

# Tasmanian Child and Family Centres

## Action Research Project

### Phase One Report

#### PART A

March 2012

Prepared for:

**Tasmanian Department of Education**

**Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services**

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We extend our thanks to the many people who provided us with rich information and critical insights in order to conduct this project and prepare this report.

In particular, thanks to the children, parents and services staff across the 12 Child and Family Centre communities who shared their time, thoughts and ideas so generously.

Finally, the Action Research Project wishes to acknowledge the Tasmanian Early Years Foundation for making funding available to the Tasmanian Department of Education to enable this project to proceed.

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## Abbreviations

ARP	Action Research Project
CFC	Child and Family Centre
CCH	Community Child Health research group
CIW	Community Inclusion Worker
CPJ	Community and Parent Journal
CL	CFC Centre Leader
DoE	Department of Education Tasmania
JISDS	Journey to Integrated Service Delivery Snapshot
LaDS	Learning and Development Strategy
LEG	Local Enabling Group
PT	CFC Project Team

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

There is growing evidence of the long-term benefits of investing in the early years, which can lead to improved outcomes for children, families and communities (Moore, 2008). The Tasmanian Child and Family Centres (CFC) initiative was announced by the Tasmanian Government with an aim of fundamentally re-engineering early childhood services to result in better outcomes for children and families (Tasmanian Government 2008). The CFC initiative comes at a time of increased focus in Australia on early childhood issues and services (Moore and Skinner, 2010).

This report reflects the first phase of the Action Research Project (February 2010 – December 2011). The report captures activity and learning arising from the establishment and early operation of CFCs in Tasmania, and documents the journey undertaken by 12 CFC communities in conjunction with other stakeholders in this statewide early years initiative.

The Action Research Project (ARP) was delivered by the Community Child Health research group within Murdoch Childrens Research Institute through funding made available to the Tasmanian Education Department by the Tasmanian Early Years Foundation. The purpose of the ARP was to engage with CFC communities and other key stakeholders to:

- facilitate discussion and processes to identify desired outcomes
- capture and document the lessons from the establishment phase of the Child and Family Centres
- explore ways to embed and sustain action research/action learning methods and tools at the local level.

The ARP employed a range of methods to capture information, including interviews, facilitated workshops, surveys and researcher observations while connecting with CFC communities and other key stakeholders. In addition to traditional action learning tasks of collecting and documenting action and learning following activity, the ARP has undertaken two specific tasks that have contributed to the input activity of the overall CFC initiative. These two input areas are summarised as outcomes development and embedding action learning.

At the end of December 2011, six Centres had opened or were about to open their doors to children and families. Of the remaining Centres, four are expected to open throughout 2012; two will open in 2013.

## Planning

The Tasmanian Child and Family Centres initiative was realised within a national policy context of increasing focus on early childhood issues and early years policy development. In recent years the Australian Government has set an early years policy agenda that includes:

- a National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care

- an Early Years Learning Framework (birth to five)
- a National Early Childhood Development Strategy, incorporating Indigenous Early Childhood Development.

In Tasmania, CFCs are part of a platform of early years initiatives, including:

- Tasmanian Early Years Foundation
- Tasmania Together
- establishment of the Office for the Commissioner for Children
- Launching into Learning, Let's Read and CU@Home community programs
- Human Services reforms around clearer and easier community access to better integrated child and family support services.

The CFC initiative seeks to improve the health and wellbeing, education and care of children birth to five years by supporting parents and enhancing service accessibility in the local community (Department of Education, 2009). To achieve this, the CFC initiative has focused strongly on engaging parents and community members through building relationships that are founded on respect, valuing and trust. In addition, services have been challenged to change the way they work together to deliver more integrated and therefore more effective services in partnership with parents, communities and other services.

The CFC initiative has comprised five key components delivering a range of inputs to support the achievement of these goals. The input areas are:

- Child and Family Centres Project Team
- Learning and Development Strategy
- Child and Family Centre staff (Community Inclusion Workers and Centre Leaders)
- Local Enabling Groups (Advisory Boards)
- Action Research Project.

The Learning and Development Strategy has been a major input into the CFC initiative through leading and supporting change. In particular the Strategy has focused attention on the change required by communities and services so that outcomes for children and families improve as a result of better connected and responsive programs and services.

## **Action**

The activity of the key input areas defines what has happened throughout the CFC initiative to date (first phase of the ARP). The report gives an overview of work and key activity undertaken by each CFC stakeholder.

The work of the *Project Team* revolved around overall leadership and guidance of the CFC initiative – a 'stewardship' or guiding role to guard the intent and integrity of the initiative. This role involved various administrative and secretariat functions, coordinating building design, processes and schedules, coordinating recruitment of CFC staff, and assistance with problem solving around individual site issues.

The Learning and Development Strategy (LaDS) led a community development process involving CFC communities, service practitioners and managers to support change through an integrated service delivery approach. The LaDS built engagement and shared understanding, and facilitated discussion and training to achieve new learning and skills. The LaDS led the rollout of an integrated service delivery approach in the context of the Tasmanian service system, with the aim of keeping a clear focus on the child. The LaDS modelled a way to build and maintain inclusive, respectful relationships to support parent, services and community engagement.

Local Enabling Groups, Community Inclusion Workers and more recently Centre Leaders have been the key drivers at the CFC community level. Local Enabling Groups have provided the collective forum for engagement and decision making and acted as the pivotal liaison point with the Project Team. Community Inclusion Workers have provided a crucial community development role in connecting parents and community members with CFC processes. Their capacity to support and encourage individual community members has been a major factor in the emergence of community leaders in a Community Co-Chairperson role. Centre Leaders have formed a CFC staff team with Community Inclusion Workers and demonstrated a higher level of leadership and strategic oversight. At a statewide level, Centre Leaders have formed a combined leadership group that is increasingly charged with guidance and governance of the initiative.

The Action Research Project (ARP) has provided key input to the CFC initiative around an outcomes-based approach to planning and monitoring. This approach laid the foundation for ongoing evaluation and reflective practice. The ARP also contributed to the embedding of action learning/action research approaches and tools that will compliment future evaluation. The main focus for the ARP has been capturing and documenting the work done and learning gained.

## **Reflection**

This section of the report outlines the learning gained from how well work has been undertaken to date and the effect of this work at community and statewide levels.

### Statewide progress

A statewide survey capturing the value of support provided to CFC communities revealed over 85 per cent of CFC community members either agreed or strongly agreed with statements regarding the work done and the difference made by key input areas of the CFC initiative. In particular, the CFC Project Team (PT), Learning and Development Strategy and Community Inclusion Workers recorded high levels of satisfaction with the work done and difference made.

Positive responses and comments regarding the work and difference made by the PT are interesting when considered in the context of circumstances at the time of writing (January 2012). The PT has not convened for a number of months and it appears the PT has been reduced to the Manager only. There is uncertainty surrounding future management and governance arrangements of the CFC initiative.

Adopting a statewide outcomes approach has been helpful to give direction to the overall CFC initiative. The Statewide Outcomes Framework has provided a shared reference point for CFC communities when developing local outcomes.

Further learning is noted around the importance of taking time for relationship building as a means to genuinely engage parents, services and other community members in CFC conversations and processes.

#### Community progress

Increasing participation by parents, their children and community members in establishing CFCs has been an exciting feature of the CFC initiative over the past two years. Evidence of parent and community involvement can be seen in Local Enabling Groups, community forums and workshops, Learning and Development statewide forums and in local programs and activities initiated by CFC staff.

Parents have reported they are more confident and skilled and feel more valued as a result of their involvement in their CFC community. The resulting positive impact on community capacity has seen the emergence of community leaders prepared to become further involved. The effect of community leaders has been to inspire and encourage other parents and community members to participate and speak up.

The commitment and involvement of service practitioners and managers can be seen across the CFC initiative. While it may not be possible to report substantial progress on the journey toward integrated service delivery, there is no doubt that significant foundations have been put in place. All services involved with CFC communities share understanding and expectation of the need and benefit of services working better together and in partnership with communities. While there remains more work to be done at all levels of the service system to ensure further progress, expectations of partnership, respectful relationships and a focus on improved outcomes for children, families, community and services are regularly discussed and planned at CFC community level.

#### Summary of key themes

Phase one of the ARP has gathered and documented substantial information from CFC communities, including parents, community members and services staff. In addition, data has been collected from key initiative components, including the Learning and Development Strategy and CFC Project Team. The following themes have emerged and are detailed in the main body of the report:

### *Consultation and communication*

Helpful factors include:

- community consultations and planning that reflect genuineness, respect and learning from previous failures
- regular and consistent communication
- sharing issues and celebrating progress and change.

Unhelpful factors include:

- assumptions being made about communities and their networks
- government and outside community communications and schedules imposed on communities
- selective and narrow first consultations.

### *Community engagement and participation*

Helpful factors include:

- taking time to build genuine and respectful relationships
- availability of childcare for parents
- Community Inclusion Worker role based in communities
- meeting formats and venues that welcome and value participation and contribution from all – particularly parents.

Unhelpful factors include:

- decision-making based on the needs of services/government
- change or interruption in the provision of community development roles such as Community Inclusion Workers
- verbal and non-verbal intimidation of community members (for example, clothing, body language, behavior, terminology and jargon, job titles, meeting format).

### *Leadership and community development*

Helpful factors include

- continuity of people in leadership roles
- negotiating shared and agreed plans and vision
- facilitating community engagement and relationship building that supports the emergence of community leaders
- building community capacity through community leaders and co-chairpersons to underpin local decision-making and ownership.

Unhelpful factors include:

- lack of high-level project champions
- turnover of people undertaking key leadership and community support roles
- inconsistent modeling of appropriate leadership and partnership at all levels of the CFC project.



### *Change through learning and development*

Helpful factors include:

- modeling of welcoming, respectful and inclusive approaches that value parents' and other community members' ideas and thoughts
- dedicated resources and programs to support change and build skills (Learning and Development Strategy)
- opportunities for diverse communities to come together and share and celebrate progress, ideas and challenges.

Unhelpful factors include:

- disconnected relations and poor communications between CFC project stakeholders
- statewide stakeholder schedules and timelines that do not necessarily fit with community/parent schedules and priorities
- government pressure and community desire for a physical building can distract discussion away from what is to happen in the build that is likely to improve outcomes for children.

## **Considerations for further action**

Arising from the planning, action and reflection documented above are a number of further actions to be considered so as to enable the goals set at the commencement of the initiative to be achieved. The further actions outlined below are arranged according to the four key themes identified in the report. These actions apply and are relevant at statewide and CFC community levels.

### *Consultation and communication*

A robust and inclusive **communication strategy** to ensure well-targeted and accessible information flow that supports helpful feedback, reflection and ongoing action learning.

Continuing statewide **opportunities for sharing lessons**, progress and successes that help maintain connections between CFC communities and strengthen relationships.

Involving **community champions and leaders** and acknowledging existing community networks and systems at the commencement of a community project will more likely lead to greater community/parent engagement, participation and ownership.

### *Community engagement and participation*

The CFC project has demonstrated the power and effectiveness of taking time to **build helpful relationships and partnerships**; project planning and resource allocation must reflect an ongoing commitment to support this approach.

Similarly, taking time to **explore common understanding** and a shared language has had a positive effect on community engagement, participation, decision-making and ownership – language and communication style can empower and build confidence, or disempower and discourage engagement.

Training in the Family Partnership Model (Davis and Day, 2010) has underpinned the CFC approach to partnership development and integrated service delivery; the systematic rollout of **Family Partnership Training and a reflective practice approach** across government and non-government sectors would greatly enhance and extend the work of CFC communities.

#### *Leadership and community development*

Immediate and longer-term **statewide project governance** and monitoring needs to be clarified and defined now in order to consolidate progress and ensure quality, accountability, continuity and guidance. There is also a need to follow through on the expectations created in communities among parents and services and avoid any risk of the CFC initiative being viewed as just another failed government idea.

An effective project governance team requires a **clear project management** approach, adequate resources and **supportive leadership** from senior management.

**High level strategic champions** are needed to guide and support the CFC initiative and ensure alignment with broad strategic policy.

A planned, systematic and long-term **mentoring and support plan** for Community Inclusion Workers and Centre Leaders needs to be identified.

An overarching **CFC evaluation plan** is needed to connect an outcomes approach with ongoing evaluation and monitoring to ensure quality approaches, demonstrate the worth of CFCs and report on improvements for children.

Achieving joined up service delivery on the ground is difficult without **consistent leadership and a joined up approach at all levels** of the initiative or Agency.

#### *Change through learning and development*

**Successful and sustained change** will require ongoing support and resources. A learning and development strategy beyond June 2013 will cement progress and success to date, and support further skills development and change.

