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# Architecture for Aboriginal Children and their Families

A post occupancy evaluation of Taikurrendi, Gabmididi  
Manoo & Ngura Yadurirn Children & Family Centres



Elizabeth Grant, Michael Colbung and Ian Green



**Architecture for Aboriginal Children and their Families:**  
An post occupancy evaluation of the Taikurrendi, Gabmididi Manoo  
and Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centres

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2015 Elizabeth Grant, Michael Colbung and Ian Green  
The University of Adelaide, Australia

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### **NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY**

In this report, the term 'Aboriginal' and 'Indigenous' are used inclusively to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

### **DISCLAIMER**

This report provides information on an independent evaluation of the Taikurrendi, Gabmididi Manoo and Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centres. The report draws on input from representatives of government agencies, funded service providers, sector representatives, stakeholders, design consultants and users. This document has been prepared using publicly available information and information from community consultations. The authors have relied on that information being accurate. An audit to verify the accuracy or completeness of the information has not been conducted and accordingly can accept no responsibility for any errors or omissions in the information.

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## ACRONYMS

ACFC	Aboriginal Children and Family Centre
CDC	Community Development Coordinator
CFC	Children and Family Centre
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
DECD	Department for Education and Child Development (South Australia)
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DPTI	Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (South Australia)
IECD NP	National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development
Mia mia	An Aboriginal ethnoarchitectural structure made of bark, branches and grasses. The term is used predominately in Noongar languages.
NIRA	National Indigenous Reform Agreement
POE	Post Occupancy Evaluation
SNAICC	Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are proud, living cultures. The survival and revival of cultures relies on cultural identity being an integral part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's educational environment and providing environments that respect the ancestral ways, family, cultural and community traditions.

Family is at the core of Aboriginal society and well-being. Complex kinship systems are central to how the culture is passed on and society is organised with families having the primary responsibility for the upbringing, protection and development of their children. Providing a safe communal setting of loving and caring with opportunities for a child's growth, development and self-empowerment has dramatic impacts on the overall welfare of the child and is pivotal in addressing the disadvantages experienced by the Aboriginal children.

This report reviews the development, outcomes and responses of users to three Children and Family Centres constructed in South Australia. The Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre (Whyalla), Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre (Christies Beach) and the Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre (Ceduna) were developed by the Department for Education and Child Development (South Australia) within the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development framework.

The projects are recognised as Australian exemplars in the design of facilities for Aboriginal children and families. The projects have been overwhelmingly received by the communities concerned and have resulted in growing numbers of Aboriginal children engaging in early learning in the areas where they are located. The Aboriginal communities concerned were keen to see the Aboriginal Children and Family Centres as places where Aboriginal people can be empowered.

Critical to the success of the projects was the concept of placemaking and the creation of Aboriginal 'places', each with its own Aboriginal identity. To achieve this, the design process included developing understandings of the behavioural and cultural norms and health requirements of potential users so that spaces were designed that were easy and pleasurable to use. In collaboration with communities, the centres were layered Indigenous meanings through the use of signs, symbols and representations.

As a result, the Children and Family Centres provide a strong physical focus for the community and families. These are places with strong cultural identities that have been generally embraced by the communities they seek to serve. As entities, the centres seek to promote themselves as safe places that reinforce positive self-identity and cultural engagement. The importance of developing each individual Children and Family Centres to have its own cultural identity was seen as paramount. Many lessons were learnt from these projects. Issues such as achievable timelines, planning and consultation processes, the appropriateness of building and construction methods, the delegation of responsibilities, public art processes and the procurement of furniture, fittings and equipment, all impinged on the processes and finished product. Consideration of these matters is likely to lead to improved outcomes in the future.

The Taikurrendi, Gabmididi Manoo and Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centres are precedents for the future, where facilities will be designed for Aboriginal children and families that reflect preferred Indigenous lifestyles and child rearing practices and respond to the cultural identity and spirituality of Aboriginal people with respect.



## **PART ONE: Background**

### **Introduction**

In 2008, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) made a national commitment to address the levels of disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians. The National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) established an overall framework and identified six key targets to 'Close the Gap' on Indigenous disadvantage. Improving early childhood outcomes was recognised as integral to the long term achievement of the COAG targets. The National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development (IECD NP) was established. The IECD NP objectives were to improve developmental outcomes for Indigenous children to achieve the COAG target.

In 2009, COAG entered into the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development to contribute to outcomes for early childhood. One outcome was access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to suitable and culturally inclusive early childhood and family support services.

The National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development placed a high priority on the establishment of Aboriginal Children and Family Centres. The Federal Government contributed \$292.62 million to establish "a minimum of 35 Children and Family Centres in urban, regional and remote areas with high Indigenous populations and high disadvantage" by June 2014. In total, 38 Aboriginal Children and Family Centres were planned across Australia, 23 in regional or remote areas and 15 in urban areas (see Appendix 1).

The IECDNP identified that the key elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Family Centres were to:

- Provide services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families;
- Provide an integrated delivery of services, including antenatal services, child and maternal health services, parenting and family support services, and early learning and child care, as the best delivery platform to ensure families actually receive the support they need;
- Be responsive to community needs.

Community engagement with the Aboriginal Children and Family Centres (ACFCs) was seen to be integral to their successful implementation. COAG required all services provided through the ACFCs to have integrated management, governance and service systems. The Aboriginal Child and Family Centres were part of a wider Commonwealth project to develop places for families with children birth to five years to access a range of services to improve the health and well-being, education and care of young children by supporting parents and enhancing accessibility of services in the local community. It is important to note that all centres were developed to service both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal clientele.

In South Australia, four Children and Family Centres at Pukattja, Whyalla, Christies Beach and Ceduna were planned, designed and developed under the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development. Meeting the needs of Aboriginal users and incorporating Aboriginal identity into projects was seen as integral to the latter three projects. New understandings of the complexities involved in the use of abstracted metaphors and encryptions from Aboriginal cultures into architecture and the complex and diverse socio-spatial needs of Aboriginal users were developed through the design process.

Given the potential capacity of the completed projects to inform other developments, it was proposed that a post-occupancy evaluation be conducted to gauge the cultural responsiveness of the centres to the Aboriginal users' aspirations and needs.

## Methodology

The research methodology was devised with collaboration from the Department for Education and Child Development and community stakeholders. A range of methodological techniques was chosen to allow Aboriginal users to contribute views in a culturally sensitive manner and provide an Aboriginal 'voice' in the results. The methodological techniques were chosen from the field of people-environments or EBS (Environment Behaviour Studies). Using a variety of techniques from this field (see Ziesel 1983) allowed a thorough exploration of the issues. A variety of methodological techniques were used in triangulation to achieve greater trustworthiness in findings and interpretation, while at the same time allowing cost effective research and minimal intrusion into the daily operation of each centre. The fieldwork for the study was conducted over periods of up to four weeks at each site using seven methodological techniques.

### Technique 1: Literature Review, Photographic Surveys and Environmental Walkthroughs

In the first instance, the existing literature for each Centre was revised and updated and an overview of other Aboriginal Children and Family Centres nationwide assembled. A photographic survey was conducted and descriptions of each Centre and its various features assembled.

### Technique 2: Behavioural Mapping

Researchers conducted place-centred behavioural mapping over various periods of the day to track users' behaviour over space and time. Readily observable characteristics, such as approximate age, sex, whether the individual was alone or with others, and what the individual was doing were recorded using prepared diagrams.

### Technique 3: Physical Trace Observations

A photographic study of various physical traces was conducted within the foyers, public areas and external areas of the complexes by researchers. Physical traces are useful in gaining a greater understanding of how people use environments and traces, much like artifacts, send nonverbal communications to other users (Zeisel 1993). By-products of behavior are produced by people interacting with the environment and can be defined further with reference to the concepts of erosion, leftovers, and missing traces.



Figures 1 A & B: Physical Trace Observations

Physical traces such as the setup of rooms and type of toys left behind enabled researchers to further understand how spaces were used.

### Technique 4: Participatory Exercises with Children using the Centres

The researchers held participatory sessions with the young users of each centre. Firstly, researchers introduced a drawing exercise where children had the opportunity to draw their concept for a children's centre. Secondly, researchers conducted a walkthrough of the centre with small groups of children to elicit their opinions of various sections of the centre.

### Technique 5: Non-Participant Observation

Non-participant observation is a data collection method used extensively in case study research (Atkinson et al. 1994). In this study, researchers entered the social system to observe events, activities, and interactions with the aim of gaining a direct understanding of the environment and how it was being used. This technique was particularly useful in observing children's behaviour in the various spaces and how users entered and moved around the building. As non-participants, the researchers did not participate directly in the activities being observed. For example, in the preschool area researcher sat quietly away from the direct play areas quietly recording the events by note form. The children were aware of the researchers' presence but after a period resumed normal play. The researchers found it useful to sit in discrete areas near the entrance and reception.

### Technique 6: Semi-structured Interviewing

Qualitative interviewing was used as a method to enable participants to discuss a range of issues regarding the design and outcomes of the different areas of the Children and Family Centres. Participants were drawn from users, parents and caregivers and employees of the centres, Aboriginal community groups and individuals with vested interest. People unwilling to participate and people unable to give informed consent were not included in the interviews. The semi-structured interviews included closed questions for collecting straightforward data and open-ended questions to allow the respondent to explain more complex feelings and attitudes and allow a two way dialogue about the Centre. The data collected was analysed to find common themes and trends (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). Feedback boards were also left in public areas to allow users to comment on each Centre without being involved in an interview.

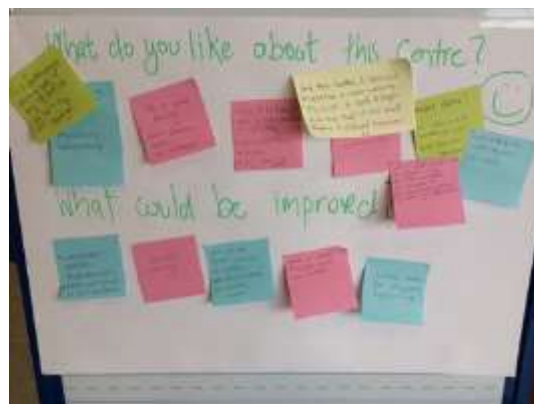


Figure 2: Feedback Board

### Technique 7: Group Consultation

Each centre had a range of stakeholders including people such as the Director, the Community Coordinator, DECD representatives, parent representatives, the school governing body, the School and representatives from the Aboriginal community. Outside community groups and individuals were identified in liaison with the Community Development Officer located at each centre and the DECD stakeholder group and approached for their willingness to participate in small stakeholder meetings.

The researchers identified groups for consultation (with the assistance of the Partnership Group, the Director and Community Coordinator at each site) and a number of small group meetings were convened. The participants were asked their views on the planning and design processes, the finished outcomes and aspects of the building which may contribute to Aboriginal users' experiences in the project. Researchers also investigated Aboriginal peoples use (or non-use) of the facility, the naming process for each centre and other factors which may impede or encourage Aboriginal people to use the centre.



The meetings often led to informal 'yarning' (Mann et al. 2011) on ways each centre contributes to the learning and cultural outcomes of the Aboriginal users and the lessons that have been learnt from the project. At Christies Beach, a larger meeting was held, while at Ceduna a series of smaller meetings were held off site. At Whyalla it was not possible to convene a community meeting.



