

REED ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2022 – CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT

Looking back over the year, there are some key highlights that I would like to mention.

As an organisation, we have been able to deliver on our commitment to genuinely invest in our staff. Our second Educators Conference was held in January this year, drawing on feedback from our inaugural one and now established as a regular feature of our REED calendar. It is a great way to welcome in each new year. The Conference has been complemented with centre-based Professional Development activities and it has been fantastic to hear about the ways in which our Educators are supporting each other in their studies. Being in a financial position to provide small above award increases to Educators and start to look at other incentives we can provide has also been important.

REED has continued to grow, not only maintaining all of our existing services but developing a new cluster in the Mid-West. It is very clear that our model of bringing together existing services in a sustainable way works, yet it is so disappointing that 18 months after the election commitment that Local Governments have been funded, but no resources have been delivered directly to any services in regional Western Australia. It continues to perplex me that on the one hand, Government Ministers such as Minister McGurk congratulate us *“for the important work that REED does in improving access to childcare for those in the regions”* and yet on the other hand, no funding has been forthcoming.

REED now has a level of financial stability in that we are not reliant on government grants or Lotterywest funding to ensure our ongoing viability. While as a responsible organisation, we will always apply for funding that is available for expanding or enhancing our activities, it is a remarkable achievement that in the space of a relatively short period of time we are in the financial position to not only fund the roles that were initially established with the Department of Communities and LotteryWest funding but additional positions as well. This is now reflected in the organisational structure that our General Manager Kylie has established. What this means is that not only is REED supporting Kylie as General Manager with the creation of a genuine senior management team and acknowledging the leadership that she provides, it has enabled her to make a contribution more broadly to the sector and be recognised as a key voice for regional services.

REED is also beginning to fulfill our commitment to diversity and inclusion through the work of our Indigenous Community Liaison project, which is demonstrating tangible outcomes in terms of increasing the number of Aboriginal children attending REED services and increasing the number of Aboriginal staff employed. As some of you know, one of my other

roles is as Board member of the Water Corporation. I recently attended the opening of the Kamarang Conference which brings Aboriginal employees from across the state together. Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow is the cornerstone of many organisations reconciliation and two of the senior Aboriginal staff – Collene Castle and Taylor Hayward put together the following, which I asked permission to share with you as I think it is very applicable to REED’s approach as well:

*Reflecting on yesterday in order to embrace and respect our shared past;
Recognising our actions and achievements today;
Working together with a shared vision of tomorrow.*

In outlining these achievements, I do not want to underestimate the impact of the workforce challenges that we are facing. We know that our services are essential to enable many other workers to do their jobs. However, to put it very bluntly, the low wages and conditions of our staff and the voluntary efforts of our Board of Management and others who support us, are effectively subsidising what should be a properly funded and accessible system of early childhood learning and development.

Recently I participated in a consultation around the way in which Universal Access funding should be distributed across the early childhood education and care sector. In the consultation guide that the consultants, Price Waterhouse Coopers developed one of the questions was: What other factors need to be considered to ensure the process / mechanism operates in the best interests of participating children?

I couldn’t resist referring the consultants back to their own organisation’s report, released in March 2011 – a practical vision for early childhood education and care, which proposed 4 key principles:

- *The interests of the child are paramount;*
- *Parents have the primary role in their child’s development;*
- *ECEC services should be universally accessible;*
- *All ECEC services should be of high quality to support good developmental outcomes.*

The sense that the last ten years has been somewhat of a decade of wasted opportunity was reinforced this month with the announcement of the appointment of former Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, as Royal Commissioner into Early Childhood Education and Care in South Australia, and her words that:

Education is a life-long passion of mine, and we all know that the most critical time for a child's learning is in their early years.

This Royal Commission is an opportunity to shape a once in a generation investment in South Australia's youngest citizens, in particular through the State Government's commitment to universal 3-year-old preschool.

Drawing on the insights of community and experts, the Royal Commission's findings will provide a pathway toward improved developmental outcomes for all South Australians children, including redressing the persistent patterns of underlying disadvantage that still plague our community.

While we will watch with great interest- and anticipation- what emerges in South Australia, REED will continue to do what we have set out in our strategic plan as our mission- to provide high quality services for children and make these services accessible to families and work with local communities to meet their needs, strengthening them and building them. The people who are here at tonight's

AGM are the driving force behind REED – our Board of Management, our Senior Management Team, our Cluster Managers and our external members of our Board Committees and I sincerely thank all of you for the contribution that you have made over the past year and will continue to make in the future. Having said that, there are four people that I would particularly like to acknowledge tonight.

The Board, in particular, has seen Kylie Helgesen grow enormously in the role of General Manager and her skills and knowledge across the breadth of our sector is recognized and appreciated. Her workload and capacity is evident to all of us and will be reinforced by reading her report to this AGM.

Emma Willson has stepped into the role of Board Executive Support at the busiest time of the year and has done an amazing job, which the members of the Board are very grateful for.

Jill Cameron, who isn't able to join us tonight, is stepping down from her various roles. Jill's original title was Project leader and she put together a formidable team, including Michael White, Fleur Wilkinson, Philippa Gardener and Lauraine Macpherson to develop the project which has become REED. Jill has been such an integral part of REED. Not only has Jill worked tirelessly from the beginning in establishing the initial project, she has been there at every step along the journey since, often working on a voluntary basis, such has been her commitment to REED. We have indeed been very fortunate to have someone of Jill's experience, skills, commitment to children and can I suggest- also patience – involved with REED.

The other person who has indicated that she will be stepping down is Carol Child. Carol's background in the early childhood sector and her detailed knowledge of how the system works has been of immense value to REED and particularly in her roles both as Treasurer and Chair of the Audit and Risk, now the Finance and Audit Committee. We know from the Management Committees of the services that have merged into REED that the role of Treasurer is the most difficult one to fill and it is no different for REED. Our appreciation to Carol is heartfelt and genuine; so to for her willingness to remain on the Board to provide support and guidance to Dee Smith who will take over the reins early next year.

Thanks again to all of you for attending tonight's AGM and for your ongoing support to REED. I am very conscious that in my role as Chairperson, I draw on the support that I receive from all of you and I sincerely appreciate it.

Helen M. Creed.

Helen Creed,
Chairperson
October, 2022