A community-friendly summary of the ARP Phase One Report is to be shared with CFC communities as soon as possible to **reflect learning, celebrate successes and maintain momentum**.

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*... through Child and Family Centres ... we aim to fundamentally re-engineer early childhood services in Tasmania ...*

Tasmanian Government, 2008

*... the Child and Family Centres initiative is an opportunity to change how communities and government work together to better meet the needs of families and their young children ...*

Child and Family Centres Project Team, 2011a

*... I see the Child and Family Centre as a tree branching out, with all the exciting things happening in our community; by being involved we (parents/community members) are taking responsibility for our community ...*

parent, Geeveston, 2011

*... Those working in government not only need to be clear about their vision and purpose for supporting integrated service delivery, but also to work in more integrated ways themselves, and better communicate their ideas on integration to the broader professional community. Indeed ... there is a need for strong leadership by Government agencies about cross-agency partnerships and responsibilities ...*

Press, Sumsion and Wong, 2010

*... I see the four pillars of Child and Family Centres as:*

- *Early Childhood Education and Care*
- *Children's health and wellbeing*
- *Family support*
- *Parent programs and support*

*My dream is that every Tasmanian child will be able to access a Child and Family Centre and parents are supported and confident in their role ...*

Interview with Sue Jenkins, Tasmanian Early Years Foundation, 2010

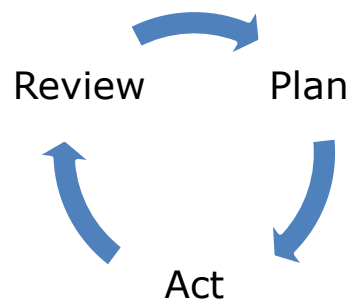
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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 About this report

This report reflects work undertaken and learning gained from the establishment and early operation of Child and Family Centres in Tasmania. Information in this report was gathered during the first phase of the Action Research Project (February 2010 – December 2011).

The format adopted in this report mirrors the action research approach of planning, action and reflection. Action research is 'learning by doing' and at the heart of this approach is reflection. Reflecting on what has happened; on what change has occurred; on what has helped or enabled progress towards change; and what has been challenging. The action research approach taken by this project can be presented simply as the cycle below:



## 1.2 Overview

The Tasmanian Child and Family Centres (CFC) initiative was announced by the Tasmanian Government in September 2008, with the aim to fundamentally re-engineer early childhood services in Tasmania (Tasmanian Government, 2008). This initiative comes at a time of mounting evidence regarding the long-term benefits of investing in the early years to achieve better outcomes for children, families and communities (Moore, 2008). It also comes at a time when there has been an increased focus on early childhood issues and services at the national level (Moore and Skinner, 2010).

While a total of up to 30 CFCs were originally announced in 2008, the Tasmanian Government has confirmed that 12 CFCs will be supported and funded for the foreseeable future.

By October 2011, four Child and Family Centres had opened their doors and commenced welcoming children and families and were in the very early stages of set up and operation. By December 2011 this number had increased to six, with five in new buildings and the CFC in Geeveston operating in a limited way from a small building

while waiting completion of the CFC. The remaining six Centres will open in 2012 (see Table 3).

### 1.3 Purpose of the Action Research Project

To support the roll-out of the CFCs, the Department of Education (DoE) supported two capacity-building projects: the Action Research Project (ARP) and the Learning and Development Strategy (LaDS). Both initiatives are funded by the Tasmanian Early Years Foundation. The latter was designed to lead and support change through modelling a partnership approach, training and skills development. The ARP was designed to capture the lessons as CFC communities undertook planning, discussions and actions to establish and operate Child and Family Centres (CFC).

The ARP was delivered by the Community Child Health (CCH), a key research group of the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute, through funding made available to the DoE by the Tasmanian Early Years Foundation. Initially funded for two years to November 2011, further funds were provided to extend the Action Research Project until November 2012. This report documents the initial phase of the project.

The purpose of the Action Research Project was to engage with CFC communities and other key stakeholders to:

- facilitate discussion and processes to identify desired outcomes
- capture and document the lessons from the establishment phase of the Child and Family Centres
- explore ways to embed and sustain action research/action learning methods and tools at the local level.

A further focus was to explore ways to sustain an outcomes-based approach to action learning and action research to support both practice reflection and progress measurement.

The project was overseen by a reference group comprising representatives from the CFC Project Team, Tasmanian Early Years Foundation and CCH.

## 1.4 Methodology

The Action Research Project was delivered with a three part focus, in line with the project purpose. Table 1 outlines the main components of the project methodology.

Table 1: Summary of Project Methodology

Project purpose	Project focus	Task	Participants
1. Facilitate discussion and processes to identify desired outcomes	Outcomes development	Development of statewide outcomes framework  Development of outcomes for each site  Model approach to develop local outcomes framework	CFC Project Team  Local Enabling Groups, parents, community members and services staff
2. Capture and document the lessons from the establishment phase of the Child and Family Centres	Capture and document what happened, how it was done and the effect of the activity	Conduct interviews Implement surveys Facilitate discussion groups and workshops Attend statewide and local meetings and workshops	All CFC components including:  CFC communities, Local Enabling Groups, Project Team, Community Inclusion Workers, Learning and Development Strategy
3. Explore ways to embed and sustain action research/ action learning methods and tools at the local level.	Embed action learning	Develop data collection tools, including Community and Parent Journal; Integration Snapshot  Implement training in outcomes approach	Community Inclusion Workers, in conjunction with CFC communities, Local Enabling Groups and Project Team

The approach taken by the ARP is a variation on the standard action research approach of capturing and documenting the learning as activity occurs. In addition, the ARP has undertaken two specific tasks that have contributed to the input activity of the overall CFC initiative. These two input areas are summarised in Table 1 as Outcomes Development and Embedding Action Learning. These tasks will be discussed further in sections 3 and 4 of this report.

### 1.4.1 Data collection methods and tools

To capture and document the lessons resulting from the establishment of CFCs, the ARP used the following methods and tools.

### *Interviews*

Individual and group interviews were conducted with key members of all CFC communities and statewide project areas throughout this phase of the ARP. Notes were summarised and key points were grouped under themes.

### *Facilitated workshops and researcher observations*

Developing statewide and local outcomes through the ARP facilitating groups and workshops provided rich opportunities to gather information and feedback from CFC communities, the Project Team and the Learning and Development Strategy.

### *Surveys*

#### *Community and Parent Journal:*

The Community and Parent Journal (CPJ) was developed with Community Inclusion Worker input as a semi-structured interview template. The focus was on capturing how parents were thinking and feeling about the CFC. In addition the CPJ aims to build local understanding and skill in action research tools.

Community Inclusion Workers (CIWs) were asked to identify at least two parents from their CFC community who would be prepared to be interviewed before and after the CFC opening. The CPJ was implemented by CIWs and relied on established relationships between parents and CIWs.

#### *Journey to Integrated Service Delivery Snapshot:*

The Journey to Integrated Service Delivery Snapshot (JISDS) is a tool designed to measure where Local Enabling Groups see themselves in regards to their journey toward services integration. The JISDS is a checklist of known attributes of early years services collated under five guiding principles. For each attribute, respondents were asked to select the response that best described where they thought their CFC community was currently positioned in relation to the model of integrated service delivery presented by the JISDS (co-located, partially integrated and fully integrated). Respondents were required to reflect on discussions and planning within their Local Enabling Group and describe the extent to which early years services in their local community were working together at the time.

The JISDS aims to document the journey towards integrated service delivery across two points. Firstly before opening the CFC, to capture baseline or early stage information; and secondly, after opening, to track change or progress. The JIS also sought to introduce a helpful framework of principles and elements that would contribute to CFC community discussions.

The target was Local Enabling Group (LEG) members. A total of eight CFC communities returned completed data (an average of six LEG members per CFC community). Challenges and limitations of the JISDS and data are discussed later in this report (see 3.4.5).



#### *Statewide Survey of CFC communities:*

The Statewide Survey (SS) was an online survey capturing feedback from CFC communities regarding the five key CFC inputs (Project Team, Learning and Development, Community Inclusion Workers, Local Enabling Groups and Action Research Project). The survey sought responses to statements about how well work was done and the difference made by the work. The sample comprised 55 respondents from across the 12 CFCs.

#### 1.4.2 Sharing the learning

Throughout this first phase, opportunities to share and feed information and learning back have included:

- progress reports (written and via project team meeting updates)
- electronic summaries of interview responses sent to Local Enabling Groups via CIWs
- participation in CFC community workshops, statewide forum presentations and Local Enabling Group meetings.

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## 2 Planning

### 2.1 Policy context

The Australian Government's agenda for early childhood education and care focuses on high-quality, accessible and affordable integrated early childhood education and care. The agenda emphasises connecting with schools to ensure all Australian children are fully prepared for learning and life.

Improving access and investing in the health, education, development and care of our children through an integrated service delivery approach is seen to benefit children, families, communities and the economy.

There is a significant focus at the Federal level on early childhood policy development and the Australian Government is working closely with state and territory governments, key early learning and care stakeholders, and families to implement its policy agenda in this area. The Policy Agenda includes:

- a National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care
- a National Early Childhood Development Strategy, incorporating the Indigenous Early Childhood Development National Partnership Agreement (see below)
- a policy committing to all children having access to an inclusive universal 15 hours of preschool education delivered by a university-qualified educator in the year before formal schooling
- an Early Years Learning Framework (0-5)
- a National Early Years Workforce Strategy
- changes to the Child Care Tax Rebate
- ongoing national rollout of the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI).

The Indigenous Early Childhood Development National Partnership Agreement identifies three distinct elements:

- integration of early childhood services through the development of Child and Family Centres
- increased access to antenatal care, pre-pregnancy and teenage sexual and reproductive health care
- increased access to and use of maternal and child health services by Indigenous families.

The National Partnership Agreement sets out a number of outcomes and objectives, including:

- Indigenous children acquire the basic skills for life and learning

- Indigenous families have ready access to suitable and culturally inclusive early childhood and family support services
- improving Indigenous families' use of the early childhood development services they need to optimise the development of their children (Australian Government, 2008).

## 2.2 Tasmanian context

The Tasmanian CFC initiative forms part of a platform of early years policy initiatives concerned with child, family and community wellbeing in Tasmania. These initiatives include:

- Early Years – A Shared Future: Framework for Action
- Tasmanian Early Years Foundation – in particular Outcomes in the Early Years Report, and support for Child and Family Centres
- Tasmania Together – Goal 2 (Communities), Goal 3 (Education), Goal 4 (Health) and Goal 5 (Vibrant Communities)
- Integrated program delivery initiatives involving collaborative hubs that include CFCs, Learning Information Network centres, Service Tasmania and Neighbourhood Houses
- Launching into Learning
- Let's Read and CU@Home programs
- Reforms in Human Services around clearer and easier community access to better integrated family support services.

The Tasmanian CFC initiative was envisaged as an opportunity to change how communities and government work together to better meet the needs of families and their young children (CFC Project Team, 2011a). To achieve this, and therefore improve results for children and families in Tasmania, Child and Family Centres aim to bring together services and supports in a way that is more than simply relocating services to a single site (CFC Project Team, 2011b).

While research suggests that an integrated service system may not directly improve family functioning and children's wellbeing, it does contribute to those outcomes by improving access to services, and enabling earlier identification of problems. Through these outcomes, more effective help can be provided (Moore and Skinner, 2010).

The term integrated service delivery refers to a system and processes that result in better connections between practitioners and providers so that the services they deliver are more comprehensive, cohesive and accessible and can better meet the needs of children and their families. Success building these connections is underpinned by the modelling of respectful and helpful relationships (Prichard, 2010).

There is evidence that the strong community engagement and community development approach adopted by the Tasmanian CFC initiative is helping to create a culture of working in partnership among parents, community members and services (CFC Project Team, 2011a).

## 2.3 Child and Family Centres initiative overview

The Tasmanian Government identified the following Operating Principles and Goals for the CFC initiative (Department of Education 2009).

Operating Principles:

*Target* – children from birth to five years, and their parents/caregivers

*Purpose* – improve health and wellbeing, education and care of children birth to five years by supporting parents and enhancing accessibility of services in the local community

*Essential Features* – CFCs will:

- offer an integrated suite of high quality programs and services
- provide local programs for every family with babies and young children
- meet the changing needs of the local community
- be a welcoming place for all children and their families.

*Services* provided through a CFC will:

- be child/family-friendly
- respect all cultures
- acknowledge the importance of family in a child's development
- respect mothers, fathers and carers as partners
- build positive relationships
- respect the needs of young children and families
- promote inclusive leadership and teamwork
- provide learning and development opportunities
- be responsive to the needs of the community
- involve families and community members in decision making and governance.