Figure 3: Group Consultation at Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre

The methodology was developed in adherence with the Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies (AIATSIS 2011), the National Statement and Guidelines on Ethical Conduct in Research involving Humans (2007), the Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research (1991) and the Privacy Act (1988). The methodology was approved by the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee and the Department for Education and Child Development Ethics Committee.

## **PART TWO: The Design of Aboriginal Children and Family Centres around Australia**

### **Introduction**

Under the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development, Aboriginal Children and Family Centres were established in 38 locations across Australia. The locations of centres varied considerably with 23 in regional or remote areas and 15 in urban settings.

Given that community engagement was seen to be integral to the successful implementation of the Aboriginal Children and Family Centres, the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relation (DEEWR) provided some guidance to the States. A factsheet was issued identifying how consultations may contribute to decisions on:

- the site of a centre;
- how best to design a new facility or adapt an existing facility;
- the services most needed in the community;
- the existing community services and resources that should be built into a centre; and
- how to involve the community in the ongoing operation of a centre.

Most states and territories established formal community consultation groups at each CFC location to gain input from community stakeholders on issues important to the community. These were known variously as Local Enabling Groups, Local Advisory Committees and Local Reference Groups. The role and membership of the groups varied across the states and territories and between CFC locations. The following section gives a brief overview of the various centres by State.

### **Victoria**

Victoria constructed two Aboriginal Children and Family Centres. The centres at Whittlesea and Bairnsdale are within urban centres and chosen on the basis of the need for the delivery of services for Aboriginal children and families in those areas.

#### **Bubup Wilam Centre for Early Learning, Whittlesea**

Whittlesea is a town in Melbourne located 40 kilometres northeast of Melbourne. At the 2011 census, the town of Whittlesea had a population of 4,826 people (ABS 2012). The City of Whittlesea is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Australia with the current population being approximately 170,000 residents. The population is expected to grow to 295,000 persons by 2031 (Finance and Organisation Improvement Directorate 2014). The town of Whittlesea sits within the Wurundjeri Nation and overall the City of Whittlesea has the fourth largest population of Indigenous residents (1,128 residents) count in Metropolitan Melbourne (Finance and Organisation Improvement Directorate 2014). Just over one percent of the population of the town identify as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent (Finance and Organisation Improvement Directorate 2014).

Bubup Wilam means 'Children's Place' in the Woi Wurrung language. Wurundjeri traditional owners named the centre and agreed on the design, following consultations with the Aboriginal community and other stakeholders. The building was completed in January 2012. The Early Learning Centre is located on council land and caters for 58 children and provides services exclusively for Aboriginal families. The Centre has been designed with four rooms dedicated to specific age groups between birth and 6 years of age. Each room is named after the languages of the Kulin Nations.



Figure 4: Bubup Wilam Centre for Early Learning - Exterior  
(Source: Bubup Wilam Centre for Early Learning Incorporated 2014).



Figure 5: Bubup Wilam Centre for Early Learning - Foyer  
(Source: Bubup Wilam Centre for Early Learning Incorporated 2104).

### **Dala Yooro Children and Families Early Learning and Development Centre, Bairnsdale**

Bairnsdale is a small city in East Gippsland with a population of approximately 7,238 people in the 2011 census (ABS 2012). Approximately 331 people identify as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. Aboriginal people living in the area are Gunai or Kurnai (*alt, spelling* Gunna, Ganai) people, whose territory occupies most of present-day Gippsland and the southern slopes of the Victorian Alps and the surrounding areas. English is the predominant language spoken.

Dala Yooro means Little Red Gum in Gunai/Kurnai language. The architectural firm, Baldasso Cortese was commissioned by the Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-operative to design the 66 place, Aboriginal Early Learning and Development Centre for the Gunai/Kurnai community. The landscape architects were Land Design Partnership with the Structural Engineers being JMP Consulting and Building Services Engineers and Sokolski Consulting Group. The project scope also encompassed the refurbishment of an existing building on the site to house the administrative, allied health components and an Elder's cultural room. The new centre houses a large training and meeting space, a kindergarten, childcare area, allied health rooms and a community kitchen and opened in 2014

The community had a number of design requests, including that oral traditions be incorporated into the design and the Centre feature earthy colours. The childcare rooms are decorated with depictions of Dala Yooro leaves, the river and lakes system and the sun and stars. The architectural firm developed a structural form for the facility that was derived from 'Booran the Pelican' a Dreaming symbol from the lakes region. The design solution made use of rammed earth walls to ground the building and large laminated timber posts to emulate the pelican wing structure along the southern and northern boundaries. The Centre contains indoor and outdoor cultural spaces. The outside area

was planned with a fire-pit, talking circle and native vegetation planted and designed by the community members and is intended to be a place for children, Elders and the local community.

The Dala Yooro Children and Family Centre is a partnership between a number of local organisations, including Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-operative (GEGAC) and Uniting Care Gippsland. Other partnering organisations involved in developing Dala Yooro were Gippsland Lakes Community Health, East Gippsland Shire Council, and the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Builders, CM and HM Banks Pty Ltd were awarded a 'Master Builders Excellence in Construction 2014' in the category of commercial projects for the project.

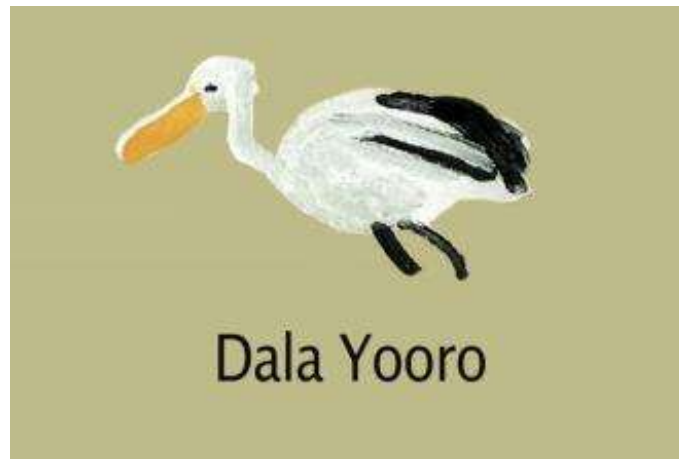


Figure 6: Booran the Pelican. The pelican was used as the design generator for the Dala Yooro Children and Families Early Learning and Development Centre.



Figure 7: Dala Yooro Children and Families Early Learning and Development Centre (Source: Baldasso Cortese, 2014).





Figures 8 A & B: Dala Yooro Children and Families Early Learning and Development Centre. Images show the sandpit and the interior of preschool (Source: Baldasso Cortese 2014).

### **New South Wales**

The New South Wales Government established six Aboriginal Child and Family Centres across the state. The sites were chosen through a deliberation of needs across the state with six locations chosen. Tenders then were called for organisations to consult with stakeholders regarding the design and then form partnerships to deliver to services at Gunnedah, Nowra, Toronto, Brewinna and Lightning Ridge and Blacktown. The organisations which won the tenders to deliver services were:

- Gunnedah – Relationships Australia NSW, Uniting Care Children, Young People and Families
- Nowra – Relationships Australia NSW (Integrated Centre Management only)
- Toronto - Awabakal Newcastle Aboriginal Cooperative Ltd (Early learning and care services only)
- Brewarrina and Lightning Ridge - Brewarrina Business Centre
- Blacktown (two sites) - Children First, Junaya Family Development Services Inc and Yawarra Aboriginal Child and Family Centre.

These organisations were also involved in design consultation.

### **Winanga-Li Aboriginal Child and Family Centre, Gunnedah**

Gunnedah is a town in north-eastern New South Wales located 434 kilometres north-west of Sydney. It has a population of approximately 9,000 people with 12.5 percent of the population (1166 people) identifying as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent (ABS 2012). The town sits within the Kamilaroi (*alt. spelling* Gamilaraay, Gamilaroi) Nation whose country extends from the area near the present-day town of Singleton in the Hunter Valley through to the Warrumbungle Mountains in the west and through to Quirindi, Tamworth, Narrabri, Walgett, Moree, Lightning Ridge and Mungindi in New South Wales to Nindigully in south west Queensland.

The term Winanga-Li means to “to hear, to listen, to know, to remember.” Winanga-Li Aboriginal Child and Family Centre was opened mid-2013 and was the first of the New South Wales Centres to be opened. The centre is a partnership of Relationships Australia NSW and Uniting Care Children's Services. The playground at the Winanga-Li centre was designed in consultation with staff, and custom created to suit the specific needs of the centre. The elements include a hand carved timber sign, fire pit with log seats, lizard, timber bubbler, bench, tree seat, triangular setting. Local timber was used to provide a connection to nature and to blend with the surrounding area.



Figure 9: Winanga-Li Aboriginal Child and Family Centre – Signage (Source: Namoi Valley Independent 2013).



Figure 10: Winanga-Li Aboriginal Child and Family Centre – Exterior (Source: Namoi Valley Independent 2013).





Figure 11: Winanga-Li Aboriginal Child and Family Centre -Play Area (Source: Andrew Smith Timber Creations 2013).

### **Ballina Aboriginal Child and Family Centre, Ballina**

Ballina is located in the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales 600 kilometres north of Sydney and 189 kilometres south of Brisbane. Ballina had a population of 39,273 in the 2011 census. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 3.1 percent of the population, compared with the NSW average of 2.5 percent (ABS 2012).

The commission to design the Ballina Aboriginal Child and Family Centre was awarded to the New South Wales Public Works Government Architect's Office who made use of the Indigenous Design Unit located within their office. A local reference group was established which included representation from Aboriginal organisations delivering family and children's services in the area, as well as Aboriginal community representation from surrounding areas such as Cabbage Tree Island. Intensive design input was sought from this group.

The building design was linked to the local culture and heritage, influenced by the flora and fauna of the local land and sea areas. The plan includes a central covered reception area with the designated childcare area located on one side and the integrated services area with consultation rooms and activity spaces located on the other side of the centre.

The project was controversial. The site chosen was part of a public park. Approximately 20 per cent of Porter Park was 'excised' to build the Aboriginal child and family centre at West Ballina. The Council recommended the centre be built on a 3800sqm area in the north-eastern corner of the reserve and the land was re-categorised from 'sports ground' to 'general community use' which caused dissent. The events occurring in chronological order were:

2009 - A Local Reference Group is established to consult with community.

