

BHP commissioned this report to help inform the discussion around next steps to address childcare in the Bowen Basin.

It is important to note that BHP has not verified the content of the report and does not support all of the recommendations contained within the report, but we hope that the information will enable a collaborative dialogue on a path forward.

We acknowledge the significant efforts of the Smart Transformation Advisory Councils (STACs) in this work to date and moving forward. BHP look forward to working with the STACS, all levels of Government, the community, resource companies and others on next steps.

2. CHILDCARE DELIVERY

Context

Attracting, recruiting and retaining the childcare workforce continues to be a significant and increasing challenge in the Bowen Basin. Finding the right form of childcare at the right time in the right place is a difficult task for most parents in these communities.

Action 2.1: Offer incentives to improve attraction, recruitment and retention of workers across the childcare sector including:

For centre-based educators

- Salary uplift
- Housing subsidy
- Relocation allowance
- Study assistance
- Easter and September bonuses
- Travel subsidies

For family day care educators

- Subsidised training
- Assistance to make housing compliant with regulations – fences, safety catches, storage and in some cases the provision of larger house
- Funding for toys and equipment to establish and maintain a service
- Providing the support required to start a new small business and the ongoing support needed to meet business obligations

Action 2.2: Provide financial support for school-based childcare traineeships and encourage all schools to offer the program.

Action 2.3: Offer financial assistance to those who wish to upgrade their qualifications to a Bachelor degree with a 'loan' arrangement in place after the completion of their degree, so that they return to make a contribution to their community.

Action 2.4: Incentivise university students to return to their communities during holiday periods to work in OSHC services.

Action 2.5: Explore opportunities for collaboration between childcare providers and businesses to recruit couples with a focus on attracting a childcare worker and providing a job for their partner in a shared salary package with housing and other benefits.

Action 2.6: Work with the Family Day Care Association (Queensland) to develop

- a campaign to recruit additional family day care educators and
- a promotional campaign to increase awareness of family day care.

Action 2.7: Reinstate a 'welcome to town' program in each community that quickly engages new people in the life of the town, provides a network of support and encourages them to stay and become part of the community.

Action 2.8: Facilitate a community support group for au pairs and nannies to provide basic education and advice as well as a support network.

Action 2.9: Encourage approved providers to work with schools so that OSHC can be delivered on school grounds to utilise the resources already in place.

Action 2.10: Work with childcare providers to better align services offered with long, overnight and weekend rosters.

Action 2.11: Contribute to the development/implementation of an app or 'share care' register that would assist parents in identifying available share care opportunities.

Action 2.12: Explore the possibility of piloting a shared family day care service where multiple educators work out of a single residence set up as a family home to provide a 24/7 childcare service.

Action 2.13: Work with landlords to allow family day care to operate from rental properties.

Action 2.14: Support families to engage au pairs and nannies by providing

- access to separate housing
- relocatable pods
- access to larger houses for families

Action 2.15: Support the inclusion of children with special needs in OSHC programs by exploring funding models that improve ratios of carers to students.

April 2021

Addressing the Childcare Challenge in the Bowen Basin

This study, commissioned by BHP, examines the current availability of childcare in regional Queensland communities where BHP has operations. It quantifies the childcare shortages in these communities, identifies the main contributors and makes recommendations that will address the childcare challenges identified.

The solution to the childcare problem does not rest with one organisation or agency. It requires a 'whole of community' approach and a commitment from government, community and business leaders to work together to address the issues as a priority.

The Shortages

The shortages of childcare places are most apparent in Moranbah, Dysart, Blackwater and Emerald.