Goals:

- Improve the health and educational outcomes for children from birth to five years.
- Provide a range of integrated early years services in the local community to support the development of children birth to five years.
- Build on existing strengths of families and communities and assist in their educational needs.
- Increase participation in the early years programs such as Launch into Learning (LiL).

- Build community capacity by developing partnerships with parents, carers and the community.
- Respond to child and family needs in a seamless and holistic manner.

Eleven Child and Family Centres were included in the CFC initiative announced by the Tasmanian Government, including the Risdon Cove Aboriginal CFC (eight in stage 1; three in stage 2). Subsequently the Risdon Cove Aboriginal CFC was given stand-alone status and removed from the larger CFC project list.

Australian Government Closing the Gap funding through the Indigenous Early Childhood Development National Partnership Agreement, enabled a further two CFC sites to be declared (Bridgewater and Geeveston), making 12 CFC communities in total (stages 1 and 2) (Tasmanian Government, 2009).

### 2.3.1 CFC initiative inputs

The CFC initiative has five main components delivering a range of inputs into the CFC initiative to support the achievement of the goals outlined above. These inputs are:

- CFC Project Team
- Learning and Development Strategy
- CFC Staff (Community Inclusion Workers and Centre Leaders)
- Local Enabling Groups
- Action Research Project.

The majority of Centre Leaders have been appointed towards the end of this phase of the ARP. At the time of writing, nine of the 12 Centre Leaders had been appointed. The full extent of the impact of the Centre Leader role will be a focus of analysis in the next phase of the ARP.

#### *Clarifying roles*

Early conversations with the Project Team and Learning and Development Strategy were important in achieving clear understanding of respective roles and outputs. Such clarification was necessary, given the number of input components and the differing roles undertaken by each component. These early discussions agreed that:

- The Project Team (PT), led by the CFC Project Manager, has a statewide role in guiding, leading and resourcing the implementation of the CFC initiative through the 12 CFC communities. The PT core membership comprises Government staff from the Education and Health and Human Services departments in addition to representatives from CFC communities. Learning and Development Strategy and Action Research Project make up the broader PT.
- The Learning and Development Strategy (LaDS), delivered by Community Child Health, has a statewide role in leading and supporting change. While a crucial member of the Project Team and overall initiative driver, the LaDS is independent of the Tasmanian Government and its reporting and governance arrangements.

- The Action Research Project, also delivered by Community Child Health, has a statewide role in outcomes development, capturing and sharing the learning, and suggesting ways to embed ongoing action research. As the ARP will be capturing information and reporting on the work of the Project Team and Learning and Development Strategy (LaDS), it was appropriate the ARP maintain reasonable independence. However, the opportunity and efficiency to be gained from the LaDS and ARP working closely together in delivering and facilitating conversations with CFC communities was also recognised.

Table 2: Summary of key CFC Inputs, Roles and Outputs

<b>CFC initiative input</b>	<b>Description and role</b>	<b>Key outputs</b>
<b><i>Project Team</i></b>	<p>Statewide</p> <p>Led by Project Manager</p> <p>Leading and guiding culture and values (philosophy) of project</p> <p>Resourcing implementation of initiative</p> <p>Comprising representatives of all other input areas</p>	<p>Design and building support</p> <p>Policy and procedures</p> <p>Communications, newsletters and website</p> <p>Budgets and recruitment</p> <p>Compliance and governance</p>
<b><i>Learning and Development Strategy</i></b>	<p>Statewide</p> <p>Leading and supporting change</p> <p>Supporting engagement, skill development and new knowledge</p> <p>Building community capacity</p>	<p>Integrated service delivery action plans</p> <p>Training programs</p> <p>Facilitated workshops and discussions</p> <p>Community engagement</p> <p>Statewide forums</p> <p>Discussion papers</p>
<b><i>CFC staff (Community Inclusion Workers and Centre Leaders)</i></b>	<p>CFC site specific</p> <p>Centre leadership and accountability</p> <p>Community development and capacity building</p> <p>Supporting parent and community connection and participation</p> <p>Communicating and liaison</p>	<p>Quality programs for children and families</p> <p>Communications and local networks</p> <p>Community meetings and workshops</p> <p>Community engagement</p> <p>Processes to support participation</p>
<b><i>Local Enabling Group</i></b>	<p>CFC site specific</p> <p>Leading, coordinating and guiding establishment and operation of CFC</p> <p>Planning, monitoring and local decision-making</p> <p>Supporting parent and community connection and participation</p>	<p>LEG meetings</p> <p>Community forums and workshops</p> <p>Local processes, policies and procedures</p> <p>CFC community network</p> <p>Community participation in decision-making</p>
<b><i>Action Research Project</i></b>	<p>Statewide</p> <p>Capturing and documenting learning</p> <p>Supporting an outcomes approach</p> <p>Developing outcomes</p> <p>Embedding action learning</p>	<p>Facilitated workshops</p> <p>Outcomes identified and frameworks developed</p> <p>Outcomes approach implemented</p> <p>Learning communicated – feedback and reports</p> <p>Tools for collecting data developed</p>

### 2.3.2 Learning and Development Strategy

A major input for the CFC initiative has been the delivery of a Learning and Development Strategy in order to lead and support the change needed to achieve the desired improvement in outcomes for children and families. Initiated and funded by the Tasmanian Early Years Foundation and delivered by Community Child Health, the LaDS underpinned its approach with the Platforms set of resources (CCCH, 2009). Platforms is a framework for community engagement, planning and systems change and is based on compelling research about the importance of the early years and their impact on the life course. In addition, Platforms draws on emerging evidence about how communities can make a difference for children and their families and how service delivery can be improved through a more integrated approach.

In working with CFC communities to lead and support an integrated service delivery approach, the LaDS has facilitated and modelled a partnership approach to deliver training and skills development. Underpinning the partnership approach has been a deliberate focus on reflective practice and the Family Partnership Model (Davis and Day, 2010).

### 2.3.3 Aboriginal Children and Family Centres

The Bridgewater and Geeveston Child and Family Centres are funded through the Indigenous Early Childhood Development National Partnership Agreement (see Policy Context section for further details). These two Centres have specific focus on improving outcomes for Aboriginal children and families, while maintaining universal access for all children and families. While noting their Aboriginal focus, for the purposes of the Action Research Project, the Bridgewater and Geeveston Child and Family Centres are part of the 12 universal Tasmanian Child and Family Centres.



### 2.3.4 CFC communities overview

Table 3 provides an overview of the 12 Child and Family Centres.

<b>Opening 2011</b>	<b>Opening 2012 and later</b>
<b>Beaconsfield</b> opened January 2011	<b>Bridgewater</b> (Aboriginal focus) due to open April 2012
<b>Break O'Day</b> (based at St Helens) opened October 2011	<b>Burnie</b> due to open early 2013
<b>Clarence Plains</b> opened December 2011	<b>Chigwell</b> due to open late 2012
<b>East Devonport</b> opened October 2011	<b>Derwent Valley</b> (based at New Norfolk) due to open late 2012
<b>Queenstown</b> opened September 2011	<b>Geeveston</b> (Aboriginal focus) stage 1 due to open early 2012 stage 2 due to open late 2012
<b>Ravenswood</b> opened December 2012	<b>George Town</b> opening date not available

Table 3: Child and Family Centres (stages one and two)

The geographic locations of Tasmanian Child and Family Centres were identified by the Child and Family Centres Steering Committee (CFCST) (formerly known as the Early Years Strategy Inter-departmental Committee), in conjunction with the Department of Premier and Cabinet. The decisions were informed by the State Infrastructure Planning System (SIPS) primarily using data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (Socio-Economic Index For Areas – SEIFA data) and Kids Come First, together with internal information and advice generated through existing state and local government sources and programs.

Individual sites within areas were endorsed by the CFCST, following recommendations by local stakeholders/community representatives, including local government, community/neighbourhood houses, or Local Enabling Groups (LEGs), if formed.

A comprehensive description of the site identification process can be found at

[www.education.tas.gov.au/childandfamily/faq](http://www.education.tas.gov.au/childandfamily/faq)

The 12 Child and Family Centre (CFC) communities are located throughout Tasmania. There are three in the north (George Town, Beaconsfield and Ravenswood); one in the northeast (Break O'Day, based at St Helens); three in the northwest (East Devonport, Burnie and West Coast, based at Queenstown); and five in the south (Bridgewater,

Chigwell, Clarence Plains, Geeveston and Derwent Valley, based at New Norfolk). A descriptive overview of each CFC community is given in Appendix C.

To further illustrate the community demographic context into which CFCs are being established, tables A and B (see Appendix E) provide a summary of scores against nine key outcome indicators for each CFC community. This information is taken from the report, *Outcomes in the Early Years: the State of Tasmania's Young Children 2009*.

The tables show that for many of the indicators in this sample, all CFC communities have scores significantly worse than the state average. Nine of the 12 CFC communities have worse than state average scores in at least four of the nine indicators. Five of these communities have scores significantly worse than the state average in at least seven indicators. For the outcome indicator, alcohol consumption during pregnancy (self reported), seven communities (Beaconsfield, Burnie, Clarence Plains, East Devonport, George Town, Queenstown and Ravenswood) have scores significantly better than the state average.

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## 3 Action

This section describes key work done by the main inputs to the CFC initiative at the statewide, CFC community and service levels.

### 3.1 Project Team – leading and guiding the CFC initiative

At a statewide level, the Project Team (PT) has undertaken overall leadership and guidance of the CFC initiative during the establishment and building of CFCs. The PT described its role as being a ‘... rudder – giving leadership and direction’. The PT also described its role in relation to ‘stewardship – as guardian of the intent and integrity of the CFC initiative’.<sup>1</sup> The PT has done this through:

- various administrative and secretariat functions, including budget development and support, policy and procedure development and communications coordination (newsletters, emails, CFC website)
- coordinating design and building processes and schedules – commencing with the Functional Design Brief (Department of Education, 2009) and liaising with Building Liaison Officers attached to individual CFC projects
- liaison with service system and Agency managers
- convening Project Team meetings and connecting various CFC initiative inputs to enhance reflection, communication and planning.

At the CFC community level, the PT has worked to support CFC communities and Local Enabling Groups through:

- coordinating recruitment of CFC staff (CIWs and CLs)
- assistance with governance and procurement/financial issues
- assistance with problem solving around individual site issues
- representing the CFC community to local agencies and authorities.

At the services level, the PT has engaged with service system managers and senior managers to represent the CFC initiative and its aim for integrated service delivery as a means to improve outcomes for children. The PT has

- maintained communications with key government and non-government services and agencies and represented the goals of the CFC initiative
- commissioned at least two reports on issues and ideas around a model of integrated service delivery with the aim of raising awareness and assisting in the repositioning of services to work in more integrated ways.

### 3.2 Learning and Development Strategy – leading and supporting change

At a statewide level, the LaDS has led a community development process involving CFC communities, service practitioners and service managers to support change through an integrated service delivery approach. LaDS adapted the Platforms resources to the Tasmanian context, aiming to build engagement and shared understanding, facilitate discussions and develop skills. Specifically the LaDS has:

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<sup>1</sup> Workshops facilitated by ARP with the PT, 18 April and 2 May 2011  
Tasmanian Action Research Project Phase One Report – Part A

- built relations through strategic advocacy with varied stakeholders around early childhood education and care, integrated service delivery and community development
- liaised with national and international thinkers around integrated service delivery and change and shared this across the CFC initiative
- led the exploration of an integrated service delivery approach in the context of the Tasmanian service system
- convened statewide forums to share and enhance learning, discussions and new knowledge
- led a reflective practice approach to examining issues and progress within CFC communities and the Project Team
- facilitated a range of training programs across the CFC initiative including Family Partnership, Reflective Practice, Father Inclusive Practice, Cultural Safety, Empowering Parents Empowering Community.

CFC communities have been a major focus for the LaDS. This has involved helping services, communities and parents to consider ways of working together better to improve results for children. The LaDS has undertaken the following work in CFC communities:

- facilitated discussions to build a shared understanding about the CFC, benefits for children and how best to work toward a more inclusive, partnership approach between parents, services and community
- led CFC communities through a stepped process that results in an action plan for better integrated service delivery
- modelled a way to build and maintain inclusive, respectful relationships that support engagement of parents, services and community
- delivered a range of training (see above)
- worked with, and supported CIWs and LEGs at the community level.