2010 - Planning begins for the BACFC at Porter Park

West Ballina residents begin a campaign to save Porter Park

2011 - Council agrees to reclassify 3800 square metres of Porter Park for the BACFC

- 2012 - The Australian Human Rights Commission investigates complaints of racial discrimination against West Ballina residents.  
A Ballina man accused of creating a racist pamphlet against the BACFC front court.  
Council votes to lease the Porter Park land to the Department of Family and Community Services.  
Work begins on the BACFC
- 2013 - Ballina man has charge of racial vilification over anti BACFC pamphlet dismissed.  
Bunjum Aboriginal Co-operative claims there are defects in construction of the BACFC
- 2014 – Building opened (Stevens 2014)

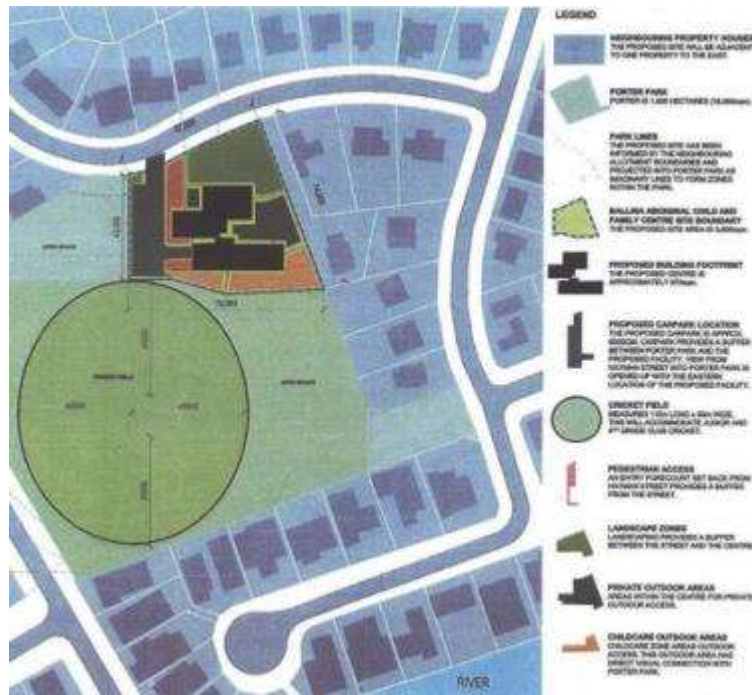


Figure 12: Ballina Aboriginal Child and Family Centre – location within Porter Park (Source: The Northern Star 2013).



Figure 13: Ballina Aboriginal Child and Family Centre - Exterior (Source: Stevens 2013).



### **Nikinpa Aboriginal Child and Family Centre, Toronto**

Toronto is a suburb within the city of Lake Macquarie in New South Wales, approximately 28 kilometres from Newcastle. It is one of the major centres in the City of Lake Macquarie Local Government Area. Toronto has a population of 5,432 residents, 5.1 percent (276 people) of who identify as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent (ABS 2012). Toronto was the site of Ebenezer Aboriginal mission (established in 1829 and closed in 1841) (Fels 1998).

Architectural firm, Melocco and Moore were commissioned by the NSW Land and Housing Corporation to provide design and documentation for the Nikinpa Aboriginal Child and Family Centre. The project included facilities to house childcare, health and family support services.

The centre also provides clinic rooms for GP services, as well as antenatal care and education; child health check-ups and immunisation; chronic healthcare services; family referrals; counselling and parenting classes, as well as child care for over 30 children operated by Awabakal Children's Services. The centre also has an IT room used to teach computer skills to seniors, and meeting rooms which are used to provide Aboriginal employment services, tenancy advice and a meeting place for Westlakes Elders. In addition, a four-room early education and care service is available, which runs in conjunction with Hunter TAFE to provide on-site delivery of Certificate III in Children's Services.



Figure 14: Nikinpa Aboriginal Child and Family Centre, Toronto – Entrance (Source: Melocco and Moore 2014).



Figure 15: Nikinpa Aboriginal Child and Family Centre, Toronto – Exterior (Source: Melocco and Moore 2014).

### **Lightning Ridge Integrated Child and Family Centre, Lightning Ridge**

Lightning Ridge is a remote town in north-western New South Wales (near the southern border of Queensland), 586 kilometres from Sydney. In the 2011 census, the population of Lightning Ridge was 2,492 with the average age of the Lightning Ridge population being 48 years of age (11 years above the Australian average) (ABS 2012). There is a significant Aboriginal population (19.8 percent of the total population) and growth of the Indigenous population has occurred due to influxes of Indigenous people from other regions. The traditional owners of the land around Lightning Ridge are the Yuwaalaraay people. English is the most commonly spoken language.

The Lightning Ridge Integrated Child and Family Centre was established under an Indigenous Partnership Agreement and constructed on Aboriginal Land Council land. The signing of the lease agreement in mid-2012 fulfilled the legislative responsibility of the Local Aboriginal Land Council and allowed for the progression of the development in Pandora Street, Lightning Ridge.

Working in conjunction with Brewarrina, the Lightning Ridge Integrated Child and Family Centre is governed by the Brewarrina Business Centre Board, which oversees the financial management and social planning required in the local indigenous community, in conjunction with a Local Reference Group and advisory committee, which provides direction from the community. The centre aims to improve the health and welfare outcomes of local Indigenous people with the 50 place childcare centre and a family support network. The centre opened for operation in January 2014.





Figure 16: Lightning Ridge Aboriginal Integrated Child and Family Centre – Exterior.



Figure 17: Lightning Ridge Aboriginal Integrated Child and Family Centre – Exterior.

### **Brewarrina Aboriginal Integrated Child and Family Centre, Brewarrina**

Brewarrina is a remote town in North West New South Wales located 787 kilometres from Sydney. At the 2011 census, Brewarrina had a population of 1,255 people with 762 people (60%) identifying as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent (ABS 2012). Brewarrina is located in the traditional lands of the Ngemba, Muruwari and Yualwarri peoples. The area has a long Indigenous history and was the site of ceremonial grounds and shared fish traps. Near the town is the site of former Brewarrina Aboriginal Mission. The mission operated from 1886 to 1966 and was one of the longest running reserve stations in New South Wales and housed Aboriginal people from around the state. Brewarrina and the mission site are highly significant to many Aboriginal people in New South Wales (NSW Department of Environment and Heritage 2013).

The Brewarrina Aboriginal Integrated Child and Family Centre is governed by the Brewarrina Business Centre Board in conjunction with a Local Reference Group, which provides feedback and direction from the community. The Centre delivers social services to the Aboriginal community through the 39 place childcare centre and a family support network. The two areas work both separately and together as required, to deliver a combination of parenting skills, health and welfare advice, family support, and recruitment and training opportunities.

The centre is built on land leased to NSW Department of Community Services who in turn sub-lease to the Brewarrina Business Centre. The purpose-built building on the corner of Young and Wilson Streets, Brewarrina was completed in January 2014.

### **Cullunghutti Aboriginal Child and Family Centre, Nowra**

Nowra is a city on the south coast of New South Wales, located approximately 160 kilometres south of Sydney. At the 2011 census, Nowra had a population of 34,479 people with 6.1 percent of the population identifying as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent (ABS 2012). 'Tharawal' or 'Dharawal' people are referred to as historically occupying the areas south and south western Sydney area from the south side of Botany Bay, around Port Hacking to the north of the Shoalhaven River (Nowra) and extending inland west to Campbelltown and Camden (Tharawal Local Aboriginal Land Council 2013).

The Cullunghutti Aboriginal Child and Family Centre opened early in 2014 jointly managed by Relationships Australia (NSW) and Illawarra Area Child Care. The facility is designed to be a welcoming place for Aboriginal people that will support culturally relevant and safe early childhood education and care, parent and family support and early childhood health services.



Figure 18: Cullunghutti Aboriginal Child and Family Centre – Play area and interior (Source: The Early Childhood Training and Resource Centre 2014).





Figure 19: Cullunghutti Aboriginal Child and Family Centre – Sculptures (Source: Cullunghutti Aboriginal Child and Family Centre 2014)

### **Ngallu Wal Child and Family Centre, Doonside**

Doonside is a suburb of Sydney, located 40 kilometres west of the central business district. Doonside's population was 13,087 in the 2011 census with 4.9 percent of the population identifying as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent (ABS 2012). The Darug people are the traditional owners of the area now known as Doonside. The Darug people scattered throughout much of Western Sydney with their lands bounded by Kuringgai to the northeast around Broken Bay, the Darkinjung to the north, the Wiradjuri to the west on the western fringe of the Blue Mountains, the Gandangara to the southwest in the Southern Highlands and the Tharawal to the southeast in the Illawarra area.

Doonside was chosen as a site due to the size and needs of the Aboriginal communities in the western suburbs (and especially the Blacktown local government area), and the potential to link with other services already established in the area. Ngallu Wal is an integrated Child and Family Centre providing childcare services to children up to four years and support services to children up to eight and their families with 29 long day care and 10 occasional care spaces. The Centre was designed by the New South Wales Public Works Department.

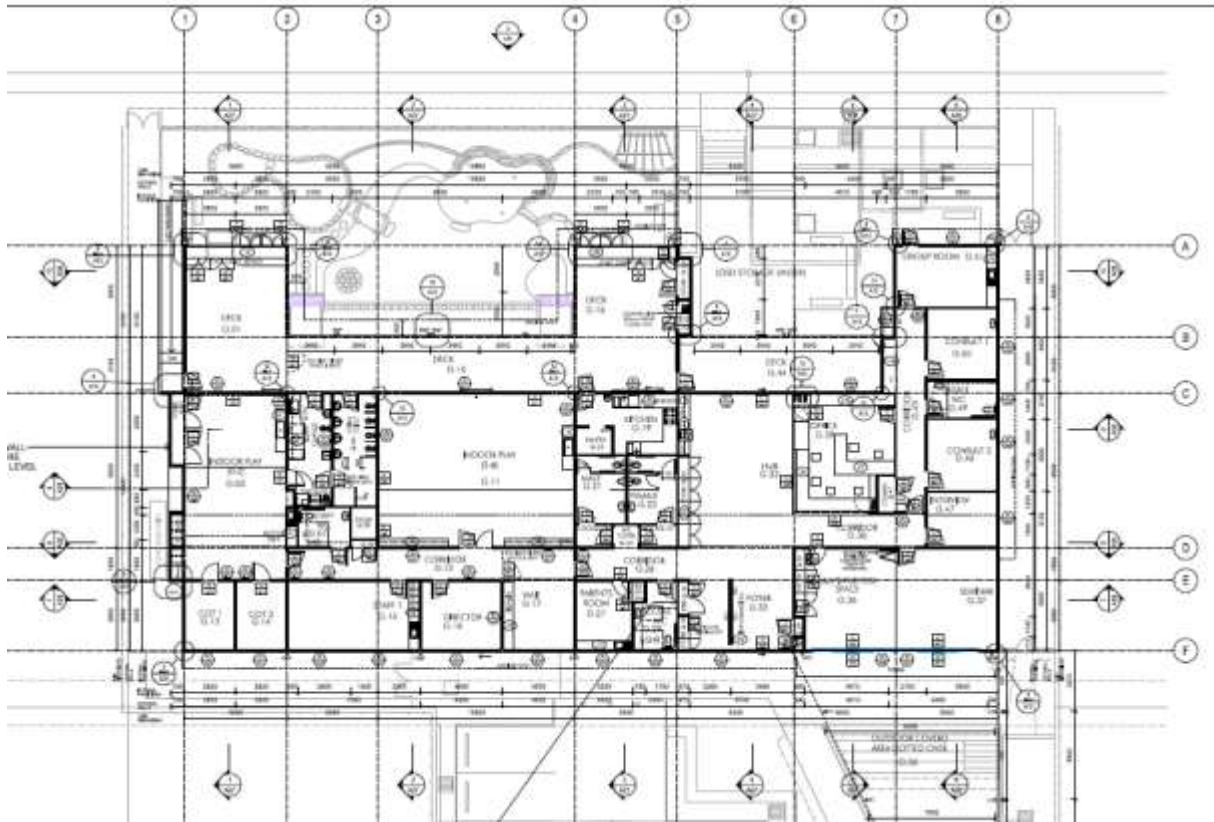


Figure 20: Ngallu Wal Aboriginal Child and Family Centre, Doonside (Source: NSW Public Works Department).

