with children under five years of age, provided by Northern Connections and Gawler Health Services Aboriginal Health Team
- Healthy Tucker Healthy Family, a four-week cooking and nutrition program for Aboriginal children and their families, facilitated by Watto Purrunna Health Service
- Bunda talk provides information and support to families on household expenses and financial management, facilitated by Anglicare
- Mai Kamparriti, a cooking program with a focus on nutrition, food preparation, cooking healthy meals and menu planning.
- Marni Waendi Transition Pathways Centre provides further education, training and employment for Aboriginal youth and adults
- Yunti, a weekly group for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parents to come together, yarn and share creative experiences from Ngarrindjeri Elders.

There are three centres that provide specific programs and support for Aboriginal children and families at Kaurna Plains, Kalaya and Tinyeri children’s centres. In addition four children and family centres located in Ceduna, Christies Beach, Whyalla and Ernabella in the APY Lands focus on supporting Aboriginal families with young children to provide the best possible start in life.
**Children and family centres**

Children and family centres are committed to improving developmental outcomes for Indigenous children and improving Indigenous families’ use of early childhood development services to optimise their children’s development.

Centres are underpinned by a philosophy of cooperation between parents, community, government and non-government partners and both complement and expand the existing network of integrated early childhood services in South Australia.

The concept for children and family centres is based on a ‘joined-up’ approach and reflects a philosophy of acknowledgement, engagement and inclusion of Aboriginal history, culture and community.

During 2014 a range of services and programs were provided at each centre.

**Ernabella Children and Family Centre:**

- Families as First Teachers, an art education program for mothers and children with a focus on parenting skills and literacy, supported by the Department of Education and Training
- Parenting support programs, provided by Relationships Australia SA
- NPY Women’s Council Nutrition program
- Hearing specialists and a visiting dentist to examine children and talk with parents.

**Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre:**

- Two weekly Learning Together playgroups for families and staff to work together to support children’s learning and development
- Special Needs Playgroup offered weekly by referral for children with a disability or additional needs
- Centacare financial counselling sessions offered once a week to support and advocate for families in financial hardship
- Tuning Into Kids, an eight-week program focusing on developing supportive, emotionally responsive parenting that promotes secure attachment relationships.

**Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre:**

- Learning Together programs such as, Play group, Song time, Story time
- Getting together cupper and chat, a weekly conversation group for families and carers in a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment
- Nunga Playgroup, delivered by Save the Children and an Aboriginal worker with a focus on Aboriginal children and families
- CaFHS offered a health screening program for all four year old children.

**Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre:**

- Play and Move Playgroup facilitated by a speech pathologist and occupational therapist with a focus on speech and physical development
- Aboriginal Mums, Bubs and Elders program, a weekly group for Aboriginal mother and elders of children under three years of age
- Aboriginal My Time, a peer support group for carers of children with a disability or chronic medical condition
- Rapped in culture facilitated by Metropolitan Aboriginal Youth and Family Services (MAYFS), supported at risk students to engage in learning and connect to culture by exploring identity, Aboriginal cultural history and music.
Locations

The following centres have been opened progressively since 2005:

» Aldinga Beach
» Andamooka
» Ardtonish
» Blair Athol North School B-7
» C.a.F.E. Enfield
» Clare Valley
» Cowandilla
» Darlington
» Elizabeth Grove Community Campus
» Elsie Ey (Hewett)
» Ernabella
» Forbes (South Plympton)
» Gabmidid Manoo (Whyalla)
» Gawler and District College B-12
» Gilles Plains
» Goolwa
» Hackham West
» il nido (Paradise)
» Ingle Farm
» John Hartley School B-7
» Kalaya

» Kaurna Plains (Elizabeth)
» Keithcot Farm
» Kirton Point (Port Lincoln)
» Lake Windemere School B-7 (Salisbury North)
» Lockleys
» Mark Oliphant College B-12 (Munno Para West)
» Mount Gambier
» Ngura Yadurirn (Ceduna)
» Ocean View College (Taperoo)
» O’Sullivan Beach
» Parafield Gardens
» Parks (Angle Park)
» Port Augusta
» Port Pirie West
» Renmark
» Sturt Street (Adelaide)
» Taikurrendi
» Tinyeri (Murray Bridge)
» Trinity Gardens
» Woodcroft Heights
» Woodville Gardens School B-7.

For more information visit: www.childrenscentres.sa.gov.au

Trish Strachan
Executive Director,
Office for Children and Young People
Department for Education and Child Development
September 2015