The LaDS work has enabled early years services to participate in the CFC initiative at statewide and community levels. Service practitioners and middle managers in particular have been a focus for inclusion as a means of strengthening relationships with parents through a partnership approach and helping services to consider how best to deliver services accordingly. Representatives of relevant early years services participated in statewide forums, community workshops and working groups facilitated by the LaDS.

### 3.3 Local Enabling Groups, Community Inclusion Workers and Centre Leaders – leading and supporting CFC communities

Local Enabling Groups, supported by Community Inclusion Workers and more recently CFC Centre Leaders (CLs), have been the key CFC drivers at the CFC community level. LEGs were the main governance group and decision-making forum for local CFC planning. LEGs – and the sub-groups and community forums they established – were an opportunity for parents, community members and service providers to come together and participate in establishing the CFC. LEGs worked closely with build personnel, including architects and departmental build officers, to oversee building plans and building works.

CIWs, in conjunction with LEG Chairpersons and Community Co-Chairpersons provided much of the administrative, liaison and engagement work on behalf of the LEG. CIWs have worked to build and maintain community engagement, particularly among parents of young children. CIWs have generally worked according to community development principles in empowering parents and community members to take ownership of CFC processes. Statewide, CIWs have formed a cohesive group to share information and give support to each other.

More recently, CLs have formed a CFC staff team with CIWs and demonstrated higher level leadership and liaison with the CFC community, Project Team and other stakeholders. At a statewide level, CLs have come together to form a significant CFC leadership group, in conjunction with the PT, to consider broad policy and operational issues and give advice and guidance to the CFC initiative.

Table 4: Summary of key work done

<b>Local Enabling Groups</b>	<b>Community Inclusion Workers</b>	<b>Centre Leaders</b>
Enabled and supported parent, community and service provider connection and participation	Organised and supported engagement and participation by parents, community and services	Leadership and accountability
Coordinated planning, monitoring and decision-making	Liaised closely with key CFC inputs, including PT, LaDS and ARP, to enable participation by parents, community and services in key CFC processes	Strategic liaison with key CFC stakeholders
Communicated and informed CFC community	Supported the emergence of Community Co-Chairs through building strength, confidence and capacity in CFC community	Oversaw development of key CFC documentation, including policies, procedures, workplans and communications
Liaised and negotiated with build personnel around design and building works	Provided administrative and communications support to the LEG and connected the LEG with the wider CFC community	Supported and resourced the work of CIWs
Maintained regular forums for discussion, consultation and decision-making	Maintained communications within the CFC community and across CFC communities via a CIW network	Formed key statewide CFC leadership group

### 3.4 Action Research Project – leading outcomes development and documenting the lessons

The three focus areas of the ARP (outcomes development, documenting the lessons and embedding action learning) were delivered at statewide and community/services levels.

#### 3.4.1 Statewide Outcomes Framework

Underpinning the ARP is a strong outcomes-based approach. A key early task for the ARP was to assist the Project Team in developing a Statewide Outcomes Framework. This work was essential to not only guide the overall CFC initiative, but provide a context for subsequent outcomes work with CFC communities.

During March, April and May 2010, the ARP facilitated a number of meetings and workshops with the Project Team to produce the draft Statewide Outcomes Framework. The Framework was shared with CFC communities in June 2010. Feedback from communities has resulted in additions and changes.

The ARP, in conjunction with the Project, commenced a review of the Statewide Outcomes Framework in June 2011. The purpose of the review was to:

- produce a community-friendly version of the Outcomes framework, containing key outcomes information
- critically examine the Indicators to ensure they are clear, measurable and realistic.

The Statewide Outcomes Framework review is yet to be finalised; however, a community-friendly outcomes poster has been produced and is currently awaiting feedback from CFC communities.

#### Statewide engagement and preparation

All Child and Family Centre communities were contacted by phone in March 2010 to arrange initial site/community visits and interviews. Community Inclusion Workers (CIWs) were the initial contact point (except Ravenswood and Bridgewater where CIWs were not appointed – other contact points were used). CIWs were identified by the ARP as key contacts in CFC communities and pivotal for any successful embedding of action research methods and tools.

Initial community visits and interviews were undertaken in April/May 2010. The purpose of these visits was:

- to introduce the Action Research Project and Officer to communities
- to familiarise the ARP with community settings
- to obtain baseline information regarding progress/issues, enablers and barriers.

Those interviewed during the initial visits included CIWs, Local Enabling Group (LEG) members and departmental LEG chairpersons. A list of interviewees together with a summary of responses can be found in Appendix N.

#### 3.4.2 CFC community outcomes

The ARP was responsible for helping CFC communities develop local outcomes frameworks. This process was important in supporting parents and communities to gain confidence and a level of ownership about what their Child and Family Centre community could achieve. Underpinning this process are the Platforms resources, which offer various templates to apply and support this work (CCCH, 2009).

Prior to commencing local outcomes development, CFC Local Enabling Groups received and considered the draft Statewide Outcomes Framework, so that local outcomes were discussed and developed within a complimentary statewide context.

To support the development of local outcomes, the ARP facilitated an outcomes-based planning and evaluation workshop in June 2010. The target audience for the workshop were Community Inclusion Workers, as they would have a leading role in developing

local outcomes. Other attendees included a small number of Local Enabling Group members, Learning and Development Strategy members and Project Team members. Workshop outcomes were for participants to have:

- a clearer understanding of outcomes-based planning and evaluation and how it can be helpful;
- increased skills in working with people in local communities to apply outcomes-based approach;
- increased skills to develop local outcomes and a clearer understanding of the expectations of this role; and
- better understanding of the supports and resources available in undertaking this role.

The first CFC community discussions around local outcomes occurred in Beaconsfield in June 2010. The three hour workshop was co-facilitated with LaDS and covered areas including change, vision and outcomes. Attendees included parents, service staff and other community members. Draft outcomes were developed and the workshop was helpful in providing valuable feedback on workshop delivery methods and use of materials, including PowerPoint slides, jargon and clear language, importance of articulating a vision and importance of hearing the local story.

By facilitating workshops, forums, working groups and meetings, the ARP was able to model a process to develop local outcomes in all 12 CFC communities. In addition, the ARP has worked with five CFC communities (Beaconsfield, Clarence Plains, Derwent Valley, Ravenswood and Break O'Day), to commence development of more detailed outcomes frameworks by expanding individual local outcomes. Progress on local outcomes development can be seen in Table 7 and in Appendices L and M.

### 3.4.3 Capturing and documenting the lessons

As outlined under project methodology (see p 10), the ARP has captured data and documented lessons using various collection methods and tools. Reflections and lessons arising from the data are discussed in section 4 (Reflection) and further data report detail is provided in Appendices.

#### Working with the Learning and Development Strategy

Working alongside Learning and Development Strategy (LaDS) was a key part of the ARP's methodology.

The ARP and LaDS share the Platforms resources as a reference point in planning engagement and facilitation with CFC communities. In line with the Platforms approach, but adapted for the Tasmanian context, LaDS facilitated conversations with CFC communities to acknowledge the communities' stories, explore change and draft a vision. This work was essential before consideration of local outcomes could commence.

Joint ARP and LaDS facilitation of community workshops was a means to progress local outcomes development and also capture important information about what was occurring and what issues were arising in CFC communities.



Working with other key CFC inputs

*Community Inclusion Workers* (formerly Social Inclusion and Community Liaison Officers) were identified at the commencement of the ARP as key contacts in CFC communities. The ARP has worked closely with all CIWs, particularly in developing local outcomes, embedding action research methods and gathering information from CIWs, parents and other CFC community members through surveys, interviews and other tools.

*CFC communities, including Local Enabling Groups*, represent the heart of the CFC initiative. It is here where the ARP applied major focus and time to capture impact and change through children, parents and families and other community members, including services. This was achieved through facilitating workshops, attending LEG and other CFC community meetings and events and interviews with individuals and groups.

*The CFC Project Team*, as the overall CFC project management body, is a crucial CFC input and liaison point for all other CFC inputs, including the ARP. Regular communications were maintained with the Project Team by attending team meetings and receiving electronic newsletters and updates. The ARP delivered regular progress reports in the form of written reports to the CFC Project Manager and via verbal reports at project team meetings.

#### 3.4.4 Embedding action learning

Although commenced, embedding ongoing action research methods and tools is the least advanced of the ARP's aims. Our approach here focused on engaging and up skilling Community Inclusion Workers and other CFC community members, including parents. The rationale for this approach is simply that if people at the community and service delivery level are motivated and interested in ongoing evaluation, then the sustainability of appropriate and relevant methods and tools is more likely.

Some action research and evaluation methods and tools have been discussed and used; however, further work is needed in this area. Phase two of the ARP will address this area in more detail.

#### 3.4.5 Challenges faced in collecting data

A number of challenges arose during the collection of data for the ARP.

##### *Interview and workshop data*

The wide geographic spread of the 12 CFC communities presented resource and time difficulties in conducting interviews, workshops and attending LEG meetings and other community events. Depending on individual CFC community progress and schedules, it was not always possible to link multiple sites when visiting northern and north-western communities. On occasions, phone interviews were conducted.

In line with the strong community development and partnerships approach led by the Learning and Development Strategy, it was important for the ARP to be flexible in scheduling, so that outcomes discussion occurred following necessary pre-outcomes consideration. This meant some delays and extended periods between CFC community

visits. The ARP relied on Community Inclusion Workers to arrange workshops and other sub-group discussions and interviews, including all communications with parents and community members. On occasions where parent participant numbers were too low, decisions were made to postpone workshops and discussions, further adding to delays.

The ARP relied heavily on communications and follow up with Community Inclusion Workers. Where CIWs did not exist or were absent due to delays in appointments or vacant positions (Bridgewater, East Devonport, George Town and Ravenswood), communications were more difficult.

Interviews with Aboriginal families and community members were requested and conducted in Geeveston and Bridgewater. Due to the absence of a CIW in Bridgewater, a number of attempts to establish these interviews failed, causing extensive delays. Eventually an interview was conducted with the community co-chairperson.

#### *Community and Parent Journal*

All CIWs were emailed a request to participate in April 2011, with a follow up email containing the CPJ template. All CIWs were phoned to discuss the emails and clarify any questions. Bridgewater was the only CFC community not to receive these communications, due to the absence of a CIW.

Six CFC communities (50 per cent) completed Parent Journals, with Break O'Day interviewing three parents, making a total of 13 Journals (A full data report is provided in Appendix A).

The detail of data provided in the Journals varied widely between CFC communities. This occurred due to the conversation and questioning approach used by CIWs. Where detail is greatest, the CIW used a more conversational and open questioning approach to explore thoughts and feelings. However, in other Journals where detail was lacking, a 'yes' or 'no' response was recorded without further exploration undertaken or recorded.

#### *Journey to Integrated Service Delivery Snapshot*

The Journey to Integrated Service Delivery Snapshot (JISDS) was a complex and resource intensive tool to undertake with Local Enabling Groups (LEGs). Based on reflection and feedback from some participants, it will be necessary to reconsider how the JISDS can be changed for the second capture point (post opening) to better document the journey toward integrated service delivery.

Some feedback indicated the language contained in the Snapshot, together with the intensity of text, was difficult for some LEG members to engage with and complete, including parents. Further feedback indicated confusion with choosing the appropriate response, with some respondents checking all boxes for some attributes. It appears some responses were given based on future predictions and current perceptions of integration. However, the request was for respondents to assess where they believed the CFC community was currently positioned. Such responses resulted in very high scores for these attributes and principles, affecting total scores.

Following consideration of these issues, the following scoring and coding rules were applied to the data collation and analysis.

1. Scoring is allocated as one for checked boxes under *Co-Located*; two for *Partially Integrated*; and three for *Fully Integrated* – giving a maximum score of 151, if all attributes under Fully Integrated are selected.
2. Where no response is given for an attribute, a consistent score of two is allocated under the *Partially Integrated* or neutral response column.
3. Where responses are given across all three integration columns for an attribute, the *Partially Integrated* or neutral response is used, with the other responses deleted. This rule ensures a consistent approach is applied to responses that deviate from the instruction and intention of the tool.

#### *Statewide survey*

The statewide survey of CFC communities was sent electronically to all CFCs via Centre Leaders and CIWs. The reach of the survey in each CFC community relied on dissemination by CFC staff.

A decision was made not to seek identification of CFC for each respondent – only main role within the CFC community was requested. The reason not to seek community identifier information was the likelihood that some potential respondents would be discouraged if required to identify their CFC community. Consequently there is no means to identify if all CFC communities are represented in the survey.

Of the original 66 respondents who commenced the survey, 14 did not finish. These were filtered to create a final sample of 55. Over 50 per cent of these respondents were in roles as parent/community, community co-chairperson, Centre Leader or CIW.