#### **Yenu Allowah Aboriginal Child and Family Centre, Mt Druitt**

Yenu Allowah is one of two centres allocated to the Blacktown local government area. Mount Druitt is located 43 kilometres west of the Sydney central business district, in the local government area of the City of Blacktown. In the 2011 census the population of Mount Druitt is 15,794 with the median age of the Mount Druitt population is 30 years of age, 7 years below the Australian average (ABS 2012). Mt. Druitt contains the highest proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of any community in western Sydney (4.5%) and the region is home to the largest urban Aboriginal population in Australia (16,998). A high percentage of children considered to be at particularly high risk developmentally in western Sydney (Wentwest 2014).

The Mount Druitt Yenu Allowah service commenced operating from interim premises in 2012 until the purpose built centre opened in June 2014. Yenu Allowah, meaning ‘walking together’, is the Darug name given to the centre by a local Elder, Aunty Edna Watson. The name represents the centre’s purpose of ‘walking together’ with Mt Druitt families, community and stakeholders to develop and deliver a centre that will make a difference.

Sydney-based Wiradjuri artist, Nicole Foreshew was engaged as the artist in residence and interior designer for the project and liaised with community users of the centre and worked with emerging Aboriginal artists and designers to enhance the aesthetics of the buildings.

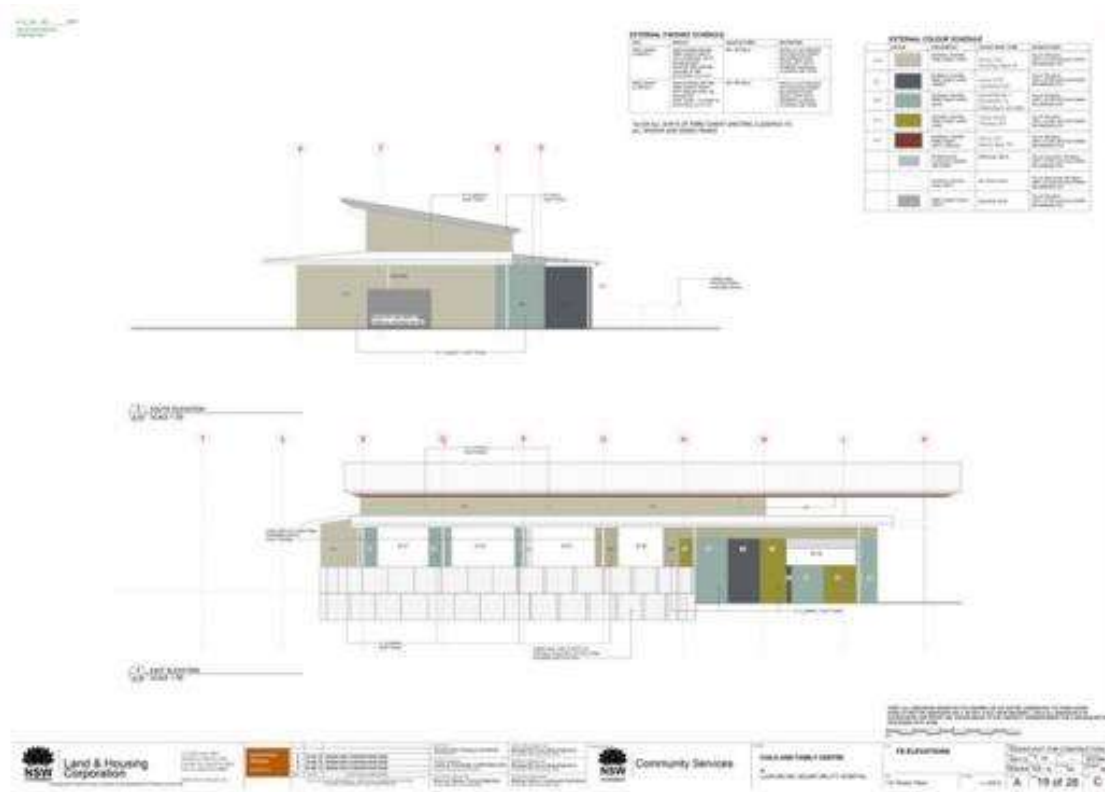


Figure 21: Yenu Allowah Aboriginal Child and Family Centre – Elevations (Source: Foreshew 2014).



Figure 22: Yenu Allowah Aboriginal Child and Family Centre – Exterior (Source: Foreshew 2014).

## **Queensland**

The National Partnership Agreement for Indigenous Early Childhood Development provided for the establishment of ten child and family centres in Queensland. The locations include: Cairns, Doomadgee, Ipswich, Logan, Mackay, Mareeba, Mornington Island, Mount Isa, Palm Island and Rockhampton. Six CFCs were built on Queensland Government land, three are located on private land and on Mornington Island the CFC was constructed on Traditional Owner land. Three CFCs (Mackay, Mornington Island and Mount Isa) also have long day care centres attached to the hub building.

All the child and family centres delivered services from permanent premises from 2013. At two sites the centres were added onto the sites of Aboriginal health services while the seven are sited adjacent to public schools. Nine of the CFCs are stand-alone buildings, while the Ipswich CFC links to Kambu Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation for Health's medical centre. All of the projects were designed by Project Services for the Department of Housing and Public Works of the Queensland Government and all but two of the Queensland projects are operated by Aboriginal community controlled organisations

### **Mareeba Children and Family Centre, Mareeba**

Mareeba is a town on the Atherton Tableland in Far North Queensland. At the 2011 census there were 10,182 people living in Mareeba with a population of 1,350 (13.3%) identifying as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent (ABS 2012). Mareeba lies within the traditional lands of the Koko Muluridji peoples and the area is now also home to many people from other language groups, including Yirrganydji, Kuku Yalanji, Djungan, Bar-Barrum and Walkamin.

The Mareeba Children and Family Centre was designed by Project Services, Department of Housing and Public Works of the Queensland Government in conjunction with architect Lea Lennon. It was entered in the 2013 Far North Queensland Regional Australian Institute of Architects Architecture Awards. The citation stated:

The Mareeba Family Centre is an actively used facility which brings together occasional child care, training and allied health in a building that is colourful, welcoming and embraces community values.

The building is in an 'L' shape and consists of an open-plan office, a manager's office, a reception area, two meeting rooms, one general consultation room, a health consultation room, a parent room, a playgroup hub and adjunct care area, a staff kitchen and a community kitchen. Outdoors, landscaping with sandstone blocks for seating and steppingstones leading to a sand pit, complement the building. There is also a small outdoor stage area for performances and areas for outdoor group meetings. The Centre provides consultation services, medical and community group facilities, for remote Indigenous children and families. This project refurbishment revised and updated an out of date tired looking facility. The design of the building focused on a whole of life strategy with re-use of the existing structural elements and floor slab where viable. The use of low maintenance materials, flexible spaces to accommodate varying occupant capacity and requirements of community groups were conceived to allow for future flexibility in operational efficiencies, whilst providing a high quality environment for users and staff. The basic footprint of the building was extended to allow for additional administration and storage spaces. The early feasibility studies addressed material selection and capital recurrent costs through a lifecycle costing analysis of integrated mechanical and electrical services.





Figure 23: Mareeba Children and Family Centre – Entry (Source: Lea Lennon 2014).



Figure 24: Mareeba Children and Family Centre – Exterior (Source: Lea Lennon 2014).



Figure 25: Mareeba Children and Family Centre – Exterior (Source: Lea Lennon 2014).



Figure 26: Mareeba Children and Family Centre – Rear (Source: Lea Lennon 2014).

### **Cairns Children and Family Centre, Cairns**

Cairns is a regional city in the far north of Queensland, located 1,700 kilometres from Brisbane. It is in the top 10 fastest growing towns in Queensland with a population growth rate at 3.2 per cent. During the latest census in 2011, the population of Cairns grew to 224,436 people (ABS 2012). Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander persons accounted for 7.8 per cent of the population or 10 741 persons in the Cairns Regional Council local government area in the 2011 census (ABS 2012). It is predicted that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population will reach more than one million people in the next 20 years, as the indigenous population rapidly ages and becomes more urbanised. It is predicted that Indigenous population growth will be fastest in Brisbane, Rockhampton, Cairns, south-western Western Australia, South Hedland, Townsville and Mackay (Biddle 2013).

The Cairns Children and Family Centre was constructed within the grounds of the Wuchopperen Medical Centre and Social Service in Cairns. The word ‘Wuchopperen’ is derived from Wikmungkan language of central western coast of Cape York. ‘Wuch’ meaning house ‘Oparra’ refers to traditional medicines and practices which encompass all aspects of physical, mental, spiritual and emotional well-being. Wuchopperen consulted widely as to the Centre’s location and decided not to co-locate the Centre within the grounds of a school due to concerns that some children would not be able to access services.

The centre was designed with community consultation on some design elements such as the location of rooms. The Centre is closely linked but physically separated from the social and emotional wellbeing facility and all the buildings are accessed and linked via covered walkways. The Centre has consulting rooms, a childcare facility, an open office area, and training area for parenting classes with a space for adjunct care.





Figure 27: Wuchopperen Medical Centre and Social Health Centre- Entrance (Source: Gordon Gould Ipson Architects, 2014).



Figure 28: Wuchopperen Medical Centre and Social Health Centre- Exterior (Source: Gordon Gould Ipson Architects 2014).



Figure 29: Cairns Children and Family Centre – Standalone CFC building (Source: Queensland Government 2014).

### **Dumaji Children and Family Centre, Doomadgee**

Doomadgee is a discrete remote Aboriginal community was located inland from the Gulf of Carpentaria with a population of approximately 1,200 people. The traditional spelling of Doomadgee 'Dumaji' was used to name the Aboriginal Children and Family Centre. The facility is prefabricated and consists of one large building with dedicated areas. Childcare is not included in the design as there is a childcare facility operating in the township. There is an area for playgroups and adjunct care, as well as staff offices, medical consultation rooms, a community kitchen and a large meeting and training room. There is also a space with computers available for community access. Outside there is a large deck area for social activities.

Construction had to be strategically managed due to transport constraints (in particular, building in a monsoonal area), the barging in of materials from Cairns, construction equipment available onsite and the use of local labour.



Figure 30: Dumaji Children and Family Centre – Exterior (Source: Australian Plumbing Gas and Solar 2013).

### **Ipswich Children and Family Centre, Ipswich**

Ipswich is a city in south-east Queensland, Australia located 40 kilometres west of the Brisbane. Ipswich comprises an area of 1090 square kilometres with a population of 180,000 people (ABS 2012). In 2012, it was estimated there were 235,971 people residing within the Ipswich/Goodna catchment area. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in 2006 was counted as 7,864 people, accounting for 3.4% of the Ipswich/Goodna catchment area population. The area has a high proportion of people who are highly disadvantaged (Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services 2014).

A purpose built facility has been added to the existing Kambu Medical Centre, an Aboriginal community controlled medical centre. The clinic was founded 32 years ago and practices a holistic and preventative approach to health care. The front of the current Medical Centre features a wall for the children to contribute individually painted tiles. The entrance consists of a large foyer and a family area with foldaway tables, lounges and a television.

The additions are also used for community meetings and house medical consultation rooms, an open plan office and a community kitchen, with a playground outside. The centre ran some services out of a temporary site during the construction phase. This site includes office space, an assessment room, waiting area and a room for family programs.

