



Childcare Leadership Alliance

RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS FOR CHILDCARE CHALLENGES IN DYSART

**Findings and Recommendations from
Engagement with the Dysart Community**

RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS FOR CHILDCARE CHALLENGES IN DYSART

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Engagement with the Dysart Community



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Prepared For: The Dysart Community and Key Stakeholders

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REPORT CONTENTS

1. Executive Summary

2. Key Findings

3. Analysis & Interpretation

4. Recommendations

5. Appendices

A: Engagement Objectives

B: Methodologies

C: Survey questionnaire

D: Survey results

E: Commentary provided in free text
sections of surveys

F: Qualitative insights gathered through
face to face engagements

G: Limitations





1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Dysart community is experiencing significant challenges in accessing stable and high-quality early childhood and school-aged care services. The Childcare Leadership Alliance (CLA) understands that Dysart has unique needs that need to be understood. In December 2024, the CLA commenced community engagement consultation with a goal to better understand the challenges and opportunities that exist in Dysart.

KEY INSIGHTS

- A high demand for care across all service types, particularly for Outside School Hours Care (OSHC).
- Strong community interest in Family Day Care (FDC) and international educator recruitment.
- Lack of housing is a key driver affecting the current childcare challenges.
- Limited local amenities and infrastructure, and employment conditions negatively affect educator attraction and retention.

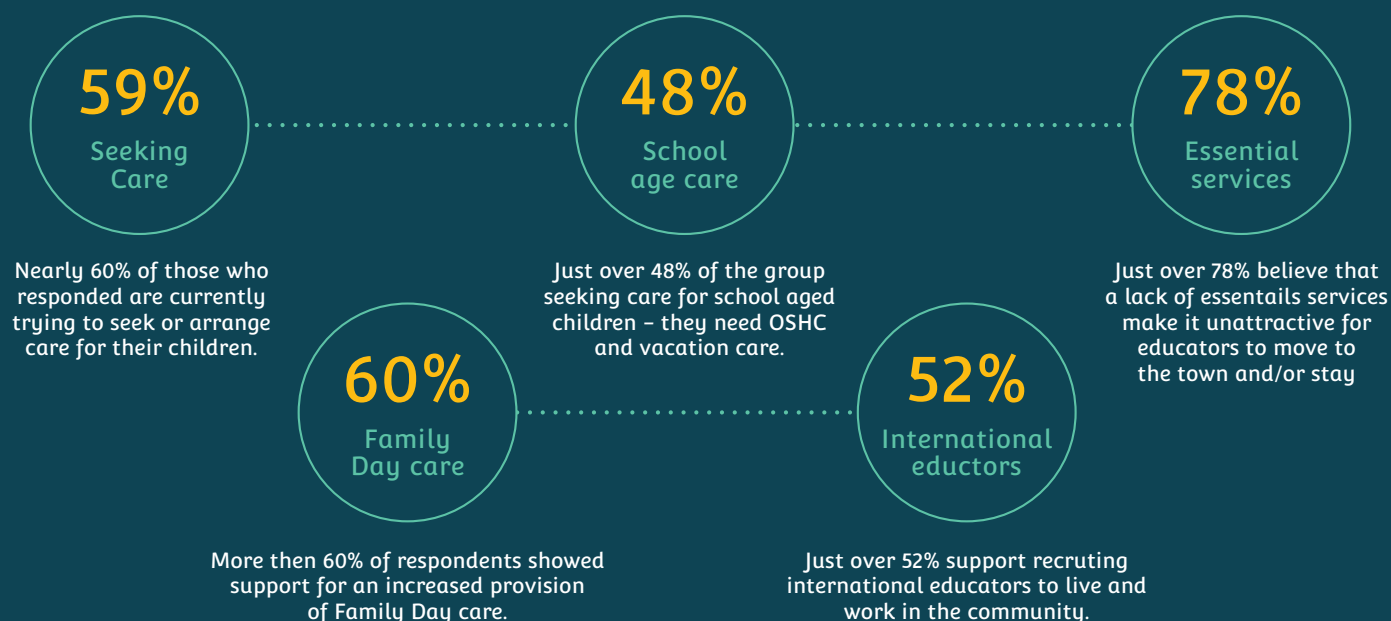
RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations outlined in section 4 highlight the multi-faceted and interconnected nature of addressing the childcare challenge in Dysart, and they require a commitment from the whole of the community and the input and influence of a variety of stakeholders.