## 4 Reflection

This section discusses the lessons from how well work to date has been undertaken and the effect of this work at CFC community and statewide levels. This section concludes with a summary of emergent key themes, together with helpful and unhelpful factors that impact on progress.

### 4.1 Statewide progress

#### 4.1.1 Value of support provided to CFC communities

A statewide survey of CFC communities showed a high degree of satisfaction with the key input areas of the CFC initiative. The online survey was conducted by the ARP during October and November 2011 and asked CFC communities about their thoughts on the work done and the difference made by the five key input areas (see Appendix N for full data set). A summary of results is provided below.

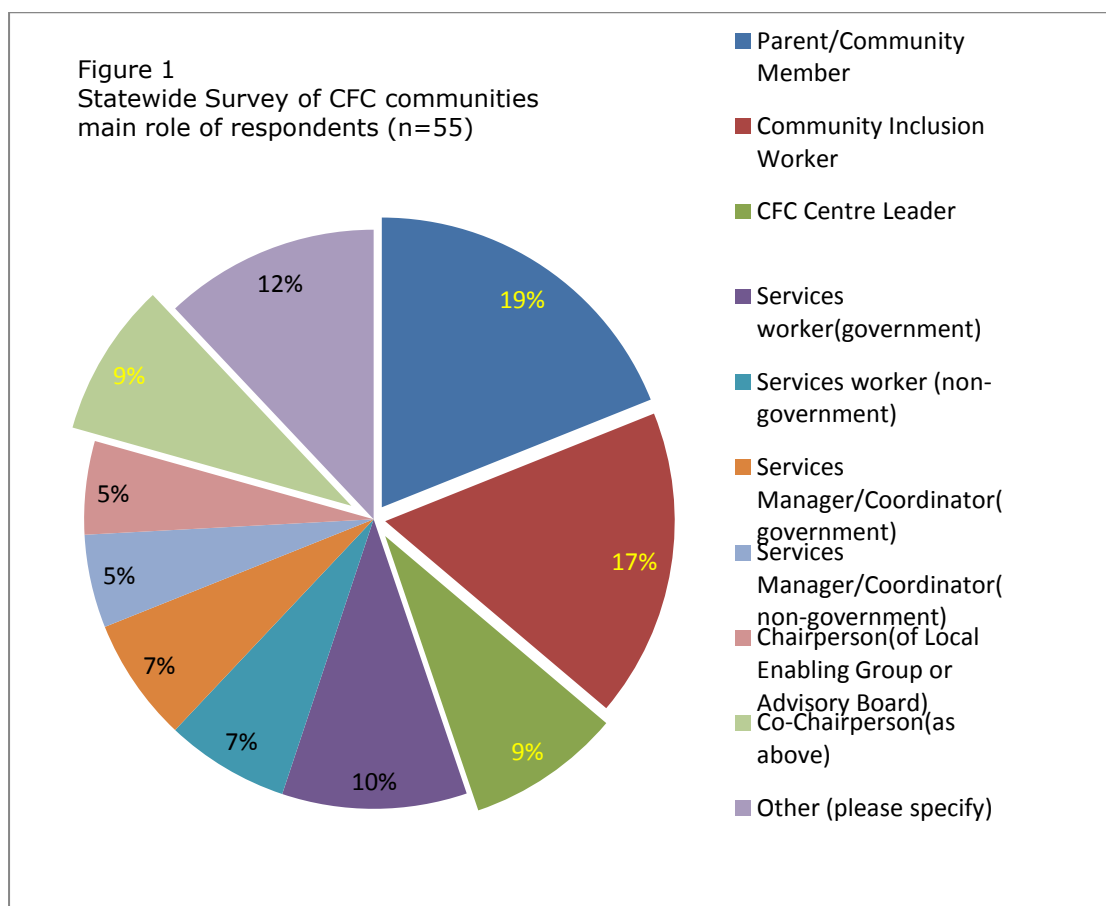


Figure 1 shows the main role of respondents to the Statewide survey of CFC communities: 54 per cent of respondents were parent/community members, Centre Leaders, Community Inclusion Workers or Community Co-Chairpersons (n=31 – highlighted). The remaining respondents (n=24) were services workers or managers.

Statewide Project Team:

The statewide survey developed four statements regarding work done by the PT following ARP-facilitated workshops with the PT on 18 April and 2 May 2011. The four statements were:

#### Answer options

**The Project Team** encourages a shared leadership approach that supports all parts of the Child and Family Project to be involved in planning and decision-making.

**The Project Team** invests in the strength of the community through building confidence, increasing knowledge and improving skills that result in increased community participation, empowerment and ownership.

**The Project Team** works to ensure clear, open communications occur across the CFC project, including Local Enabling Groups, services and other community representatives, so that helpful information is shared across and within CFC communities.

**The Project Team** supports CFC communities, including parents and services, to discuss change and consider doing things differently in the interests of better outcomes for children and families.

Over 90 per cent of respondents (n=55) either agreed or strongly agreed with these statements on the work done by the PT. Three respondents (5.5 per cent) disagreed with statement three regarding clear, open communications and information sharing.

Comments (n=23) were overwhelmingly positive, referencing the enthusiasm, energy and inclusive style of the PT which is committed to listening to CFC communities. Two comments outlined the difficulty in differentiating between PT and LaDS. A further two comments pointed to the great work of the PT despite having very limited resources.

Regarding the difference made by the work of the PT, the following statements were put forward for response:

#### Answer options

I believe parents and community members are more supported to be involved in the planning and decision-making regarding the CFC, as a result of work done by the **Statewide Project Team**.

I feel the CFC community is more confident, informed and empowered as a result of work done by the **Statewide Project Team**.

I now feel information is shared effectively between the CFC community and other parts of the project in ways that are helpful, as a result of work done by the **Statewide Project Team**.

I believe the CFC community is open to change and prepared to do things differently for the benefit of our children and families, as a result of work done by the **Statewide Project Team**.

Statements 1, 2 and 4 received a high percentage of agree and strongly agree responses (87 per cent, 84 per cent and 85 per cent respectively). Statement 3 received more neutral responses (27 per cent neither agree nor disagree), while 69 per cent indicated they agreed or strongly agreed. One respondent each disagreed and strongly disagreed with statement 3. These responses indicate less satisfaction with communications work

of the PT and the sharing of information between CFC communities and other parts of the CFC initiative.

Comments (n=18) regarding the difference made by the work of the PT show a range of responses, including:

- praise for the PT in bringing structure and clarity to the CFC initiative
- the PT was successful in bringing community, parents and services closer together
- difficulty in distinguishing between the work of the PT and that of LaDS
- one comment indicating they felt the greatest difference had been made by local people, rather than at the statewide PT level.

Learning and Development Strategy:

Similar to the process used for the PT, three work area statements were devised following an ARP-facilitated workshop with LaDS on 6 May 2011. The three work statements were:

### Answer Options

**Learning and Development** models a way of meeting together that helps everyone to participate, views to be valued and relationships to be strengthened.

**Learning and Development** creates opportunities to identify new knowledge and improve skills in a way that is responsive to community needs.

**Learning and Development** models an approach to change that is respectful and inclusive of all, including parents, community members and service providers.

Respondents strongly agreed (56 per cent, 42 per cent, 60 per cent) and agreed (36 per cent, 47 per cent, 31 per cent) with the work done by LaDS. This reflects the pivotal role of LaDS in modelling partnership and positive relations, creating opportunities for new knowledge and skills, and being the key driver of change.

Comments (n=21) regarding how well LaDS undertook its work included:

- empowering community
- resulting in more community/parent participation
- leading to powerful community voices emerging
- inclusive, respectful and equal (community and services).

Other comments included:

- some workshops seemed like a specific agenda was being adhered to
- sometimes things moved very slowly
- one comment indicated confusion between LaDS and PT.

Regarding the difference made as a result of the LaDS work, the following statements were identified:

### Answer options

I feel the CFC community is more skilled in engaging and building relationships with children, parents, community members and service providers as a result of work done by the **Learning and Development Strategy**.

I now feel parents and community members are more confident to participate in the CFC project, as a result of work done by the **Learning and Development Strategy**.

I feel that our CFC community sees the value in the Learning and Development approach to community planning and decision-making, as result of work done by the **Learning and Development Strategy**.

While respondents overwhelmingly agreed with the difference made by LaDS (agreed – 53 per cent for all statements; strongly agreed – 36 per cent, 33 per cent, 33 per cent), there was an increase in the neutral response (9 per cent, 13 per cent, 13 per cent) compared with responses to how well the work was done.

Comments (n=15) regarding the difference made consistently indicated that CFC communities were more inclusive and respectful of each other as a whole; and more confident to participate and have a greater sense of ownership as a result of the work of LaDS. Partnership, empowerment and increased skills were also mentioned. Further comments indicated a marked difference but with low or small numbers. One comment questioned whether CFC communities had any knowledge of or were influenced by LaDS. This comment further suggested that only local people had real impact.

### Local Enabling Groups:

The following statements were identified by the ARP following attendance at LEG meetings in all CFC communities and interviews with LEG members.

*How well was the work done?*

### Answer option

The CFC **Local Enabling Group (or Advisory Board)** brings together parents, community members and services to build relationships that help plan, monitor and make decisions about the CFC.

*What difference has been made?*

### Answer option

I feel the CFC community is more informed, involved and has more ownership of decisions as a result of work done by the **Local Enabling Group (or Advisory Board)**.

A high level of satisfaction with LEGs was indicated, as 98 per cent of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with both statements above. The strong response for LEGs can be partly attributed to a large number of respondents who were members of LEGs and had firsthand experience and knowledge of the role and structure of LEGs.

Examples of comments pertaining to LEGs include:

- *The LEG concept has been fantastic – community members definitely feel they are driving this project in partnership with service providers (CFC Centre Leader).*
- *I am proud to be a part of our LEG and we are privileged to have a Centre Leader and CIW that are both wonderful communicators and motivators. There is a strong respect for everybody and it is exciting to be a part of. The structure of the CFC project allows us to set goals, discuss and review so it helps keep us on track. We can learn much from the other CFCs in the State, be inspired by their achievements and draw on their strengths (parent/community member).*
- *Reflection is new to some members of our LEG and a valuable tool to learn! (services worker - government).*
- *I think the formation of the LEG has allowed a broad cross-section of the community to be heard and validated (services manager - government).*

Community Inclusion Workers:

The following statements relating to the work of CIWs were identified by the ARP following a close connection and working relationship with all CIWs.

*How well was the work done?*

#### **Answer option**

The **Community Inclusion Worker** (formerly SICLO) connects, organises and supports the CFC community so that parents, community members and services are involved and informed about the CFC.

*What difference has been made?*

#### **Answer option**

I believe parents, community members and services feel more supported, informed and confident to be involved in CFC planning and decisions as a result of work done by the **Community Inclusion Worker**.

Responses for the above statements were heavily skewed towards strongly agreed (How Well – 74 per cent; Difference – 64 per cent). Responses for agreed were also high (How Well – 24 per cent; Difference – 29 per cent). It should be noted that 17 per cent (n=10) of respondents were CIWs.

Comments pertaining to CIWs included:

- *The community inclusion worker has worked with parents, children and the community and has achieved a high rate of parents being involved in the LEG group (parent/community member).*
- *Our CIW has worked hard to share her passion for the CFC with others, and is quite strategic in the way she goes about her work (Assistant Principal/LEG member).*



- *The Community Inclusion Worker is the person who has provided the community support and has worked so hard to make sure that the CFC will be successful (services worker – government).*

Action Research Project:

The following statements were identified for the work done and difference made for the ARP following a review of the ARP workplan and project purpose.

*How well was the work done?*

#### **Answer options**

The **Action Research Project** models a way to identify results or outcomes we want for children and families and how we might measure our progress toward these outcomes.

The **Action Research Project** helps us to reflect on what we are doing by sharing the learning from all Child and Family Centres.

*What difference has been made?*

#### **Answer options**

I now feel clearer about the results or outcomes we want for our children and families and how we might start to measure progress toward these outcomes, as a result of work done by the **Action Research Project**.

I now have more understanding about what has worked well and what some of the challenges are across all Child and Family Centre communities, as a result of work done by the **Action Research Project**.

The responses showed that 49 per cent agreed with the statements concerning how well the work was done, while 53 per cent agreed with the difference made statements. Compared to other roles, neutral responses were higher, with 7 per cent and 9 per cent of respondents selecting neither agree or disagree for how well statements; 11 per cent and 16 per cent selecting neither agree or disagree for the difference made statements.