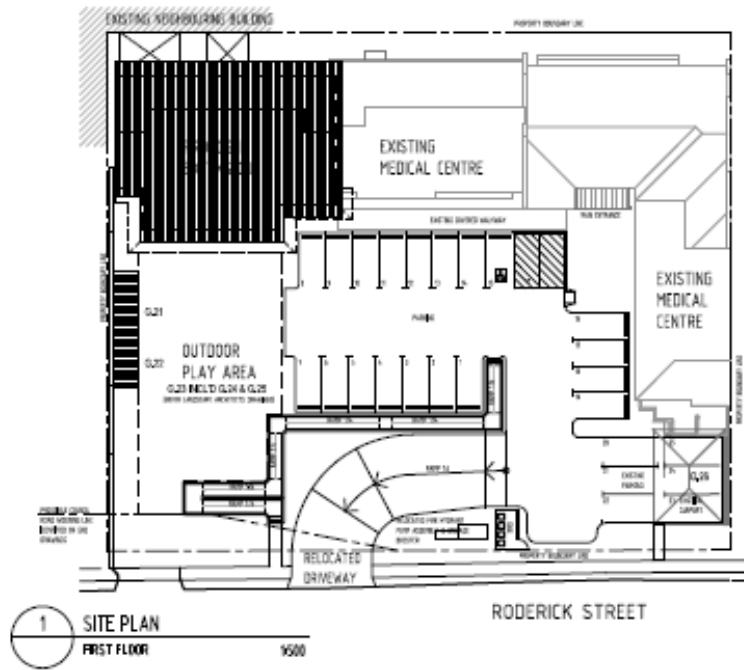


Figure 31: Ipswich Children and Family centre – Site Plan (Source: Lonergan and Law Architects).

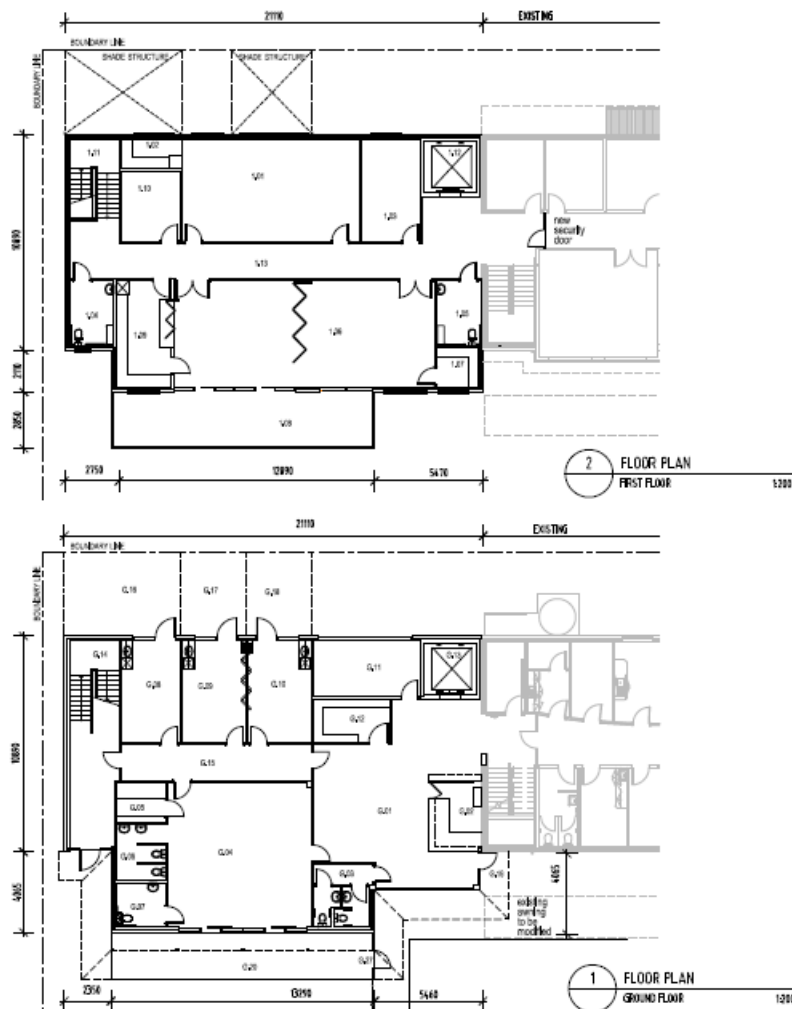


Figure 32: Ipswich Children and Family centre – Building Plans (Source: Lonergan and Law Architects).



### **Ganyjuu Child and Family Centre, Logan**

Logan is a city in South East Queensland situated between the Brisbane to the north and the Gold Coast to the south. The population at the 2011 census was 287,517 people with 2.8 percent of the population (7,773), identifying as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent (ABS 2012).

The Ganyjuu Child and Family Centre was constructed within the grounds of a public school site. The building was planned with plaque on the path at the entrance. The plaque features the totems of the two major clan groups of the area. At the entrance, there is a floor to ceiling feature wall displaying photographs of significant community members. The building houses an adjunct care facility, meeting rooms, a hub space and clinic rooms, staff areas and outside areas.

### **Ngakulwen Nyerrwe Children and Family Centre and Kirdi Mayarr Long Day Care Centre, Mornington Island**

Mornington Island is in the lower southern Gulf of Carpentaria approximately 444 km north of Mt Isa and 125 km from Burketown. Mornington Island has four major clan groups descending from Lardil, Yangkaal and Kaiadilt peoples. The clan groups are Barlumbenda, Jirrurumbenda, Lilumbenda and Larlumbenda. Mornington Island has a population of approximately 1,300 with 92% of the population identifying as being of Indigenous descent (ABS 2012). The Mornington Island Children and Family Centre is operated by the Save the Children Fund. The design consists of two large buildings with a shared courtyard.



Figure 33: Mornington Island Children and Family Centre (Source: Australian Government Office of the Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services 2013).

### **Mount Isa Children and Family Centre, Mount Isa**

Mount Isa is a city in north-west Queensland. It covers an area of over 43,310 square kilometres and is an administrative, commercial, and industrial centre. The population of Mount Isa at the 2011 census was 22,091 persons, an increase of 0.6 percent over the previous year. At the 2011 census, 3,205 people identified as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin (15.1% of the total population) (ABS 2012). The Kalkadoon are traditional owners of the area.

The design of the Mount Isa Children and Family Centre consists of two buildings located in Short Street, side by side with the one entry point. The long day care centre is purpose built and decorated with local cultural artefacts. Both buildings open onto the rear external area which backs onto a native forest. The rear area has a fireplace for yarning circles.

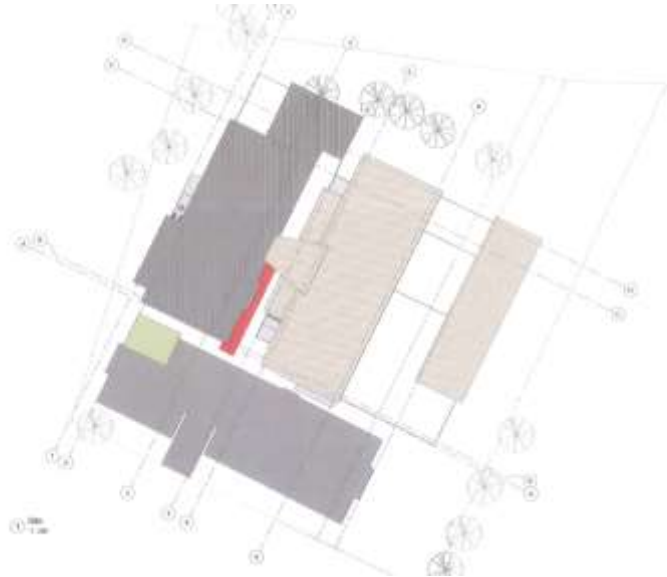


Figure 34: Mount Isa Children and Family Centre – site plan (Source: Queensland Government, Department of Housing and Public Works).

### **Palm Island Children and Family Centre, Palm Island**

Palm Island lies off the coast of Townsville and has one of the largest Aboriginal communities in Queensland with people from more than 40 language groups present. Approximately 2,500 people reside on Palm Island (ABS 2012).

The Children and Family Centre was designed with cultural, political and budgetary constraints which presented significant challenges. Given these, it was determined that a modular building system would be used. A prefabricated building was constructed in Brisbane and was delivered to Palm Island, mid-2012. It was located on the former Bwgcolman preschool site. The building includes a large open plan central hub, two consultation rooms, an adjunct child care room, dedicated rooms for parents, a toy-library and offices. A large covered deck has been built on the southern side of the centre and will overlook an outdoor play area. In the last decade, layering prefabricated buildings with local symbols, signs and art has a tradition on Palm Island. The collaboration with respected local artist and Elder, Allan Palm Island has followed this tradition (Queensland Government, 2008).



Figure 35: Bwgcolman Palm Island Children and Family Centre – Exterior (Source: Lea Lennon Architects 2013).



Figure 36: Bwgcolman Palm Island Children and Family Centre – Artwork. Artist: Allan Palm Island (Source: Lea Lennon Architects 2013).

### **Rockhampton Child and Family Centre, Rockhampton**

Rockhampton is a city located 600 kilometres north of Brisbane. The 2011 census recorded the Rockhampton urban area with a population of 61,724 people. The city has a high Indigenous population with 5.9 percent (4,073 people) identifying as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent in the 2011 census. The region of Rockhampton and Capricorn Coast is the traditional land of the Darumbal (*alt spelling* Dharumbal) Aboriginal people.

The Rockhampton Children and Family Centre was constructed within the grounds of an existing public school. The tender for the delivery of services was awarded to Bidgerdii Health Service. The building includes a large open plan central hub, three consultation rooms, a kitchen with servery, an adjunct child care room, dedicated rooms for parents, a toy-library and offices. A large covered verandah was built on the southern wing of the centre overlooking an outdoor play area.

### **Western Australia**

The five Centres in Western Australia were established on crown land close to or on public school sites in Halls Creek, Fitzroy Crossing, Kununurra, Roebourne and the Swan Region. Evidence to support site locations was obtained from a review of the number and needs of Aboriginal children located in each area, the availability or lack of existing services, the degree of disadvantage, and the likelihood of the Centres being fully utilised in these locations. The Halls Creek and Fitzroy Crossing Centres became operational in 2012. The remaining centres were constructed during 2012 and 2013, with all open for business by 2014. The Western Australian Government stated that community engagement on aspects including site location, building design, local governance arrangements, and service and program provision was vital for their success (Government of Western Australia, Department of Education, 2011).



### **Roebourne Children and Family Centre, Roebourne**

Roebourne is a town in Western Australia's Pilbara region, located 202 km from Port Hedland and approximately 1,500 kilometres from Perth. Roebourne became essentially an Aboriginal town as people moved out of the crowded camps and reserves, and from the outlying stations in the 1960s. Roebourne's population is 950 and growing. The area is home to the Ngarluma people, but many Yindjibarndi and Banyjima people previously from outlying stations also live in the town.

The commission for the design of Roebourne Children and Family Centre was awarded to architectural firm, Iredale, Pederson Hook, a firm with considerable experience in Indigenous projects. Finn Pederson described that the project:

...focuses on the functional relationship of the adult multipurpose facility and childcare facility akin the symbiotic relationship of parent and child; and foster fun and a family atmosphere for members of the community to gather. The design approach to distinguish the building functional spaces between the childcare centre and family centre, allows each to develop its unique identity. The two buildings are united by a continuous undulating canopy structure that creates a sense of unity for the whole.