2. KEY FINDINGS

2.1 A HIGH LEVEL OVERVIEW



Essential services missing

Housing

Health & medical

Public transport

Emergency services

Sport & recreation

Facilities for young families

Improved facilities at schools

Broader community issues

Housing

Schooling

Drugs

Alcohol

Crime

To embrace international educators

Housing

Improved public transport offerings



HOUSING IS KEY FOR ADDRESSING THE CHILDCARE CHALLENGE

2.2 DETAIL RE KEY FINDINGS

- Nearly 60% of those who responded are currently trying to seek or arrange care for their children
- The largest group of children who need care are school aged children requiring outside school hours care and vacation care, followed by children aged 0-2.
- The majority of respondents are parents/guardians who need stable care for their children, and they indicate that this is for the purposes of their employment or to enable them to study.
- A large proportion of respondents shared that it is vital to have stable early childhood education and care (ECEC) and Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) to help keep people in the community, as well as attract them to the town.
- A vast majority of respondents believe that a lack of essential services in Dysart make it unattractive for educators to move to the town and/or stay.
- More than 60% of respondents showed support for an increased provision of Family Day Care. The next two most popular ideas were to provide training pathways for high school students and to recruit international educators.
- There are 5 individuals who completed the survey who are qualified educators living in town who have chosen to not work in the sector. The majority of these 5 cited pay and employment conditions as the reason they chose to leave and pursue other avenues of employment. These 5 educators could equal another 20 - 55 children being offered care per day if they chose to return to the sector.
- Commentary throughout indicated that due to mining rosters, and the fact that mines operate during evenings and weekends, there is a greater need for the provision of flexible care arrangements. This aligns with why the community is so supportive of more Family Day Care offerings in the community.



3. ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

3.1 THE FINDINGS TELL US THAT:

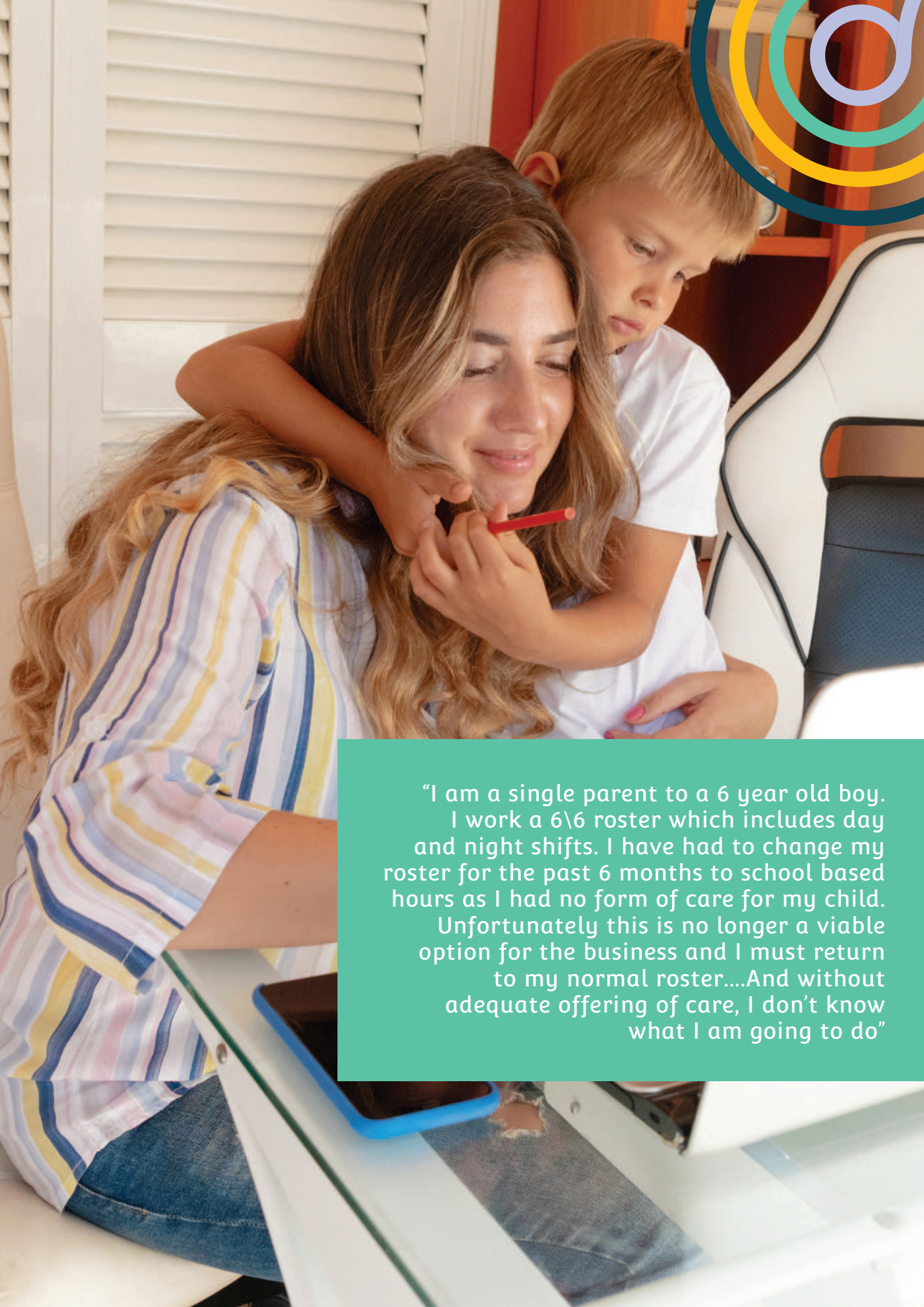
- The Dysart community has a high demand for OSHC services and a demand for more ECEC.
- The flexibility offered through FDC would suit the needs of the community well.
- The lack of affordable housing within the community is a key constraint on the attraction, recruitment, and retention of ECEC and OSHC educators.
- A lack of what the community deems as “essential services” is contributing to the challenge of attracting, recruiting, and retaining ECEC and OSHC educators.
- The community is open and interested in the idea of welcoming international educators to live and work in Dysart.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION	CLA'S ROLE	DESIRED PARTNER/S
Stable housing for educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with IAHT • Continue to seek support for housing from Industry, including financial support for furnishing houses • Support providers to consider and understand the ROI for leasing properties and sub-leasing to educators at a fair rate • Provision of the Accommodation toolkit to providers and support to utilise the materials provided 	Isaac Affordable Housing Trust (IAHT), Industry in Dysart
Recruit international educators to live and work in Dysart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to run International marketing campaigns • Continue to promote Dysart as a desirable location to live and work • Support providers with international recruitment and sponsored employment • Assist with recruitment where needed • Continue to provide, and promote, access to the “Get ready for work program” for providers / recruits • Support providers to access Place Based Funding on offer • Seek further financial support from Industry to alleviate costs incurred by providers 	Providers, Industry
Support increased provision of Family Day Care offerings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share findings of report with FDCA • Be available for support and assistance • Continue to ensure that FDC educators are aware that they can access professional development on offer from CLA • Where possible, encourage financial support from Industry to assist 	Family Day Care Australia (FDCA), BMA, other Industry in Dysart