Comments made about the ARP included:

- *Action Research has given tools to look at where we are (baseline) and where we should be heading and how to monitor change (CIW).*
- *Action Research Project is invaluable in the process (CIW).*
- *Action Research has been a primary driver in the development and thinking around where we need to head as a community with the improvement of outcomes (CIW).*

#### 4.1.2 Adopting a statewide outcomes approach

*Effectiveness of Statewide Outcomes Framework (SOF)*

Feedback obtained by the ARP through interviews, observations and attendance at key forums and workshops indicated the SOF document was helpful in:

- giving guidance and direction to the overall CFC project
- giving a statewide context for CFC communities as they formed local outcomes
- providing a common or shared reference point for CFC communities and other project functions (e.g. Project Team, Learning and Development Strategy).

While the SOF was not intended to be used for community consultations, it was sent to Local Enabling Groups (LEGs) for the purpose of generating discussion. Feedback from Local Enabling Groups suggests the SOF document distributed in June 2010 largely failed to generate the sort of discussion of outcomes and related details that was hoped for.

LEG comments about the SOF included:

*Too many words ... too overwhelming.*

*The Vision and Outcomes were ok, but the rest of it doesn't work.*

*Everyone's eyes just glazed over – you don't know where to look.*

*If you are familiar with these sorts of documents it's ok, but for our parents and even some services it's not.*

The recent review of the SOF has produced a community poster that will simplify the outcomes message. The ARP developed a summary version of the SOF that was useful for raising awareness of a statewide vision and outcomes, as part of the development of local outcomes (see Appendices I and J for SOF and summary version).

Reflection from CFC communities, including LEGs, CIWs and CLs, indicates that an outcomes-based approach has been helpful in focussing on desired results as a means to getting clearer about the planning and monitoring that is required. However, at the point of writing this report (January 2012), there is no statewide evaluation plan in place that links community and statewide outcomes with ongoing monitoring and evaluation. The lack of an evaluation plan has led to some questions and confusion at community level regarding what measures will be required and what the next steps are beyond identifying outcomes.

#### 4.1.3 Importance of relationship building

A clear lesson arising from the Child and Family Centres (CFC) project to date has been the importance of positive relationships for engaging community and forming a foundation for change. In circumstances where outcomes for children have not improved in recent decades, despite the best efforts of parents, services and governments (Moore, 2008), the Learning and Development Strategy (LaDS) has led a deliberate strategy to 'do things differently' (see Value of Support Provided to CFC Sites – Learning and Development in previous section).

In 'doing things differently' to improve outcomes for children through the establishment of quality, integrated Child and Family Centre communities, the LaDS has focussed on inclusive, trusting and genuine ways to build connection and a shared understanding for all involved in the CFC project (parents, community members and services staff).

The systematic rollout of training in the Family Partnership Model (Davis and Day, 2010) underpinned the approach to strengthen relationships. Training commenced with all CIWs in early 2010, and has occurred or is planned in all CFC communities. Participants have included parents, services (including Child Health and Parenting nurses and staff) and CFC project and other government agency staff. The emerging critical mass of CFC people familiar with the Family Partnership Model has enabled the sharing of ideas, language and a common approach to building and maintaining helpful relationships.

The resulting impact on community engagement and participation (discussed throughout this report), is at the core of community development, where community drives the process, rather than services or government dictating what is to happen.

Reflection and feedback obtained from interviews with community participants and attendance at LEGs and community workshops suggested further factors that have been helpful in building relationships and community engagement. These include:

- taking time at the beginning of meetings and forums to welcome and introduce participants in a way that is warm and welcoming, inclusive and respectful
- a meeting venue that is known and comfortable for community members
- meeting format that is relaxed, welcoming and has seating that ensures participants are able to see each other
- the availability of refreshments and space for children and childcare
- sharing responsibility for setting the meeting agenda and other decision-making
- use of language that is inclusive and accessible to all participants
- parent/community representatives in leadership roles – chairing or helping to chair meetings
- being mindful of the excluding and intimidating effect behaviour, dress and body language can have on community participation.

To illustrate the effect of the above factors, the following sample of feedback from parents regarding their CFC experience was gathered from parents through interviews and reflections from CFC meetings, workshops and forums.

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I see the Child and Family Centre as a tree branching out, with all the exciting things happening in our community; by being involved we (parents/community members) are taking responsibility for our community.

***parent, Geeveston***

I was unwilling to get involved at first because I was nervous. When I first started going to the (CFC) workshops, I was very anxious, but now I walk in and feel ok. We are all there for the same reason.

***parent, Derwent Valley***

It (CFC workshop) was great. You felt really welcomed to have a say and that what you said was worth something.

***parent, Burnie***

I see the Child and Family Centre assisting parents and families in a way that they feel comfortable and welcome.

***service, Beaconsfield***

I've always felt welcomed and everyone gets to have their input; I've never felt like I shouldn't be there (CFC meeting/workshop).

***parent, East Devonport***

My mind has been expanded to new things. I believe becoming involved in my community has helped me grow personally. I have a say and I'm being listened to.

***parent, Geeveston***

The very first (CFC) meeting I went to, oh my god, all these government names, I was thinking my opinion was not going to matter at all. But to sit in a circle and find out that these people are not just these big, long names, but are actually a person who is really interested in what you have got to say and that you are going to have a say about what's going to happen in the Centre.

***parent, Clarence Plains***

It's good to have somewhere to go (CFC meetings/workshops) where you feel validated and where the whole feel is that everyone appreciates other opinions; nobody is wrong and you feel like you are really wanted somewhere.

***parent, East Devonport***

For those involved I think it's (the CFC) brought us closer together. I'm talking about people you might have said hello to when dropping the kids off at school or see at the shop. Whereas now, we've got something to talk about.

***parent, Clarence Plains***

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The following feedback was gathered by the Learning and Development Strategy from workshop participants (community and services).

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These meetings are different. I feel equal to everyone else even though I'm not a professional. I have ideas that I contribute and people stop and really listen to what I have to say

I've seen big changes already! How meetings are held, the time we give to getting to know one another, the language used ... it all helps mums like me feel more comfortable being involved

I understand so much more about why we need to develop a new type of service for families. I think the workers in the training understand too. We are all excited about it but it is going to be hard

Being here with everyone is the best part, working in small groups and trusting each other

Being a part of these sessions gives me something outside of my everyday life, it makes me feel valuable and linked to the community

Coming here and working together has for the first time made me think that we can make a real difference for our kids

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## 4.2 CFC community level progress

### 4.2.1 Level of parent, child and community participation

Increasing participation by parents, children and community members in establishing Child and Family Centres has been an exciting feature of the CFC project over the past two years. Evidence of parent and community involvement can be seen in Local Enabling Groups, community forums and workshops, Learning and Development statewide forums and in local programs and activities initiated by CFC staff.

Feedback from community workshop participants and material gained through interviews with LEG and community members reveals some helpful and unhelpful factors.

*Helpful factors that enable parent/community participation include:*

- the extent that parents and community members feel comfortable, welcomed, valued and listened to (see Importance of Relationship Building – impact of Learning and Development Strategy)
- a meeting format and venue that is informal and relaxed
- the availability of childcare within eyesight of parents
- quality of support, encouragement and information given by Community Inclusion Workers (also see Value of Support to CFC Sites – CIWs)
- existence of community leadership through Community Co-Chairpersons.

*Unhelpful factors that discourage parent/community participation include:*

- frequent change in leadership or Community Inclusion Worker personnel
- use of bureaucratic language or jargon
- discussions dominated by services or individuals.

Participation by parents and community members in CFC activity varies widely across CFC communities. Below are two case studies obtained through observations and interviews by the ARP with the relevant CFC communities and LEGs.

#### Case study 1

The *Geeveston CFC community* approached the task of community engagement and participation in a way that was different from other CFC communities. Established, trusted relationships had already been formed between key service staff and community members/parents, prior to the announcement of a Child and Family Centre.

There was an early focus on engaging parents and community around the idea of a CFC – with an emphasis on asking the community about their ideas and expectations. Considerable pressure to form a Local Enabling Group (LEG) was resisted in favour of informal community meetings that gave parents and community members opportunities to become informed, give their views and explore options about the proposed CFC.

Eventually the Geeveston LEG was formed in mid 2010 and currently has at least 50 per cent participation from community members/parents. The LEG remains the main planning, governance and workshop forum for the CFC community.

#### Case study 2

The *Burnie CFC community* has strengthened participation by parents and community in a different way. A LEG was established in early 2010; however, participation by parents has been low. This is despite considerable effort by the Community Inclusion Worker (CIW) and other LEG members to encourage parent involvement. There was additional pressure, both implied and actual, from the broader CFC project to improve parent participation in the LEG.

The CIW continued to build relations with parents and community members by regularly visiting Launching into Learning and other playgroups and schools where parents of young children were attending and engaged. This approach was successful in attracting parents and community members to participate in Learning and Development community forums, where around 30 parent, community and service representatives regularly attend. Almost all LEG members attend these forums, with discussions and feedback taken back to LEG meetings for discussion and endorsement.

This approach (community forum and LEG) has led to more parents being interested in the LEG; however, the informality and community feel of the workshops continue to attract higher numbers of parents.

### *Community development – Community Inclusion Worker*

The role of Community Inclusion Worker (CIW) in particular, as indicated by the Statewide Survey data above, has had a major influence on the extent of parent and community engagement and participation. At the commencement of the ARP, CIWs were identified as key contact points within CFC communities. Consequently, the ARP has had consistent interaction with CIWs throughout the project, enabling close observation and feedback. Interview responses from CIWs and LEG members indicate that locating the CIW role within CFC communities has been a major contributing factor in maintaining engagement of parents, community members and services.

In more isolated or rural communities (Derwent Valley, West Coast, Burnie, Break O’Day), CIWs are members of their CFC community. Interview feedback from these CIWs and their LEG members suggest this connection brings enormous knowledge and understanding about the people, services and issues in respective communities. This in turn can lead to increased trust and connection for many parents and community members.

Throughout the CFC initiative there have been examples where CIW personnel have changed or the appointment has been delayed, causing negative effects on community engagement, participation and communications. The East Devonport and George Town CFC communities experienced periods of approximately eight weeks without a CIW, following the departure of a previous CIW. LEG members and parents from both communities reported the following changes:

- less knowledge among CFC community, particularly parents, about what was happening and fewer parents attending LEG meetings or CFC workshops
- less communication with other CFC communities
- less contact with the CFC Project Team
- fewer organised CFC events and workshops.

The Bridgewater CFC community was without a dedicated CIW role until the recent appointment of an Aboriginal Liaison Worker (role similar to CIW). Until this appointment, a number of personnel had undertaken a combination liaison and CIW role. However, the absence of a dedicated CIW role over the past two years has had an impact on community engagement, participation and communications. Feedback from LEG and wider CFC community members suggest there has been a lack of consistency and organisation due to changing personnel and the absence of a CIW, as in other CFC communities.

Responses from the Parent and Community Journal (see Appendix A), indicate the importance of CIWs in introducing parents to the CFC. Thirteen parents from six CFC communities were interviewed about their involvement and thoughts on a Child and Family Centre. Of the nine parents who were involved in the CFC in some way (attending workshops, LEG meetings, forums), six were introduced by the CIW.



#### 4.2.2 Growing community leadership and building capacity

Growing community leadership and increasing community capacity is evidenced by parents and other community members taking on LEG Co-Chairperson roles and/or expressing increased confidence to speak out, participate in and contribute to the CFC planning and decision-making. The empowerment of individuals and community capacity building through greater self-confidence and awareness of skills and expertise has been a significant change that has occurred in CFC communities as a result of the CFC initiative.

One example of the empowerment of individuals leading to increased community capacity was provided at the Statewide Forum in George Town in October 2011. George Town parents shared their journey towards increased confidence and self-esteem as a result of becoming involved in the CFC and LEG. They spoke of an awakening to benefits beyond just for themselves; they spoke of an increased awareness and motivation to improve things for all children and the wider community.

Examples of change and growth can be found in all CFC communities. By way of illustration, two personal stories of growth and change are shared in this report (see Parent Stories of Change – Appendix G). These stories are powerful reflections from two parents about their journey, growth and empowerment regarding their involvement in their respective CFCs.

#### 4.2.3 Impact of local outcomes:

A substantial part of the ARP workplan involved providing input into the CFC initiative through the development of local outcomes and associated frameworks. Feedback and reflection from CFC community outcomes workshops and working groups has indicated some helpful learning about this work.