The internal layout of a series of enclosed functional spaces and covered external spaces provides environmentally and culturally appropriate spaces to develop a positive learning environment, and attempts to welcome the local community to share in the creation of positive parent and childhood development. The design embraces the natural climatic conditions, in particular the prevailing breezes to inform the planning and sustainable use of the facility.



Figure 37: Roebourne Children and Family Centre - Plan (Source: Iredale, Pederson Hook, 2013).



Figure 38: Roebourne Children and Family Centre - External areas between buildings (Source: Finn Pederson, 2014).



Figure 39: Roebourne Children and Family Centre – Entrance (Source: Finn Pederson, 2014).

### **Middle Swan Children and Family Centre, Middle Swan**

Middle Swan is a suburb of Perth. The 2011 census showed the City of Swan's population is growing rapidly with an average annual growth rate of 3.21 per cent per annum since the previous Census in 2006. Between 2006 and 2011, the population grew by almost 15,000 people (ABS 2012). The

Noongar people are the traditional owners of the Swan coastal plain. A mission was operated at Middle Swan and historically the Aboriginal population came to the area as a result of dispossession.

Architectural firm, Formworks Architecture were engaged by the Department of Education to design Swan Region Children and Family Centre within an 'archetypal' framework with a design that could be constructed at multiple locations if required. The Middle Swan Children and Family Centre opened in 2014 with facilities including a family centre, an area for a non-licensed crèche and health consulting rooms. The centre is located on the site of the Middle Swan Primary School in Stratton.

Formworks Architecture interesting solution was to design a single-storey design that references a 'mia mia' of the Indigenous people with its circular, semi-outdoor form. The centres consist of fluid spaces that can be used in a variety of ways." The Clayton View Children and Family Centre was been constructed using a similar design.



Figure 40: Middle Swan Children and Family Centre. The ethno-architectural form of a 'mia mia' was used as the design generator for the Middle Swan Children and Family Centre. The firm was attempting to achieve a prototype for Aboriginal Children and Family Centres across Western Australia (Source: Formworks Architecture 2013).

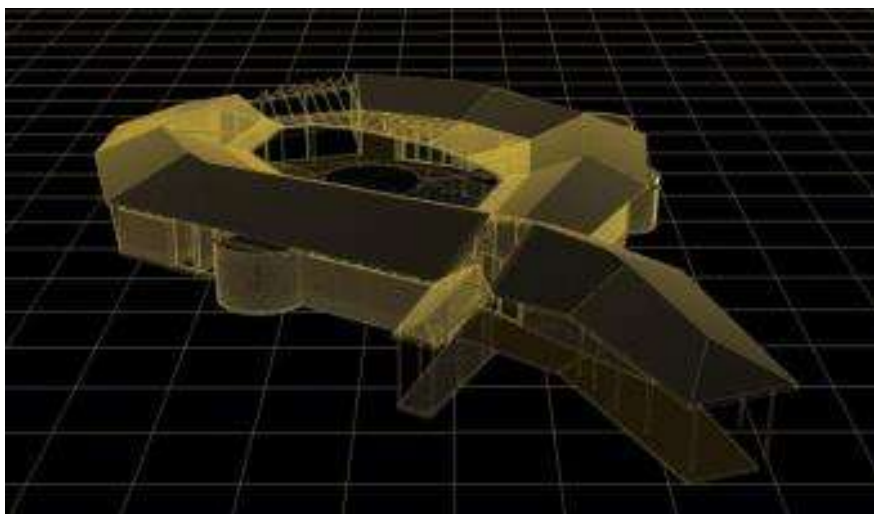


Figure 41: Middle Swan Children and Family Centre - CAD generated design (Source: Formworks Architecture 2013).





Figure 42: Middle Swan Children and Family Centre - Courtyard area under construction (Source: Formworks Architecture 2013).



Figure 43: Middle Swan Children and Family Centre - External finishes/surfaces/planting guide (Source: Formworks Architecture 2013).

### **Ningkuwum-Ngamayuwu Children and Family Centre, Halls Creek**

Halls Creek is situated in the East Kimberley region between Fitzroy Crossing and Turkey Creek (Warmun). Halls Creek is home to the Jaru (*alt. spelling* Djar-u) and Kija (*alt. spelling* Kitja, Gidja) peoples as well as some Tjurabalan peoples from desert areas to the south. Aboriginal people represent over 70% of the Halls Creek's population.

The Ningkuwum-Ngamayuwu Children and Family Centre opened in 2012. The name 'Ningkuwum-Ngamayuwu' translates to 'relatives' in Kija and Jaru languages. The design incorporates early childhood education, childcare and medical services as well as communal spaces and gardens for use by the community and other service providers. The facility consists of three separate areas housed under a communal roof. The licensed childcare area is located in the middle, while on either side are the medical consulting rooms and the family centre, which contains a dedicated education and training centre. Consulting rooms are decorated with local designs and artefacts and a point of pride is the outdoor landscaping, where a small irrigation system allows native grasses to grow and creates an environment for social gatherings around the fire pit.



Figure 44: Ningkuwum-Ngamayuwu Children and Family Centre - Architect's rendering (Source: Department of Education WA, 2014).



Figure 45: Ningkuwum-Ngamayuwu Children and Family Centre – Exterior (Source: Department of Education WA, 2014).



Figure 46: Ningkuwum-Ngamayuwu Children and Family Centre – Rear play area (Source: Department of Education WA, 2014).

### **Baya Gawiy Buga yani Jandu yani u Centre (Fitzroy Crossing Children and Family Centre), Fitzroy Crossing**

Fitzroy Crossing is located approximately 2,500 kilometres from Perth with a population of approximately 1200 people, most of who are of Aboriginal descent. Within the town boundaries of Fitzroy Crossing, there are six discrete Aboriginal communities. In order of the size of their core populations they are: Junjuwa, Kurnangki, Mindi Rardi, Loanbun, DarlIngunaya and Bungardi. The Indigenous population of Fitzroy Crossing contains significant linguistic and cultural diversity. There are five major language groups resident in the town, Walmajarri, Wangkatjunga, Gooniyandi, Nyikina and Bunuba—as well as others, such as Djaru and Mangala. Bunuba are the traditional owners for the country on which Fitzroy Crossing sits.

The Baya Gawiy Buga yani Jandu yani u Centre was opened in 2012 and is located adjacent to the Fitzroy Valley District High School on Balanijangarri Road, Fitzroy Crossing (Wagner 2013). The Fitzroy River was used as a reference for the aesthetic language of this facility in the design by Bateman Architects. The fish in the river are the reference and the metaphor for the building architecture. Two important fish to Aboriginal culture are the Saw Fish (Galwanyi) and the Freshwater Whip Ray (Baya Gawiy). The building takes on the form of the fish to produce an organic building with curved walls, organic forms and a vaulted roof speak to the important aspects of 'country' and to the other elements in the landscape.

The project provides accommodation for two major elements: a Child Care Centre and a Family Centre which are linked via a covered breezeway to provide shelter and shade. The Child Care Centre has been designed to accommodate 16 – 0 to 2 year olds, 20 – 2 to 3 year olds and 20 – 3 to 4 year olds playground areas and service areas such as kitchen, laundry & staff areas. The Family Centre will be focused on providing health education and meeting places for the Community. It also provides accommodation for a Primary Health Care Consultation Clinic, a Play Group Area, Central kitchen and Group Meeting Rooms.

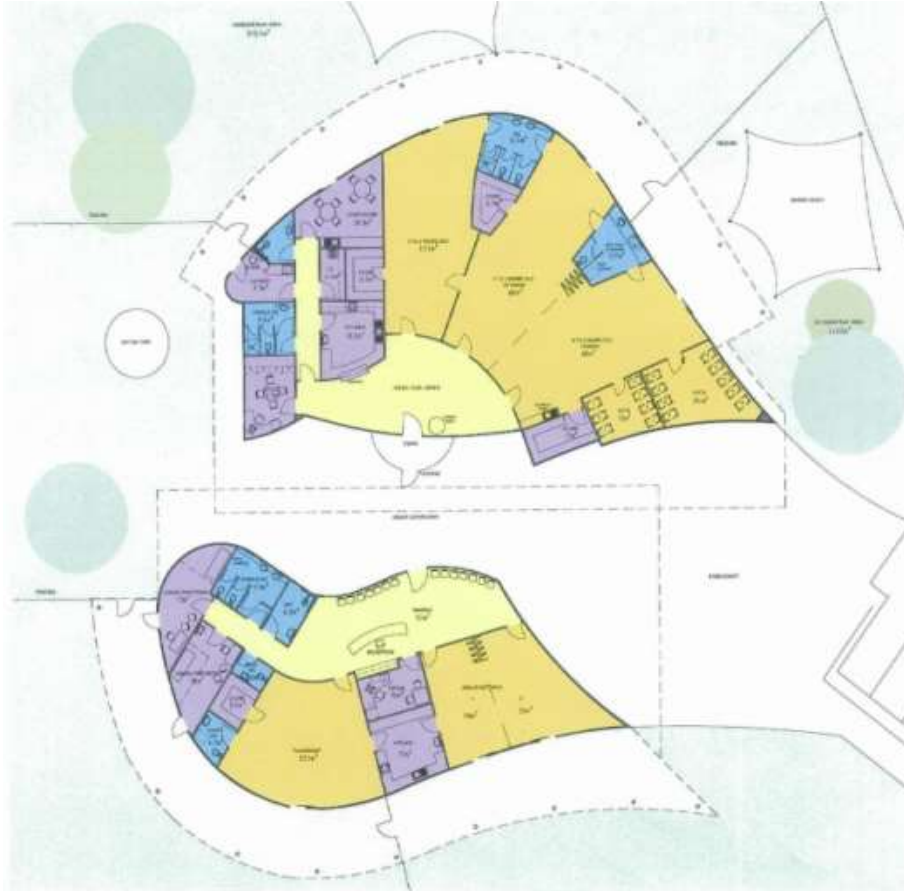


Figure 47: Baya Gawiy Buga yani Jandu yani u Centre, Fitzroy Crossing – Plans (Source: Department of Education WA, 2014).



Figure 48: Baya Gawiy Buga yani Jandu yani u Centre, Fitzroy Crossing – Exterior (Source: Bateman Architects 2014).





Figure 49: Baya Gawiy Buga yani Jandu yani u Centre, Fitzroy Crossing – Interior (Source: Department of Education WA, 2014).

### **Kununurra Children and Family Centre, Kununurra**

Kununurra is located at the eastern extremity of the Kimberley Region, 3,200 kilometres north east of Perth. It has a population of approximately 7000 people which increases up to three fold during the dry season. Almost half of the population identify as being of Aboriginal descent, mainly Miriwung Gajerrong people who are the recognised Native Title holders of the town of Kununurra.

The architectural firm, Iredale, Pederson Hook was commissioned to design the Kununurra Children and Family Centre. Kununurra is located in the East Kimberley region of Western Australia with a population of approximately 6,000 people with almost half the population identifying as being of Aboriginal descent. The wet season sees a large influx of Indigenous persons into Kununurra from outlying communities such as Kalumburu, Oombulgurri, Warmun, Port Keats and other communities which can result in a doubling of the population. The Aboriginal population consists of a number of language groups; with the traditional owners, the Miriwung and Gajerrong people, remaining dominant. The population is young with over 800 children between 0-5 years residing in the area.

