

CHAIR REPORT TO REED 2019 AGM

REED is something that I believe very strongly in and think it is such an essential service for many small communities. From the few communities I am aware of, their volunteer committees are struggling with the increase in regulation and lack of appropriate staff, and I really hope REED's future acquisitions are as problem free as possible and enable these centres to keep offering childcare services. It's integral to small towns that parents are able to return to the workforce.

This is a comment from a recent conversation with someone about potentially becoming a member of the REED Board. I use it to open my report, as I think it captures so well the level of support that REED has across the Wheatbelt and what drives us as an organization.

With a starting point of two services in Narrogin, Great Beginnings Family Day Care across the region and broadening the former mobile services at Pingelly and Wickopin into centres, and the first merger successfully concluded on 1st July 2019 and the second on 1st September 2019, REED is well and truly underway. We are in the process of negotiating formal merger agreements concurrently with a further 12 services. While the target of 20 regional services to be operating under the REED umbrella by March 2020, is likely to be over-ambitious given the financial and human resources available, the scale and complexity of this strategically important initiative needs to be acknowledged.

The Board recently undertook a significant review of its operation in the context of a broader lessons learnt since our commencement in March last year. One of the findings concerned the importance of the strategic plan as a unifying factor across the Board:

Perhaps the most positive responses to the survey were contained in the third area of the review related to the strategy for the organisation. Over 90% of Board members believe that the strategy reflects the organisation's values, directions and objectives and a similar percentage believe that they understand the strategy and can articulate it in the public domain.

Accordingly, it is appropriate to re-state those four key directions of our current strategic plan in this report to the AGM.

1. Delivering a range of high-quality services
2. Ensuring the Organisation is sustainable

3. Building our Organisation
4. Engaging with the Community

and reflect on what we have achieved to date.

Highlights for me have included improvements in the quality of the services (as demonstrated through changes in the rating on national standards), acting on our commitment to implementing professional development and career path opportunities for our staff, increasing the utilisation of our services by attracting families from all the groups which make up the community, making the difficult decisions –such as in relation to fees- which will ensure our financial sustainability, implementing a range of improved systems to build our organization and actively engaging with key stakeholders.

Such activities do not occur in isolation and at this AGM, I would like to acknowledge the support that we have received. The goodwill and encouragement for us to succeed has been overwhelming:

- across the political spectrum, but in particular from Minister Simone McGurk and Nationals Leader Mia Davies;
- from the staff at the funding and regulatory bodies and in particular ECRU, the WA Department of Communities, Lotterywest and the WA office of the Commonwealth Department of Education;
- the Shire of Narrogin in whose building our regional office is based and other Local Government Authorities across the Wheatbelt, but in particular the Shires who have been prepared to continue the arrangements for leases at peppercorn rents, staff accommodation and grant funding which they have traditionally had with their local committees across to REED;
- ongoing pro bono legal support from Herbert Smith Freehills and Corrs, Chambers Westgarth;
- those we have formal partnerships with, such as Moorditj Youth Foundation Aboriginal Corporation; and
- regionally based organisations, and in particular, the Wheatbelt Business Network.

Particular mention must also be made of our staff capably led by General Manager Kylie Helgesen and ably supported by our senior Managers and our Finance and Admin team, as well as the project implementation team led by Jill Cameron and her colleagues Michael White, Philippa Gardener and Lauraine

Macpherson. Our heartfelt thanks to you all, not just for the work you have done but the many hours that have been put in beyond what you are paid for. You have all made an outstanding contribution to the successful establishment of REED.

And, to my fellow Board members, thank you - your input and your commitment has been invaluable and much appreciated. The work of being a Board member of REED is much more than participating in regular Board meetings. Every Board member has been involved in at least one, and in many cases, more than one, of our formal Committees and our Working Groups.

The role of two Committees, Audit and Risk and Human Resources are detailed in the Constitution, which underlines their important functions. We also established a Governance Committee which initially developed important documents including the Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Guidelines and will now be responsible for oversight of our Governance and Policy Framework.

Given the pivotal role of the Narrogin Regional Child Care Services in the establishment of REED, a specific Committee to facilitate this process of transition was put in place. As a result of a consultation process about to commence, it is likely to be replaced by some other mechanism by which Committees and families of merging services have a direct input into the REED Board.

The Board also set up a Project Control Group as an important vehicle for information exchange and accountability between REED's General Manager, the Project Team and the Board. The PCG has for example, developed a Three Stage Merger Process and a Merger Progress Chart which is updated by the PCG on a monthly basis and provided to the Board.

While not a formal Committee, the Board has also embarked on an Aboriginal Engagement Strategy which is already making an impact.

This AGM heralds the first major changes in the composition of the Board, as three Board members have resigned in recent months. Two members, whose terms have expired, have not re-nominated but have indicated their interest in continuing to be involved as members of Committees. Four members who all came through a formal appointments process have been newly appointed to the Board. So my heartfelt thanks to all of you and the contributions that you have made and will continue to make.



As REED, we have an exciting year ahead; I look forward to sharing that next phase of our journey with you.

Helen Creed,
Chairperson,
October, 2019