



Regional Early Education
and Development Inc

Strategic Plan 2021-2024

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WHO WE ARE

We are a not-for-profit organisation created in 2018 in the Wheatbelt region to provide high quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services for families in regional Western Australia.

THE CHALLENGE

There are many small Early Childhood Centres in regional Western Australia who find it challenging to provide high quality services for families and children. We are taking on this challenge by bringing together these centres so that together we can build a single organisation that guarantees the funding and support each of these small regional centres need in order to provide quality early learning and development services.

THE BACKGROUND

Historically, most early childhood services in regional WA have relied on Commonwealth and State “Sustainability Funding” for continued operation. However, this is no longer the case and funding is now competitive and time limited.

For many small communities, these changes to funding, as well as low utilisation rates and relatively high costs for each child place, have put many services at risk as management committees, often made up of volunteers, also face significant regulatory obligations to ensure the successful operation of a quality and legally compliant ECEC service.

In response to this situation, the Regional Early Education and Development (REED) organisation created a new cluster model of management to provide not-for-profit services across the Wheatbelt region, reducing the burden upon volunteers to provide these vital community services. REED aims to improve financial viability through economies of scale, provide a consistent approach to quality service delivery, offer improved career development opportunities for staff, and provide a stronger foundation for growth, delivering real economic and social benefit to the region.

Strategic Plan 2021-2024

Our Vision

By working together we will assist country towns to ensure:

Children thrive and flourish because of high quality services.

Families have access to, and confidence in, the early learning and development services REED provides for their children.

Vibrant communities where families want to live, work and raise their children.

Our Mission

We will provide high-quality early learning and development services for children and families.

We will work with local communities to help them strengthen and grow through meeting the needs of families.

Our Values

In building our service we are guided by five key values -

Quality - It is our responsibility to provide the highest quality of service that we can to the young children whose well-being is the focus of our work.

Partnership – “It takes a village to raise a child”. We believe we will only be successful when we work in partnership with families and the community.

Respect and Inclusion - We respect the knowledge and skills of many diverse people who help us provide the best possible services for young children and we will actively work to include all children and families in our services.

Integrity – We apply the highest standards of accountability in our management of the public funds and private contributions that support our not-for-profit organisation.

Innovation and Curiosity – We believe we will only evolve and improve quality if we continually flex and pursue new opportunities for excellence and sustainability. This will be driven by an open curiosity and a willingness to be innovative in our services.

Strategic Plan 2021-2024

We are focused on promoting the learning and development of young children. In this work our key partners are:

Children - who we will engage with and listen to their needs for development and learning.

Families - who also are looking for high-quality services for their children and reliable care for them while families participate in the workforce.

Communities, including Local Governments - who understand the value of early childhood services in building community well-being and supporting regional economic and social development.

Our staff - for whom we aim to be the employer of choice, respecting their skills and enabling them to continue to build their capacities within a professional and supportive environment.

Funders - interested in supporting us to expand our service and its impact.

Federal, State and Local Governments that are also keen to see a successful model of provision of early childhood services in rural and regional areas.

ACHIEVEMENTS 2018-2021

- ❖ Merged 19 ECEC services into a single organisation.
- ❖ Built a single culture based on shared purpose and common values.
- ❖ Implemented centralised systems for finance, human resources, information and capital works.
- ❖ Improved the quality of services to meet national standards.
- ❖ Improved professional development for staff.
- ❖ Built a strong reputation in the communities where we are providing services.
- ❖ Built a strong reputation with funding bodies (State, Commonwealth and local governments) that continue their support for REED's work.

REED faces two major challenges as it seeks to achieve its objectives over the next three years.

Challenge 1 - Financial Viability

Early childhood services in Australia are funded by fees charged to families. Services must generate enough income to meet their expenses, particularly the cost of staffing.

Financial viability depends on enrolling sufficient children to meet these costs. In rural and regional areas where numbers of children are often low and variable, maintaining financial viability represents a major challenge. Small and isolated services can easily become unviable in the context of this business model.

To overcome these difficulties and to ensure the continued provision of quality early childhood services to small rural and regional communities, REED has developed a range of strategies to implement over the next three years.

Challenge 2 - Attracting and Retaining Staff

The second challenge that REED faces is attracting sufficient qualified staff to deliver on its objective of providing high-quality care and education to young children in the Wheatbelt and surrounding areas.

Rural and regional areas find it difficult to attract and retain the necessary staff to meet quality standards for a number of reasons. These include:

- ❖ Low wages generally paid to early childhood staff.
- ❖ Difficulties in finding appropriate accommodation for staff.
- ❖ Competing with large services in urban areas.
- ❖ Competing with schools to attract qualified early childhood teachers.

Strategic Plan 2021-2024

What we will achieve

Over the next three years we will meet these challenges and deliver high quality services by acting in four key areas.