Aboriginal people in Kununurra face significant social and health issues. Around 80% of the Aboriginal population is welfare dependent. The town has 'night culture' where numerous kids roam the street to either amuse themselves, get away from violence, or unsafe home environments. This in turn, impacts on school attendance, academic achievement and low employment opportunities later in life often serving to introduce people to the criminal- justice system. The area has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Western Australia and children suffer from high rates of hearing loss, foetal alcohol spectrum disorders and other physical and cognitive impairments. Around 47% of school aged children do not attend school regularly.

The Kununurra building was designed in consultation with the community. Its location at the northern end of the school was chosen to accommodate families living in the garden and ranch areas, and for its close proximity to the Aboriginal Health Service. The Centre has a licensed childcare facility and family areas, which will offer facilities for training, programs for parents and early learning, healthy living programs run in the Centre kitchen. The Centre also has two health-consulting rooms, one to paediatric standards and one for mental health counselling. The 1800 m<sup>2</sup> facility was constructed with a slab on ground, engineered steel superstructure with light gauge steel framing and a variety of external claddings.



The design approach was to physically distinguish the building's functional spaces and to allow each to develop its unique identity. A singular covering roof creates a sense of identity for the whole facility, while the identity of the Child Care Centre and the Family Centre are expressed by changes in the roof form over the entry areas of these portions of the facility.

The internal layout of enclosed functional spaces and covered external spaces provides environmentally and culturally appropriate spaces to develop a positive learning environment, and welcomes the local community to share in the creation of positive parent and childhood development. The Centre is designed to take into account Aboriginal avoidance practices, gender separations and privacy needs with clinics are designed with private entrances and toilets gender-separated. The design takes into account the cultural significance of the views to Kelly's Knob and direction towards Mirima (Hidden Valley) National Park.



Figure 50: Kununurra Children and Family Centre -Architect's model (Source: Iredale, Pederson, Hook 2013).



Figure 51: Kununurra Children and Family Centre - View of entrance. (Source: Finn Pederson 2014).



Figure 52: Kununurra Children and Family Centre - External outlook (Source: Finn Pederson 2014).

### **Northern Territory**

Five child and family centres were established at Yuendumu, Gunbalanya, Ngukurr, Maningrida and Palmerston. The former Commonwealth Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) identified two communities and the remainder were chosen based on the following criteria: community identification of early childhood as a priority; insufficient community infrastructure to deal with rising early childhood numbers and health and early development statistics.

The Centres were expected to be operational by the end of 2011 but difficulties in agreement on land tenure issues between the Northern and Central Land Councils and the Northern Territory Government caused some delays. The Government is required to have a 40-year lease over any infrastructure on Aboriginal land. In 2012, consultations for the design had been conducted for most sites. Tenders were called in 2013 and construction of most projects was complete in 2014.

### **Palmerston Child and Family Centre, Palmerston**

Palmerston is located between the outer areas of Darwin 21 kilometres southeast of Darwin. It had a population of 34,618 at the 2011 census and is one of the fastest growing cities in Australia. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of Palmerston is approximately 12.8% and growing. Over 50 percent of the population of Palmerston is under the age of 30 and 10 percent under the age of five years (ABS 2012).

The Department of Education sought appropriate sites to build the centre in collaboration with the Larrakia Corporation, representing the traditional owners of the land and formed a steering committee, of which Danila Dilaba and Larrakia Corporation were members, alongside the local council and non-government organisations that deliver programs in the Palmerston area. The steering committee engaged a consultant to gather advice from all relevant stakeholders, including service providers for Palmerston and the outlying areas and camps, and parents who use these services.

Norbuilt Constructions were awarded the tender to build Palmerston Child and Family Centre which was completed in 2014.

### **Kurdu Kurdu Kurlangu Child and Family Centre, Yuendumu**

Yuendumu is a discrete Aboriginal community located 293 kilometres northwest of Alice Springs. It is located within the Yuendumu Aboriginal Lands Trust area on traditional Anmatyerr and Warlpiri land and includes numerous outstations. The community is comprised of Warlpiri and Anmatyerr people, with a population of approximately 820 people (ABS 2012).

The original establishment of Kurdu-kurdu at Yuendumu in 2005 is important in a discussion of Children and Family Centres. Kurdu-kurdu started at the local school as a play-centre for pre-school children. With the sponsorship of the Yuendumu-Willowra CGC, the organisation took over an empty house and established a well-resourced and staffed comprehensive child-care centre. Kurdu-kurdu developed into a 'best-practice' model for child-care in remote Aboriginal communities and was named in the 2007-2008 *Reconciliation Action Plan Report* as the model for the "establishment of [an] innovative Childcare Service Hub" in remote areas.

The first Child and Family Centre community meeting at Yuendumu was held in 2009. This meeting represented the beginnings of an enduring partnership between the WETT ECCD Project, the Yuendumu community, the Kurdu Kurdu Kurlangu Yuendumu Child Care Centre, Central Desert Shire and Integrated Family Services and led to the development of the Early Childhood Care and Development Reference Group. Throughout 2010, a series of community meetings were held in collaboration with Kurdu Kurdu Kurlangu and local service providers. These meetings were chaired by Warlpiri women to provide feedback to Integrated Family Services and the architect regarding community aspirations for the new Child and Family Centre.

The Early Childhood Care and Development Reference Group, Kurdu Kurdu Kurlangu and Integrated Family Services were able to present the final design of the Child and Family Centre at the Local Reference Group meeting in 2011. At this meeting the Early Childhood Care and Development Reference Group and Kurdu Kurdu Kurlangu assured everyone that the new building reflected their ideas.



Figure 53: Kurdu Kurdu Kurlangu Child and Family Centre– Presentation of design. The Early Childhood Care and Development Reference Group, Kurdu Kurdu Kurlangu and Integrated Family Services presenting the final design of the Child and Family Centre at the Local Reference Group meeting in 2011 (Source: Department of Education 2011).



In 2013, the Commonwealth reported that significant delays have occurred due to the Northern Territory government's focus on service delivery from interim premises rather than the construction of the permanent premises, the need for extensive and extended community consultation, land tenure and lease negotiations and local infrastructure up-grades. Minor delays with site preparation occurred due to issues with the water supply to the site. Construction commenced with an expected completion of 2014.



Figure 54: Kurdu Kurdu Kurlangu Child and Family Centre. Centre under construction in January 2014 (Yuendumu Community 2014).

### **Armunbu Child and Family Centre, Gunbalanya**

Gunbalanya (*alt. spelling* Kunbarllanjnja which is historically referred to as Oenpelli) is a discrete remote Aboriginal community situated about 60km north east of Jabiru, across the East Alligator River in Arnhem Land. There are approximately 1500 residents; the main language is Kunwinjku, used by many residents as a first language. The traditional owners of the land where the community is located are the Mandjurlngunj clan and there are 25 clan groups in total.

The former Gunbalanya Youth Centre was transformed into an interim facility for child and family services in 2012. The parents named the centre 'Karbenbukkan Wurdwurdkilekileh' meaning 'teach little children', later naming the new centre, the Armunbu Child and Family Centre. The site and design for the new centre was agreed and endorsed by the Traditional Owners. Construction of the Children and Family Centre but construction was initially delayed due to land tenure issues and inadequate sewerage.



Figures 55 A & B: Armunbu Child and Family Centre – Artists workshops. In 2013, Injalak Arts and Crafts, Gunbalanya worked with local artists at the interim centre to create public art pieces for the Armunbu Child and Family Centre. One of the murals featured the illustrations from book Kuni Wanjh Kunwoybuk - Come Share Together (Photographs Janie Andrews).



Figure 56: Armunbu Child and Family Centre – Completed mosaic. Artist Janie Andrews with a completed mosaic panel for Armunbu Child and Family Centre (Source: Tactile Arts 2014).

#### **Ngukkurr Children and Family Centre, Ngukkurr**

Ngukkurr is a discrete remote Aboriginal community located 330 kilometres south east of Katherine in south east Arnhem Land. The population of the community is approximately 1200 people with 200 people living in the surrounding area. The major language spoken in Ngukkurr is Kriol, with English and other Indigenous languages including Mara, Ngandi, Alawa, Nunggubuyu, Rittarangu, Wandarang and Ngalakan being spoken.

The recognised traditional owners group of Ngukkurr, the Yugul Mangi are the established leadership group in the community. Yugul Mangi cover the seven language groups of the area and have set up an early childhood reference group, made up of senior women, which guides the delivery of children's services in Ngukkurr. The community's only childcare facility was closed down and an outside organisation was providing outreach services so the construction and establishment of a 50 place child and family centre built to national quality standards was seen to be essential in meeting the needs of children aged 0 – 5 years. Tenders were released mid-2013.

Ri-Con was awarded the contract to construct the Ngukkurr Children and Family Centre for the Northern Territory Department of Infrastructure. The construction of the CFC was completed in June, 2014. The centre is separated into two sections. The Family Centre incorporates a commercial kitchen, freezer room, consulting room, multiple purpose and two disabled toilets and the child care centre including reception area, staff rooms, offices, laundry, disabled toilets, sleeping room, and the infants and children's rooms. The building is constructed of blockwork with a steel frame, with a mono pitch metal clad roof. Externally there is a 14 bay carpark, two large circular sand pits, bike track and extensive landscaping.





Figure 57: Ngukkurr Children and Family Centre – Exterior (Source: Ri-con 2014).



Figures 58: Ngukkurr Children and Family Centre – Kitchen and Children's Areas. (Source: Ri-con 2014).

### **Maningrida Child and Family Centre, Maningrida**

Maningrida is located approximately 520 kilometres east of Darwin and 300 kilometres northeast of Jabiru in North Central Arnhem Land. Maningrida services an average population of 2650 people which includes those who live (mostly on a seasonal basis) on the 30 or so homeland centres in outlying areas. The Kunibidji people are the traditional landowners with other language groups living in the area including; Kunbarlang, Nakkara, Burarra, Gun-nartpa, Gurrgoni, Rembarrnga, Eastern Kunwinjku, Djinang, Wurlaki and Gupapuyngu. In total, over 50 Indigenous languages are spoken in the region.

The site and Centre designed were agreed and endorsed by the Traditional Owners after the resolution of land tenure issues. Ri-con was awarded the contract to construct the Maningrida

Children and Family Centre for the Northern Territory's Department of Infrastructure. The Maningrida Child and Family Centre is steel frame structure, with blockwork walls internally and externally, with a mono pitch metal clad roof. The facility is separated into two sections. The Family Centre incorporating a commercial kitchen, consulting, multiple purpose & two disabled toilets. The second section is the child care centre which includes reception area, staff rooms, offices, laundry, disabled toilets, sleeping, infants and children's rooms. Externally there is a carpark, large sand pits, bike track and extensive landscaping. The project was completed in April 2014.



Figure 59: Maningrida Child and Family Centre – Covered external area (Source: Ri-con 2014).



Figures 60 A and B: Maningrida Child and Family Centre – Internal Views (Source: Ri-con 2014).

### Tasmania

The Australian Government funded the two Aboriginal Child and Family Centres at Bridgewater (Tagara Lia) and Geeveston (Wayraparattee) in Tasmania under the Indigenous Closing the Gap strategy. Risdon Cove was also funded as the dedicated centre for Aboriginal children and their families and is managed through an agreement between the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre and the Department of Education. The Tasmanian Government developed a functional design brief (Department of Education, date unknown). This document does not prescribe, however, particular design outcomes for the Children and Family Centres.

### **Tagara Lia Children and Family Centre, Bridgewater**

Bridgewater is a suburb located approximately 19 kilometres from the Hobart Central Business District. In 2011, there were 4126 people living in Bridgewater, with 444 people identifying as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. The average age of people living in Bridgewater is 32 years of age which is five years below the Australian average (ABS 2012).