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION	CLA'S ROLE	DESIRED PARTNER/S
Support current providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to reach out to both providers Ensure both Lady Gowrie and Dysart Kindy organisations are aware of the CLA, the support we can offer, and the upcoming Placed Based Funding opportunities. 	Providers, IRC in advocacy role
Explore the possibility of providing study and career pathways for high school students interested in early childhood education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with high school and students to understand interest in a career / pathway in ECEC. Re-introduce high school and students to "Get ready for work" If need / interest is present, work with the high school, RTO's and industry to establish an offering Help establish / maintain positive relationships between school and providers to allow for work placements 	High school, providers, Industry, RTOs, Country University Centre (CUC)
Engage, include and garner support from the whole community	<p>The CLA will encourage the following ideas to be considered within the community / local businesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sign up to the offering of an "Educators Reward Program" whereby educators receive a discount on items like coffees or groceries. Support the CLA's efforts to send educators to world-leading early years conferences. Support the approach taken with the "Small town, big heart" campaign Support the community to raise topics about their children or the centre with educators at the centre, ensuring educators can truly clock off when they are socialising or running errands. Encourage the community to organise a quarterly "Welcome newcomers" picnic or event to welcome new educators and other people to the community. 	STAC, Isaac Chamber of Commerce, community representatives from Industry, local businesses, community spaces such as the library / rec centre, sporting groups
Participation from Council in solutions	The Isaac Regional Council has shown its commitment to the childcare challenges faced in the region. It will be financially supporting the CLA as of 1 July 2025 in its efforts to improve the stability and sustainability of childcare offerings. The CLA and the Council will work together and explore how the Council's commitment can be realised in the Dysart community.	Isaac Regional Council
Community promotion campaign	If and where certain recommendations are implemented and realised, the CLA would seek to create and release a community promotion campaign that showcases these key programs. This will provide Dysart with the opportunity to showcase its small town spirit, its willingness and desire to support the early childhood and school age care sector, its recognition of the value of early years and school age care educators to the community, and the unique offerings it has to attract and retain educators.	Support of all relevant partners in filming, content development, etc