CHART 1
Estimated shortfalls - Moranbah

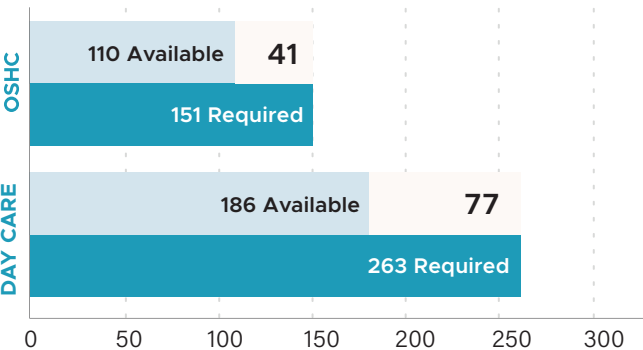


CHART 2
Estimated shortfalls - Dysart

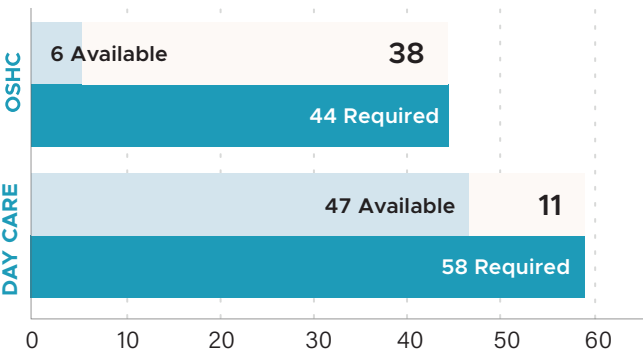


CHART 3
Estimated shortfalls - Blackwater

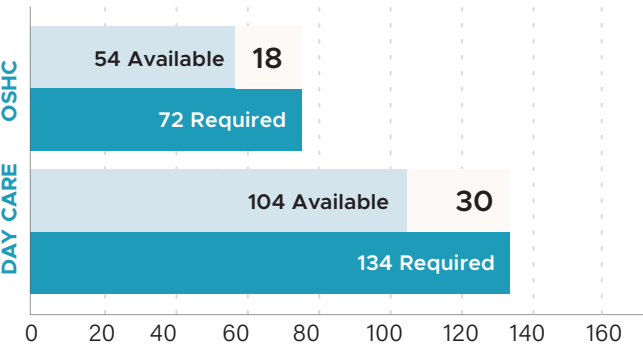
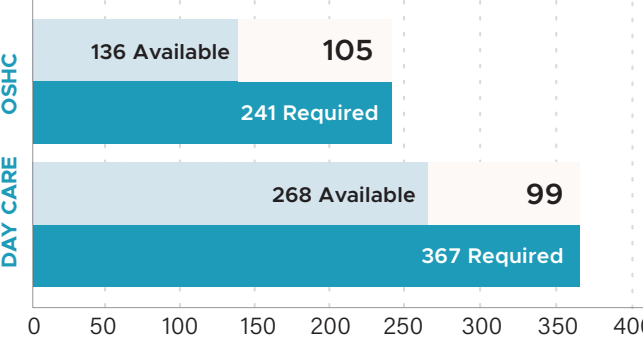


CHART 4
Estimated shortfalls - Emerald



The Main Contributors

Providers are not able to attract, recruit and retain the staff they need to operate their services at capacity or to expand their services to meet the need in these communities.

Centre-based educators	Family Day Care educators	Au Pairs, nannies, in-home care educators
Remuneration		
Childcare workers are poorly paid.	Lack of awareness about the incomes that can be generated	Often poorly paid
Cost of living		
High living costs have the most impact on those who earn less		
Housing		
The majority of childcare workers do not get housing or housing subsidies.	Available housing does not always work for family day care, the educators and their families`	Some houses do not easily accommodate another adult
Other factors		
It costs more to maintain knowledge and progress careers because of location	Complying with childcare regulations and small business responsibilities can be burdensome	Childcare work does not qualify as specified work for Working Holiday visas 417 and 462.
Funding the development and maintenance of facilities that can make staff feel supported and valued can be difficult.	Educators can feel isolated and unsupported as they work alone.	



Recommendations

1. STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

Context

A strategic approach to the planning and funding of childcare as well as leadership and advocacy at the highest level is needed. A leadership alliance must take responsibility for the broad, long-term strategic direction and oversight of childcare across the Bowen Basin. It would have no responsibility for the operational management of childcare services, but would provide support and advocacy for those services if required.

Action 1.1: Support the establishment of Childcare Leadership Alliances (CLA) in the Isaac and Central Highlands regions chaired by councillors (the mayor or deputy mayor), and comprised of decision-making representatives of resource companies, key industry and community leaders and a senior member of the Department of Education who has responsibility for Early Childhood Education and Care to:

- develop a strategic plan for childcare in their communities
- consider and prioritise the recommendations of this report
- oversee the implementation of the accepted recommendations in their communities
- investigate funding sources at both a local and broader level including the Resources Community Infrastructure Fund
- identify in-kind support that could be made available to support the delivery of childcare, for example, bus services, maintenance, business skills
- determine the funding model to be used to support childcare in the region giving consideration to existing models already working in the community

- determine the criteria to be used for the allocation of funds and in-kind support ensuring that their purpose is to create additional childcare places
- connect childcare providers to local experts willing to provide advice and guidance
- test the appetite for an 'Adopt A Centre' model for major employers to assist childcare centres with maintenance and other requirements
- advocate on behalf of the community for initiatives that would increase the availability of childcare including the recognition of childcare as work specified for working holiday visa extensions.

Action 1.2: Funding an executive officer to support the work of the CLA by undertaking tasks including progressing actions, developing options for funding models, negotiating the funding and in-kind support from resource companies and other major employers in the communities, researching and costing options, developing submissions and reports, influencing media, engaging stakeholders and managing meetings of the alliance.