Delivering a Range of High-Quality Services

Ensuring all our services meet or exceed national standards.

Understanding the needs of each community and providing the appropriate service.

Broadening the range of services that we offer to meet the needs of children and families.

Implementing strategies to retain and attract high quality staff, including access to professional development and career path opportunities.

Ensuring our Organisation is sustainable

Increasing the utilisation of our service by attracting families from all the groups which make up our community.

Building a strong reputation in our community.

Delivering an operational surplus each year with a business model that balances our income and expenditure.

Establishing ethically responsible partnerships with corporate partners.

Having effective mechanisms to identify and to manage risk.

Building our Organisation

Successfully merging ECEC services into the organisation as they are ready.

Working with communities that currently do not have ECEC services to open new services where possible.

Developing an inclusive organisational culture based on shared purpose and common values.

Our Board and management team operating with exemplary governance policies and systems to lead and support our services.

Engaging with the Community

Working in collaboration with parents and carers.

Implementing a strategy to engage Aboriginal children and families.

Implementing a strategy to engage vulnerable children and families in our services.

Using the feedback from children and families to improve our services.

Actively engaging local government in our services.

Implementing a communication plan which builds our reputation and informs our partners.

Specific Initiatives

Area 1 **Delivering a Range of High-Quality Services**

Implementing strategies to retain and attract high quality staff, including access to professional development and career path opportunities.

REED will work with State Government to develop incentives for regional ECEC staff. These may include:

- ❖ Scholarships of \$10,000 for up-skilling REED educators from Certificate III to Diploma level qualifications.
- ❖ Providing incentive payments of above-award rates in small difficult-to-staff locations.
- ❖ Providing a relocation allowance for staff moving to the Wheatbelt and other regional areas.
- ❖ Building on work with Narrogin TAFE and across the broader TAFE network to ensure the availability of training programs for REED staff.
- ❖ Working with State and Local Government to apply accommodation support initiatives to ECEC staff.

Area 1 **Delivering a Range of High-Quality Services**

Broadening the range of services that we offer to meet the needs of children and families.

The development of an integrated hub of co-located services for families may well provide REED with the opportunity to strengthen its position as a community member and community leader, delivering services that communities need.

REED will work with State Government and non-government agencies to develop co-located services. These may include:

- ❖ Child health services, dental services, hearing and speech pathology services, GP clinics and midwifery services.
- ❖ Organisations that provide family support such as Share and Care, Wanslea, NDIS providers.
- ❖ Schools with high proportion of low socio-economic population.

Specific Initiatives

Area 2 and 3

Building our Organisation and Ensuring it is Sustainable

Expansion and Consolidation

REED will continue to seek opportunities to merge with other organisations. However REED will consider how any further mergers might strengthen REED, making it more resilient.

REED will consider options for expansion into other regions of WA if these provide opportunities to strengthen our financial base and not diminish our original commitment to Wheatbelt communities.

Area 2 and 3

Building our Organisation and Ensuring it is Sustainable

Delivering Kindergarten Programs

The Commonwealth has provided additional funding to expand kindergarten programs in all states and territories.

If REED offered funded kindergarten programs this would increase the utilisation rates of services, reduce the cost and promote the employment of ECEC teachers in REED services.

REED will work with the State Government, the Department of Education and local schools to provide kindergarten programs as part of its early learning and development services.

Specific Initiatives

Area 4 Engaging with the Community

Implementing a strategy to engage Aboriginal children and families

REED will further develop a plan for a pilot project that aims to increase Aboriginal participation in ECEC. The project will rely on the employment of a cultural broker and a trainee educator who will:

- ❖ assist in providing a culturally safe environment.
- ❖ provide training and development.
- ❖ provide outreach to assist families in home.

The project will also seek to cover the out-of-pocket fee for Aboriginal children in ECEC services.

Area 4 Engaging with the Community

Communicating with the Community

REED will strengthen its communication strategy with the use of comparative statistics showing the progress that REED has made in the last two years.

These statistics might include:

- ❖ improvement in services' national quality ratings.
- ❖ increasing usage of services.
- ❖ increasing viability of services.
- ❖ the initial steps of an effective staff supervision and development program.

The strategy will include testimonials from staff and families.

Strategic Plan 2021-2024

We are conscious of the need to measure success in tangible ways. The following areas will be monitored by the Board

Key Indicators for Board Monitoring

- ❖ Reviewing the success of mergers as they occur.
- ❖ Financial outcomes monthly.
- ❖ Utilisation rates of each service on a monthly basis.
- ❖ Develop a risk register and report monthly against strategic risk.
- ❖ The participation of staff in professional development opportunities.
- ❖ The status of each service in relation to national standards.
- ❖ The level of participation of Aboriginal and CALD communities in our services.
- ❖ The participation of Local Government through financial and “in-kind” contributions.