“I am a single parent to a 6 year old boy. I work a 6\6 roster which includes day and night shifts. I have had to change my roster for the past 6 months to school based hours as I had no form of care for my child. Unfortunately this is no longer a viable option for the business and I must return to my normal roster....And without adequate offering of care, I don't know what I am going to do”

5. APPENDICES

A: Engagement Objectives

B: Methodologies

C: Survey questionnaire

D: Survey results

E: Qualitative insights gathered through face to face engagements

F: Limitations

APPENDIX A: ENGAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Our goals in engaging with the community via surveys and in-person discussions were to:

- Understand the current demand for early childhood and school-age care services.
- Better understand the impact that a lack of stable, sustainable offerings was having on the community.
- Obtain an understanding of what other, interrelated factors could be contributing to the instability of offerings in the community.
- Gauge community interest in possible solutions, such as international recruitment.
- Highlight the need for the broader community to be involved in shaping and implementing solutions.
- Increase community awareness of the CLA.

The approach taken to engage with the community was to:

- Release a community-wide survey to gather data and insights, and
- Engage with community members in 1-1 or small group discussions to explore the information shared in the survey and gain further contextual insights.

APPENDIX B: METHODOLOGIES

Engagement methods:

- We utilised both surveys and in person discussions to gather qualitative and quantitative data
- We utilised social media, established community relationships, print posters with QR codes in prominent locations and media releases to share the engagement opportunities and purpose

Audience for survey and face to face engagements:

The survey and opportunity to engage in face-to-face engagement was open to all Dysart community members.

Sample Size:

The surveys and in person sessions yielded engagement from 53 unique participants.

Engagement duration:

- The survey was available for 4 weeks, and the in-person sessions occurred over two days in Dysart.
- It is important to note that due to inclement weather, one of the face-to-face sessions had to be cancelled. To address this, we released a second survey to the community that sought feedback that the face-to-face sessions focused on, and we consistently offered the community the opportunity to meet with Astute team members face to face online, or through phone calls.

APPENDIX C: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

We want to support the Dysart community to have stable, sustainable childcare offerings, and through this survey we want to hear from all members of the community (not just parents) about all of the challenges that come from not having stable, sustainable childcare offerings. We want to know what childcare offerings the community needs to survive, and thrive, and we want everyone's input on possible solutions.

Your age

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16-20 | <input type="checkbox"/> 36-44 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 21-26 | <input type="checkbox"/> 45-55 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 27-31 | <input type="checkbox"/> 55-65 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 32-36 | <input type="checkbox"/> 65+ |

How does having access to stable early childhood and /or school age care impact you? (Tick all that apply)

- ☐ I am a parent / grandparent / guardian and need care for my children
- ☐ I am an employee / student and without appropriate care I can't work or study
- ☐ I am business owner and my employees need it to be able to work
- ☐ Without it my business can't survive, or grow
- ☐ I am an early childhood / outside school hour care educator and I need it to be able to work
- ☐ I am a high school student and would like to make a career in early childhood / outside school hours care
- ☐ Other

How does having access to stable early childhood and / or school age care impact the community? (Tick all that apply)

- ☐ We need it to attract people to live and work here
- ☐ We need it to keep people living and working here
- ☐ It impacts the provision of essential services such as schooling and health care as those professionals require it for their children, and without it they don't move here or stay
- ☐ Without it children can be left behind in terms of their growth and development
- ☐ Other

APPENDIX C: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Are you currently seeking care for children / grandchildren?

☐ No

☐ Yes

If you answered “yes” to the above question, can you tell us about your needs.

What ages are the children? Do you need long day care, kindergarten, outside school hours care or family day care? Do you need care through the week, evenings, weekends?

What are the barriers to having stable offerings of care in the community? (Tick all that apply)

- ☐ Lack of essential services in town to attract educators to move and work here
- ☐ Housing issues - hard for people to find affordable, suitable housing
- ☐ Broader community issues
- ☐ Lack of interest from the community in early childhood or school age care
- ☐ Lack of need for early childhood or school age care
- ☐ No training pathway for high school students
- ☐ No training pathway for adults wishing to retrain
- ☐ Qualified educators leave for other jobs in the community
- ☐ Other

Are you a qualified early childhood or school age care educator
NOT working in the sector?