Lessons arising from local outcomes development included:

- parent and service participation helped with shared understanding and better relationships that keep the focus on children and families
- a focus on outcomes helped balance local activity away from just the 'bricks and mortar' issues associated with buildings to consideration of what happens inside or as a result of the building
- a focus on outcomes helped communities become clearer about why to bother with a CFC and what some of the benefits could be
- using clear and agreed language and negotiating common meaning and understanding was essential to maintain parent and community participation and ownership.

Tables 5 and 6 are examples of negotiating language and common meaning as a way to build shared understanding and ownership when developing local outcomes (see Appendix K for copy of outcomes workshop plan; Appendix L for list of visions and outcomes and Appendix M for an example of expanded outcome).

Table 5: Burnie CFC outcomes workshop (20 July 2011)

WHAT are outcomes?	WHY have outcomes?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• goal</li> <li>• something to work towards</li> <li>• results of action (or inaction)</li> <li>• achieving something</li> <li>• good results we want/end result</li> <li>• expectation of something happening</li> <li>• reflection on <b>how we are</b> going</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• direction - so we know where we are going</li> <li>• purpose</li> <li>• so we don't stagnate</li> <li>• to measure how we are going</li> <li>• communicating a shared understanding</li> <li>• to keep us on track – otherwise how do we know we are on the right track?</li> </ul>

The word 'outcomes' is not a word used widely in local communities by parents. To explore and develop outcomes for a CFC community, it is essential to be clear (as a group, workshop participants or community) about what we mean by this word.

Table 5 above reflects workshop participants' responses to the two questions, what are outcomes? and why have outcomes? This enabled discussion about shared understanding and agreement, before moving on to the main question: *What are the good results or outcomes we want for our children and families?*

Table 6 below shows further clarification of language required to progress a local outcomes framework.

COMMUNITY LANGUAGE	PLANNING LANGUAGE
Our dream.....	.....Vision
<u>What</u> we want to achieve.....	.....Outcomes
<u>What</u> we want to target.....	.....Objectives
<u>How</u> we will do it broadly.....	.....Strategies
<u>How</u> we will do it specifically.....	.....Activities
How we will know if we're making a difference – measuring the <u>What</u> .....	.....Impact indicators
How we will know we've done what we said we would do, and in a satisfactory way - measuring the <u>How</u> .....	.....Process indicators

Table 6: Negotiating outcomes language and meaning

Feedback from parents and other community members attending Learning and Development and Action Research facilitated workshops indicate that using language that is not commonly understood or shared is unhelpful. Such language is viewed as jargon and leads to confusion and disengagement.

Facilitating discussion and exploration of local outcomes with CFC communities, in conjunction with LaDS, has required many more community visits and workshops than originally planned. Reasons for this include:

- outcomes discussions need to fit into a community context that includes acknowledging the community story, agreeing on ways of working together, building a picture of what CFCs are about and why change is needed and drafting a shared vision (all work progressed by LaDS)
- enabling and building engagement by parents and community members requires trusting, genuine and respectful relationship development – appropriate time must be scheduled for this
- communities have their own priorities and timing requirements and imposing external schedules can undermine ongoing community participation.

Table 7 shows all CFC communities making substantial progress toward developing local outcomes, with six communities having commenced or completed a draft local outcomes framework (30 October 2011).

Table 7: Local Outcomes Development (October 2011)

	<i>Initial visit</i>	<i>Introduce outcomes approach</i>	<i>Statewide Outcomes Framework discussed</i>	<i>Vision drafted</i>	<i>First outcomes workshop</i>	<i>Draft local outcomes</i>	<i>Second and subsequent visits re outcomes</i>	<i>Local outcomes developed and agreed to</i>	<i>Outcome(s) expanded into framework</i>
BEACONSFIELD	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
BREAK O'DAY	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
BRIDGEWATER	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes		
BURNIE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	commenced
CHIGWELL	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	
CLARENCE PLAINS	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
EAST DEVONPORT	yes	yes	yes	preliminary work completed	preliminary work completed	yes			
GEEVESTON	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	
GEORGE TOWN	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes			
DERWENT VALLEY	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	commenced
QUEENSTOWN	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes				
RAVENSWOOD	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	commenced

#### 4.2.4 Journey to Integrated Service Delivery

A key target of the Tasmanian Child and Family Centres initiative was better integration of services in order to improve outcomes for children and families.

The integration of services for children and families within Child and Family Centres is intended to provide an opportunity for fundamental re-engineering of services currently delivered by government agencies, as opposed to simply relocating services to a single site. In order to achieve true integration there needs to be common values, vision and commitment across all services, community members, government staff, leaders and managers who are involved in the delivery, management or uptake of CFC services (CFC Project Team, 2011b).

It is too early to say that Child and Family Centres are resulting in better integration of services and therefore improved outcomes for children; however, the journey towards integrated service delivery as one way of achieving better outcomes for children has certainly commenced.

Three papers on integrated service delivery have been written from within the CFC project (CFC Project Team 2011a; CFC Project Team 2011b; Learning and Development – Prichard et. al. 2010). These papers outline the case for better collaborative and integrated service arrangements and put forward models to explain key elements of an effective integrated service delivery approach. While the target audience varies, it is not clear what impact these papers have had on either the journey to integrated service delivery at the CFC community level, or on service system collaboration, particularly at middle and senior management levels in key government agencies.

A major part of the Learning and Development Strategy program delivered with CFC communities involved conversation about integrated service delivery – its elements, meaning and benefits. LaDS' aim is for this work was for draft action plans in each CFC community that incorporate a vision and outcomes for integrated service delivery.

All CFC communities have commenced exploration and planning around integrated service delivery; some are more advanced than others. Feedback from Learning and Development and CFC communities has reflected the following issues and factors:

- Community workshops and discussions around integrated service delivery become more difficult to schedule as the CFC building opening approaches – focus shifts to the building.
- Taking time to consider such questions as: what is integrated service delivery? what does it look like? what needs to happen? leading to a 'To Do' list of actions, has helped CFC communities develop a shared understanding of and be clear together about the possible benefits for children.
- Feedback from some individuals and groups, including Aboriginal people, is that the term 'integration' is unhelpful and can be offensive.

- The importance and benefit of service representatives, particularly frontline staff, participating in preliminary conversations that help build and strengthen relationships.
- The perception from some CFC communities that local services are being asked to 'collaborate and work together better', when this approach does not appear to be modelled by middle or senior management in their service or agency.
- A lack of structural change within services and agencies can lead to a sense of 'lack of permission' for frontline staff, leading to inertia and blocking.
- There has been a positive shift in the way services and parents/community members interact and develop a shared understanding.
- There remains a sense that progress and change to date is person-dependent; the challenge is to embed this into the way we all work together, so that it is expected and supported.
- The collection, sharing and use of information and data is necessary and must not be used as a reason why collaboration and integrated service delivery fails.

#### *Beaconsfield CFC*

As the first to open its doors (March 2011) the Beaconsfield CFC offers a glimpse of what might be possible in relation to the integration of service delivery. Child Health and Parenting (CHAPS) operate from the Centre, together with playgroups run by Launching into Learning. Recently a psychologist commenced a part-time practice from the Centre offering bulk-billed services for adults and children. A childcare facility (operated by a non-government provider) operates next to the CFC.

Feedback from interviews with people involved with the Beaconsfield CFC (including the former Local Enabling Group chairperson [Government Department representative], Advisory Board chairperson, Centre Leader and Community Inclusion Worker), suggest that 'natural connections' were occurring between people and between services. All interviewees felt these connections were happening through the co-location of services within the CFC and as a result of CHAPS attracting parents and families into the Centre. The Centre Leader indicated that as relationships formed and strengthened, opportunities were created for multiple points of help to be available.

Although very early on the journey, it appears co-location of services within a welcoming and attractive place can lead to opportunities for connection and help that may not have otherwise occurred. More evaluation and monitoring is required.

#### *Joint CFC and Learning Information Network Centre (LINC) sites*

Two CFC sites (George Town and Queenstown) were identified at the commencement of the CFC initiative as community services hub sites. Hubs are multi-service or multi-use sites where multiple service functions are co-located to achieve convenience and better access for users, together with improved efficiencies and connections for services.

At West Coast the CFC has been co-located with LINC (bringing together Library, Archives and Heritage, Adult Education and Online Access Centres) and Service Tasmania to create a community services hub. A similar model is planned for Bridgewater and George Town.

It is clear from interviews with key players involved in creating a workable Hub model that differing service philosophies and roles have made for difficult and at times tense negotiations between CFCs and LINC.

These tensions can partly be explained through different understandings of 'integration' and 'integrated service delivery' by key stakeholders.

CFCs have embarked on a journey to better integrate and connect early years services as a means to improve outcomes for children. This journey has been supported through comprehensive and detailed work by LaDS, involving many hours of discussion and consideration in each CFC community about what 'integrated service delivery' looks like and what needs to happen to achieve progress.

Meanwhile LINC and Service Tasmania (Hub partners) are more likely to view 'integration' in terms of co-location opportunities for sharing space, resources and improving communications and service access for respective service users. The CFC view of integrated service delivery is founded on people and on building relationships to improve trust, engagement, confidence and ownership; LINC and Service Tasmania are concerned with creating opportunities for better access for service users through multiple services co-locating and co-sharing a space. This view is an earlier step on the overall journey toward integrated service delivery – perhaps a step that CFCs have moved beyond.

#### *Journey to Integration Service Delivery Snapshot*

While there are issues arising from the design of the Snapshot, participation levels and the data collected (see 3.4.5 Challenges Faced in Collecting Data), there is some useful information to be gleaned from the data.

Generally, CFCs scored more strongly in Principles one and two (Service philosophy and provision is driven by the needs of children and families; Child, family and community participation is actively promoted and supported). Principle three (Governance and planning is informed and inclusive) also scored highly with some CFCs.

Principles five and four (Child and family centre's practice and programs are evaluated and reviewed; Professional practice is based on respectful relationships embedded in a learning culture) generally scored lower across all CFCs. Some CFCs also scored lower in Principle three and Principle one.

Among the higher scoring Attributes were:

- Philosophy and vision (Principle 1)
- Community consultation (P2)
- Child and family consultation (P2)
- Family representation on governance or steering group (P2)
- Relationship with local schools (P2)
- Supportive programs and opportunity for parents (P2)
- Steering of management group (P3).

- Among the lower scoring Attributes were:
- Referral processes and services accessibility (P1)
- Information systems and information provision (P3)
- Strategic direction (P 3)
- Staff involvement in strategic planning (P4)
- Employment arrangements (P4).

A full data report is presented in Part B of this report (see Appendix B).

#### 4.2.5 Effort required to embed action research

As indicated earlier in this report, embedding action research methods and tools is the least advanced area of activity undertaken by the Action Research Project (ARP). This is partly due to underestimating the time required to engage with each CFC community and work with them and their schedules to draft local outcomes and capture information. A further impact relates to Community Inclusion Worker's skills, experience and focus. An important part of the ARP's work was to build the case for ongoing action research methods and to raise knowledge and skill levels accordingly. While this work has commenced, further work will be undertaken in the second phase of this project.

However, the following progress can be reported:

- successful introduction of an outcomes-based approach, particularly with Community Inclusion Workers
- attendance by all CIWs at an information and skills workshop on outcomes approach and subsequent discussions with CIWs and Local Enabling Groups around capturing feedback from parents and community members
- development of CIWs as the key contact point for Action Research Project and increasing skills in outcomes approach and action research methods
- development of information gathering tools (including Community and Parent Journal and Integration Snapshot) with Community Inclusion Workers and implemented by CIWs with parents, LEG members and CFC community.

### 4.3 Summary of key themes

The ARP has collected substantial information from CFC communities, including parents, community members and services staff. In addition, data has been gathered from key project components, including the Learning and Development Strategy and CFC Project Team. The following key themes are emerging:

- Consultations and Communications
- Community Engagement and Participation
- Leadership and Community Development
- Change through Learning and Development.



A summary of key themes, enablers and barriers is provided in Part B of this report (see Appendix F).

It is important to note that information has been gathered from the very early stages of this project (from February 2010). While some of the issues discussed below may have been partially or fully addressed, it is important to capture and record the lessons that have been gained in order to inform future work.

### *Theme 1 Community consultation and communication*

#### Issues

During initial visits to CFC communities in April and May 2010, comment was made by key people in two communities (Ravenswood and Bridgewater) regarding the original community consultations when the Child and Family Centres initiative was first announced. In some (not all) instances the process appeared variable and sporadic in informing a wide spread of community members of the announcement of a CFC in the area and what this meant. Subsequent early stage information dissemination and consultation appeared variable, as some community members became aware of the announcement, while others did not.