- ☐ No
☐ Yes

If you answered “yes” to the above question, why are you no longer working in the field?
(Tick all that apply)

- ☐ The pay provided to educators
☐ Employment conditions for educators
☐ Better pay at a new job
☐ Better employment conditions at a new job
☐ I am no longer interested in working in that sector
☐ Other

Do you think any of the below ideas could prove helpful in stabilising the offering of early
childhood and/or school age care in the community?

- ☐ Recruiting international educators to work and live in the community
☐ Training year 11, 12 and school leavers to work in the sector
☐ Providing more Family Day Care
☐ Having the whole community support the drive to attract and retain educators
☐ Providing a retraining pathway for locals to work in the sector
☐ Looking at alternative / new service providers
☐ Other

**If you have any other feedback, ideas or information you would like to share in regards to
any of the above questions, or anything that relates to early childhood or school age care
offerings in the community, please share with us below:**

APPENDIX D: SURVEY RESULTS

NOTE: Light blue denotes the most popular group / response for that question.

AGE BRACKETS OF RESPONDENTS

21-26 years	10.8%
27 - 31 years	15.2%
32 - 36 years	19.5%
36 - 44 years	34.7%
45 - 55 years	13%
55 - 65 years	6.5%
65+ years	0%

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS CURRENTLY SEEKING CARE

58.7%

CHILDCARE NEEDS OF RESPONDENTS

Children's ages	Number of children	% of the group currently seeking care	% of all 46 respondents
0-2 years	11	40.7%	23.9%
2- 3 years	7	25.9%	15.2%
3 - 5 years	5	18.5%	10.8%
School age	13	48.1%	28.2%

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF HAVING STABLE ECEC / OSHC ON YOU?

I am a parent / carer and my children need this care	78.2%
I need it to be able to work / study	41.3%
I am a business owner and my employees need it and my business needs it to survive and thrive	13%
I am an educator - it is my profession and work	8.6%

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF HAVING STABLE ECEC / OSHC ON THE COMMUNITY?

We need it to attract people to the community	78.2%
We need it to keep people here	91.3%
It impacts the provision of essential services, such as health care and schooling, as those professionals require it for their children and without it they don't move here or stay	78.2%
Without it, children can be left behind in terms of their development	60.8%

WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO BEING ABLE TO HAVE STABLE OFFERINGS OF CARE IN THE COMMUNITY?

Lack of essential services to attract educators	78.2%
Housing issues	56.5%
Qualified educators leave for other jobs in the community	60.8%
Broader community issues	26%
No training pathway for high school students	21.7%
No training pathway for adults wishing to retrain to work in the sector	17.3%
Lack of interest from community in ECEC / OSHC	28.2%

SUPPORT FOR IDEAS TO HELP

Recruit international educators to live and work in the community	52.1%
Train year 11 / 12 students, and school leavers, to work in the sector	60.8%
Provide more FDC	65.2%
Have the whole community support the drive to attract and retain educators	56.5%
Retraining pathway for locals to enter sector	63%
Alternative / new service provider	56.5%

EDUCATORS IN TOWN NOT WORKING IN THE SECTOR

No of qualified educators in town BUT not working in the sector	10.8% of respondents
Educators not working in sector due to pay	80% of the 10.8%
Educators not working in sector due to employment conditions	60% of the 10.8%

APPENDIX E: QUALITATIVE INSIGHTS GATHERED THROUGH FACE TO FACE ENGAGEMENTS

What essential services are missing that are contributing to the lack of attraction and retention of educators?

- Affordable housing
- Health and medical services
- Public transport
- Emergency services
- Food outlets
- Sport and recreation facilities
- Facilities for young families
- Facilities at school need to be improved

More than 24% of respondents indicated that broader community issues are contributing to the lack of stable care offerings - can you provide any insight on what those issues might be?

- Housing
- Schooling
- Drugs and alcohol
- Crime

How could the whole community support the drive to attract and retain educators?

- Campaign to highlight to the town how and why ECEC / OSHC is so important
- More public recognition of the importance of ECEC / OSHC educators
- Inclusion of Educators in the Mayor's Annual Awards
- Local businesses contribute to the costs of sending educators to conferences, assisting with upkeep and beautification of centres and their facilities

More than 50% supported the idea of recruiting international educators to live and work in the community. What do you think the community would need to prepare for a change such as this?

- Better housing
- Offer of public transport

APPENDIX F: LIMITATIONS

- Sample size is modest and may not fully reflect all community views
- Weather impacted in-person engagement opportunities
- Strong sentiment about specific providers may bias perceptions
- Further demographic segmentation could enhance representativeness



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www.childcareleadershipalliance.com.au