Similar comments have been made by community members attending workshops and interviews across other CFC communities. Many parents were surprised to discover a Child and Family Centre was planned for their area. The issue raised here is about how to maximise community knowledge and support around an initiative. In some communities, the extent to which announcements are broadly shared and consultation occurs is dependent on the networks, resources and skills of the individuals and groups receiving and sending the information. The way in which an initiative is announced or introduced can have impact future support and engagement. Feedback from parents indicates that announcements made through newspapers have little impact and exclude those with low literacy.

Communication between CFC communities, Local Enabling Groups and other key stakeholders has been enhanced through regular monthly newsletters and the maintenance of the CFC website. Parents not directly involved in the LEG are less likely to access these communication channels. On the other hand, Statewide Forums organised through the Learning and Development Strategy, enable progress and information to be shared across CFC communities, including parents and community members not formally involved with CFC processes. The Forums have been successful in building engagement. The opportunity for community members to present their progress and successes has clearly inspired other communities to commit to further community engagement and participation. A recent example can be found with the George Town Forum in October 2011, where George Town parents sat on stage and shared how their confidence and self-esteem had increased as a result of being involved in discussions and planning about their CFC (including attending previous Statewide Forums). They reported how the CFC was a connecting point for parents to come together and share a common community purpose.

The Action Research Project (ARP) found there was significant variation in the frequency and quality of communication across CFC communities, particularly when providing ARP feedback to communities via email. Community Inclusion Workers were usually the first point of contact, as well as the usual dissemination point for sharing ARP feedback with Local Enabling Groups (LEG) and the broader CFC community. However, interviews with LEG members and LEG chairpersons reveal that some communications and feedback material either was not received or at least not remembered. There is often an assumption that when reports and other information-based material are sent to a target group, that this information is received, read and absorbed. Such assumptions are misleading and may hide gaps in information sharing and dissemination.

## *Theme 2      Community engagement and participation*

### Issues

Early feedback regarding community/parent participation in CFC processes identified some barriers inhibiting parent access and participation. Lack of childcare during community meetings, scheduling of meetings (day and time) and the intimidating nature of some meeting formats (formal feel, language used, unfamiliar people, 'official looking/government' people) were raised as issues that affect community/parent participation.

However, in the 18 months since this initial feedback, enormous and tangible change has occurred. Evidence of change can be seen in how communities meet together, how parents and community members are welcomed, and how conversations are taking place. As discussed previously in this report, change has occurred in part as a result of explicit conversations and agreements about what is a respectful and inclusive approach. The modelling of this approach to 'strengthen relationships' through Learning and Development community workshops has enabled CFC communities to build connections and participation.

The other major ingredient in supporting engagement and participation is the presence within communities of Community Inclusion Workers. Their role as a connection point and support resource for parents, services staff and other community and CFC project people has largely been responsible for maintaining community engagement, participation and in some cases, expanding community skills, capacities and independence.

However, it is also apparent that where CIW personnel have changed (George Town and East Devonport), or been delayed in their appointment (Ravenswood), or no CIW has been appointed (Bridgewater), , there is a discernible negative effect on parent and community engagement. Interestingly, while issues around the 'the build' were noted by some to be a distraction, others felt an absence of a building or 'build process' at times discouraged parents from becoming involved or maintaining their involvement.

The increasing provision of childcare for parents attending community meetings is helpful. Running community meetings with young children and babies present highlights an approach that is tolerant, values parents, and is child- focussed. The increasing role and presence of community co-chairpersons is also encouraging local community participation and giving CFC meetings more of a local feel, rather than one dominated by 'outsiders, government or other workers'.

The presentation and consideration by communities of sensitive children and family data (Kids Come First, Australian Early Development Index) has posed challenges for all. Appropriately, communities have been encouraged to consider this material from a strengths perspective and as an impetus to improve results for children. These presentations need to be more planned and strategic, so that outcomes discussions and reviews can occur with the benefit of this data. Opportunities for CFC communities to receive updates and refresher information sessions around helpful data will be important and beneficial.

Forming and supporting respectful relationships is a key ingredient for the engagement and participation of community members, particularly parents. Meetings and gatherings where service providers dominate or direct conversation usually lead to community member and parent disengagement.

Issues of engagement and participation for Aboriginal children and families have been raised across all CFC communities. Feedback from Aboriginal people connected with the two Child and Family Centres with Aboriginal focus (Bridgewater and Geeveston) reiterated that Aboriginal families required the same positive approach that non-Aboriginal people reflected – (positive relationships, non-judgemental attitudes and a culturally warm, welcoming environment). The ARP interviewed Aboriginal families regarding their thoughts and expectations of a CFC (see Appendix H). The availability of free cultural competency training has led to more open and positive discussions around Aboriginal engagement across many CFC communities.

The extent to which an inclusive and respectful partnership approach is sustainable and leads to long-term change in participation by parents and community members is likely to be influenced by how far this approach is modelled across all sectors and layers of the CFC initiative. This presents challenges for senior leadership within government and non-government agencies, as there remains a strong perception that action and change being asked for on the ground is not being modelled at other levels of the service system.

### *Theme 3 Leadership and community development*

#### Issues

The broad notion of leadership and its influence on community engagement and participation has been consistently raised across all CFC communities. Some responses during the initial visits to CFC communities suggested more high-level leadership was required to promote and market the CFCs at local and statewide levels.

Other responses suggested some community members/parents were intimidated and became disengaged through a perception that outside people had been appointed to run the community meetings and that local community voices would not be heard. As already reported, there is strong evidence that the role of Community Inclusion Workers has had a counterbalancing effect on these perceptions, with local engagement encouraged and supported.

A number of senior departmental staff interviewed by the ARP raised questions about the capacity of leadership within government agencies to lead a collaborative, integrated approach at a time of severe funding restraint. Many observed that during such periods in the past, programs, services and agencies tend to retreat back to core business and work even more within a 'silo' system. Also raised in these interviews was the perception that high-level CFC project champions were no longer in place, following government restructuring and/or natural attrition. This poses a significant risk for the CFC project in relation to future support and governance.

A further area of leadership raised by departmental staff during the early stages of the project relates to the absence of key project management documentation. The CFC Project Team has prepared significant and helpful documentation for CFC Local Enabling Groups and communities covering all aspects of the design and build of CFC spaces, governance, policies and procedures, operating principles, equipment inventories, templates for information and data collection. However, the ARP was unable to locate cohesive and guiding project management documentation that enabled progress and key milestones to be tracked. A set of project management documents would normally set out short, medium and long-term project goals, project scope, a governance and project stakeholder map, communications plan, risk management strategy and issues register. It is noted that the Tasmanian Government has developed a comprehensive set of project management resources that are well regarded throughout Australia. The lack of this documentation may partly explain some of the early confusion and role clarification discussions between key project components (PT, LaDS and ARP).

The appointment of CFC Centre Leaders over recent months has seen an emerging group of experienced and skilled leaders who have significantly shifted the momentum of the CFC project. A recent CFC Centre Leaders induction workshop explored leadership and listed the following desirable characteristics:

- listening and understanding;
- being prepared and planned;
- bringing people together;
- taking the heat – making decision when required;
- knowing about relationships and their importance;
- articulating a vision; and
- building confidence and skills in others.

A further area of leadership and community development that has had significant impact on CFC communities and parent participation is the emergence of community co-chairpersons (see Appendix G – Parent Stories of Change). Reflections from parents who have taken up community co-chair roles reveal the nervousness and anxiety they felt when initially attending CFC meetings and forums. However, they also reflect their growth in confidence, self-esteem and excitement as discussions and planning proceed. One parent who is now a community co-chair of a CFC Local Enabling Group said:

... For a person whom has lived in this community for 15 years and has had to put up with all the stigma which is attached to (this community) and outside people thinking we are all drop kicks who wouldn't have a clue about anything of any importance this [people really listening to what I have to say] was really important. On this day I finally saw real people who really do want to make a difference in our fantastic little community that I know and love. I walk away from that meeting feeling extremely proud of what I had achieved that day ... The more community members that are involved in this project the bigger the statement to outsiders that for a majority of us we believe our children deserve the best start in life just as any other. In doing so these children will prosper and it will be passed on to the next generation.

The influence of a local parent in a leadership and support role within a CFC community cannot be underestimated in encouraging more parent/community voices to be heard. Currently all CFC communities either have a community co-chairperson in place or are planning for this to occur (see 4.2 CFC Community Level Progress).

#### *Theme 4      Change through learning and development*

##### Issues

The overarching objective of the CFC Learning and Development Strategy (LaDS) is:

to provide a planned professional development program for staff and community members who are involved in the establishment and operation of CFCs to support the operation of integrated child and family services (LaDS planning workshop, May 2011).

The rollout of a Learning and Development Strategy alongside the CFC initiative has provided crucial support for change and had a major impact on the extent and substance of progress toward CFC initiative outcomes. The development of partnership approaches and the engagement and connectedness of families and parents figure prominently in the CFC Statewide Outcomes around Community and Services (see Appendix I). While measurement and evaluation of these outcomes is yet to be formalised, there is clear evidence of progress in each CFC community.

A culture of learning and development has been created through local and statewide learning and training opportunities, where parents, community members and service practitioners and managers have been brought together and invited to explore different ways of working and thinking. There has been a discernible flow-on effect across CFC communities as learning from LaDS workshops and forums are applied to Local Enabling Group meetings and other community forums

A focus on the importance of building and maintaining respectful relationships has enabled a shared or common understanding to be identified, where the views and expectations of parents and services are valued equally. The resulting increase in confidence and self-belief for many parents has led directly to the emergence of local leaders. All CFC communities have, or are considering how to have a Community Co-chair role in place. Through the emergence of local leaders, other parents and community members have been supported and inspired to participate and speak up.

Resourcing a dedicated and deliberate learning and development program is in line with what we know about how change is supported and sustained. The extent of systems and service change outlined by the CFC initiative requires ongoing change management and support. With the current LaDS due to cease in June 2013, there is uncertainty as to how future change management and support will occur – particularly as CFCs become fully operational and established in communities. At this stage this will mean a heavier reliance on Centre Leaders and whatever support structures are put in place to ensure ongoing reform momentum is maintained.

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## 5 Considerations for Further Action

Arising from the planning, action and reflection documented above are a number of further actions to be considered so as to enable the goals set at the commencement of the initiative to be achieved. The further actions outlined below are arranged according to the four key themes identified in the report. These actions apply and are relevant at statewide and CFC community levels.

### *Consultation and communication*

- A robust and inclusive **communication strategy** to ensure well-targeted and accessible information flow that supports helpful feedback, reflection and ongoing action learning.
- Continuing statewide **opportunities for sharing learning**, progress and successes that helps maintain connections between CFC communities and strengthen relationships.
- Involving **community champions and leaders** and acknowledging existing community networks and systems at the commencement of a community project will more likely lead to greater community/parent engagement, participation and ownership.

### *Community engagement and participation*

- The CFC project has demonstrated the power and effectiveness of taking time to **build helpful relationships and partnerships**; project planning and resource allocation must reflect an ongoing commitment to support this approach.
- Similarly, taking time to **explore common understanding** and shared language has had a positive effect on community engagement, participation, decision-making and ownership – language and communication style can empower and build confidence, or disempower and discourage engagement.
- Training in the Family Partnership Model (Davis and Day, 2010) has underpinned the CFC approach to partnership development and integrated service delivery; the systematic rollout of **Family Partnership Training and a reflective practice approach** across government and non-government sectors would greatly enhance and extend the work of CFC communities.

### *Leadership and community development*

- Immediate and longer term **statewide project governance** and monitoring needs to be clarified and defined now to consolidate progress and ensure quality, accountability, continuity and guidance. There is also a need to follow through on the expectations created in communities among parents and services to avoid any risk of the CFC initiative being viewed as just another failed government idea.
- An effective project governance team requires a **clear project management** approach, adequate resources and **supportive leadership** from senior management.
- High-level **strategic champions** are needed to guide and support the CFC initiative and ensure alignment with broad strategic policy.
- A planned, systematic and long-term **mentoring and support plan** for Community Inclusion Workers and Centre Leaders needs to be identified.
- An overarching **CFC evaluation plan** is needed to connect an outcomes approach with ongoing evaluation and monitoring to ensure quality approaches, demonstrate the worth of CFCs and report on improvements for children.
- Achieving joined up service delivery on the ground is difficult without **consistent leadership and a joined up approach at all levels** of the initiative or Agency.

### *Change through learning and development*

- **Successful and sustained change** will require ongoing support and resources. A learning and development strategy beyond June 2013 will cement progress and success to date and support further skills development and change.
- A community-friendly summary of the ARP Phase One Report to be shared with CFC communities as soon as possible to **reflect learning, celebrate successes and maintain momentum.**



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