The commission for the Tagara Lia Children and Family Centre was awarded to Liminal Architecture. The brief was to bring together Service Tasmania, LINC and Tagari lia Child and Family Centre into a single building to provide information, training and support services to the Bridgewater community. The project carefully unifies the three service providers, attempting to reconcile on occasion conflicting requirements. The architecture mediates between the internal spaces and the landscape, the public and private aspects of the program and civic and suburban site characteristics. The planning attempts to make a distinction between open and control aspects of the program while addressing issues of privacy and security.

Marking the edge between the civic and the suburban, the building form responds to its context through shifts of scale, materiality and texture transitioning from the commercial to the domestic. A nature-based children's play area and a 'bush tucker' garden are integral to indoor-outdoor connections facilitating spontaneity and outdoor learning, encouraging curiosity and endless variations of play. Garden beds and scattered trees add shade, colour and shadow.



Figures 61 A & B: Bridgewater Children and Family Centre – Exterior views (Source: Liminal Architecture 2014).





Figures 62 A & B: Bridgewater Children and Family Centre – Interior views (Source: Liminal Architecture 2014).

### **Wayraparattee Child and Family Centre, Geeveston**

Geeveston is a town on the Huon River, 62 kilometres south west of Hobart. In the 2011 census, the population of Geeveston stated to be 1,431 people with the average age of people being 41 years of age, four years above the Australian average. Geeveston has a population of 149 Aboriginal people (ABS 2012).

Wayraparattee (we-rah-pah-rah-tee) is an Aboriginal word for 'forest ground.' The southern Tasmanian rural township of Geeveston known for its apple and forestry industries and the architects Liminal Studio sought the reuse of a set of 1950's weatherboard buildings. The centre provides education for birth-5 years, focused around family interactions, and supporting health services in an environment both homely and stimulating. The 30 place childcare facility is co-located with the Huon Valley Council Childcare Services to provide childcare and an adjunct care room and a training room will be part of this building as well.



Figures 63 A & B: Wayraparattee Child and Family Centre –Interiors spaces (Source: Liminal Architecture 2014).



Figures 64 A & B: Wayraparattee Child and Family Centre – Play Area and Exterior (Source: Liminal Architecture 2014).

### **TAC Risdon Cove**

The Aboriginal Centre (TAC) Risdon Cove is located seven kilometres north of Hobart, Tasmania. Lying on the Derwent River, Risdon Cove is of great significance to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community. Midden sites provide evidence of an extensive period of Aboriginal occupation. Risdon Cove was the first place in Tasmania to be colonised by Europeans and the site of a massacre of Palawa by Europeans. The 109 hectare site was a declared Indigenous Protected Area and continues to be a highly contested space.

The development of the Children’s Centre was underpinned by a desire to promote a strong sense of Aboriginal identity and community and to recreate a sacred landscape of Aboriginal knowledge and identity. The design approach developed by the architects Tim Penny Architecture and Interiors focused on developing a residential scale pavilion which sits peacefully in the landscape. Internal spaces accommodating pre-school children, administration and community facilities are arranged around a landscaped representation of Country.

The centre has been developed as a place for family and community rather than a centre only for children. The concept that the child needs to observe and be part of family and community activities is essential to the notion of Indigenous well-being. As such, the centre has been designed to operate a range of services such as long day care, an out of school hours program, child health, speech therapy, family support, transition to school, physical activity, and nutrition programs and other community activities. The kitchen was located centrally to provide Elders with visual connections across the centre. Similarly, children have line of sight to various areas so that they not visually separated from family. Children can view their cousin over in the next area or see their aunt or grandmother in the community room.

The building is designed to have a seamless transition between inside and outside spaces. Large windows and no window treatments allow children to have unencumbered views to country. All internal environments utilise natural materials, natural experiences and natural environments. Materials used for the construction consist of timber, cane, natural materials and fibres. Staff report seeing the benefits in terms of children’s expanded imaginations, problem solving skills and creativity. They note that the use of natural materials has created a learning environment that challenges children to explore what something could be, instead of ‘what it is’ and provides opportunities to for children use all their senses. In the external areas, boulders have been strategically placed rather than using seating so that it appears that the children are sitting in a natural setting.





Figure 65: TAC Aboriginal Children and Family Centre – Entrance (Source: Tim Penny, 2014).



Figure 66: TAC Aboriginal Children and Family Centre – Rear Playscape (Source: Tim Penny, 2014).



Figure 67: TAC Aboriginal Children and Family Centre – Interior (Source: Tim Penny, 2014).

The centre attempts to recreate a landscape of Aboriginal history with Bass Strait Island heritage, knowledge and identity. The building is constructed of native Tasmanian timbers reminiscent of the buildings on Cape Barren Island. The external play area embodies a deeper layer of storytelling and meaning and was designed using aerial photographs of the Furneaux Islands. Two rockeries representing Flinders and Cape Barren Islands feature. Mounds in the play area are intended to replicate the mutton bird mounds of the islands and a mutton bird shed sits in the play area replicating the environment children would experience in Aboriginal communities on the islands.

### **South Australia**

South Australia delivered four Aboriginal Children and Family Centres under the Federal Government initiative with centres at Ceduna, Christies Beach, Whyalla and Pukatja Children were established. These sites were chosen as each was identified as areas with a high number of Aboriginal families with babies and small children. Each location was also identified as having existing services that could potentially work together with the new Centre to meet the needs of the community.

Prior to the delivery of these centres, the South Australian Department for Education and Child Development had developed some expertise in the area of developing Children and Family Centres to need the needs of the Aboriginal community. The designs of the Kurna Plains Children's Centre at Elizabeth and the Tinyeri Children's Centre for Early Childhood Development and Parenting at Murray Bridge informed subsequent design processes.

The Kurna Plains Children's and Family Centre is part of a cluster of education facilities which include a Preschool, a Childcare Centre, a Family Centre and the Kurna Plains School. The Children and Family Centre is spread over two buildings, sited approximately 100 metres apart. The Preschool shares some facilities with the Childcare Centre and is divided with a central passageway and a disused operable wall which divides the main teaching spaces. The sharing of facilities has created significant issues including confusion for users and a lack of identity for each entity. The Family Centre is housed within a transportable building and shares its facilities with MarniWaiendi, an employment training program for Indigenous people. The two buildings are separated by a car park and roadway. The two functions should, ideally, be integrated. The issues faced by having the Children and Family Centre spread across two buildings are being investigated by the South Australian Department for Education and Child Development.

Tinyeri Children's Centre for Early Childhood Development and Parenting, Murray Bridge was completed in 2010 (architects Hardy Milazzo). The centre is located on a discrete site on the Murray Bridge South Primary School. The centre was recognised as an Aboriginal centre, however, the brief did not address the cultural and socio-spatial needs of Aboriginal children in the design and architects were not required to directly address these aspects. However, staff and the Aboriginal community had input into the design and are extremely proud of their accomplishments and Aboriginal influences included throughout the complex.

The centre has a large open reception and waiting area. The staff room is accessible from the reception point and functions as a community drop in area. Clients are directed to the family and children's services areas from the reception. The majority of the building is designed to operate as a pre-school facility. Co-located to the preschool facility is an occasional care area, sleeping/program room, storage and children's ablutions. A kitchen and wet/dry play areas form part of the large children's program area. There are several external areas for children. A discrete outdoor dining area is located on the southerly aspect of the building. The play areas are located on the westerly aspect. A bike track is located as a discrete area from other children's play areas. At the time of the design of the Children and Family Centres at Whyalla, Ceduna and Christies Beach, Tinyeri Children's Centre for Early Childhood Development and Parenting was seen as a best practice precedent by the South Australian Department for Education and Child Development.

#### **Pukatja Aboriginal Children and Family Centre, Pukatja**

The Pukatja Aboriginal Children and Family Centre was constructed at Pukatja (formerly Ernabella) an Aboriginal community in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands in the far north of South Australia in 2009. The new Children and Family Centre was linked to an existing child care centre using similar materials, colours and design. Troppo Architects designed the Centre using prefabricated components and landscaping included into the project. The total budget for the project was \$500,000 and construction was completed within budget.

The authors lament that opportunities to enhance the enhanced learning outcomes and support the diverse and differing socio-spatial needs of Aboriginal people may have been lost in the design of Pukatja Aboriginal Children and Family Centre. This was however the first of the Aboriginal Children and Family Centres constructed and range of issues such as its remote location and government funding cycle timelines impacted on the design outcomes.



Figure 68: Pukatja (Ernabella) Children and Family Centre - External and internal outlooks (Source: Grant 2011).





Figure 69: Pukatja (Ernabella) Children and Family Centre - Exterior (Source Grant, 2011).

### Discussion

It can be seen that the design of Aboriginal Children and Family Centres has varied greatly across Australia. The re-imagining of the environments for Aboriginal children and families has been challenging and many models have been proposed.

The Queensland Aboriginal children and family centres were co-located within existing Aboriginal community controlled health services and built as additions to existing buildings. Standalone facilities were constructed in Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania. In Western Australia, Northern Territory and South Australia most centres have been located on or adjacent to existing public schools.

The consultation processes for projects were led by state and territory governments with Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relation (DEEWR) involved as appropriate. Other than preparing a factsheet on the potential decisions that consultations might contribute to, DEEWR did not clarify the interpretation of 'appropriate involvement' in the context of CFCs and, as a result, the involvement of DEEWR staff in consultations was variable and not systematic. Some information about consultations and consultation processes was included in state and territory reports but no significant information about the outcomes of consultations was prepared and the opportunity envisaged by COAG for sharing best practice on consultation approaches between states and territories was limited.

Community level consultations occurred in phases. In some states and territories, general information sessions were held in the community before more formalised consultative forums were established. The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care reported that as each state and territory approached consultations differently, the establishment of community consultation groups did not occur in all locations. In some smaller remote communities it was reported that there was not a need or capacity to set up a new group and communities instead used existing groups or structures to conduct consultations. For example, in Fitzroy Crossing (Western Australia) the Fitzroy Futures Forum (an existing community governance body) was used as the community consultative body for the establishment of the local CFC. In some cases, the opportunity to engender a 'sense of community' and influence the design and function of the centre were listed as highlights. In other cases, SNAICC reported that stakeholders felt that consultations had been

limited, which led to frustration and disappointment. Community consultations for the Aboriginal children and family centres also had cultural and political elements. These elements had the potential to empower or confine projects.

No guidance was given to the States to the nature of the professional services that would be required to realise projects. Some projects were tendered solely to local architectural firms; others used government architects and several projects were tendered to design teams consisting of architects, landscape architects, public art consultants and artists.

It is difficult to make comparisons between the projects because of their diversity. It would appear that where there were no pre-existing centres catering for Aboriginal children and consultation was limited that the designs tend to be that of a traditional preschool.

In some remote locations, prefabricated buildings were used due to budgetary constraints, the availability of builders and the need to meet timelines. Prefabrication presents considerable barriers for design innovation due to the dimensional restrictions dictated by the transportation method. At other remote locations, blockwork buildings were constructed. Using blockwork can be advantageous as it can prove to be labour saving (easy to cut, larger units), is generally easier to apply fixings, has a lower density, higher thermal insulation properties and provides a suitable key for plaster and cement rendering. It is however generally much more expensive to use blocks than bricks (Concrete Masonry Association of Australia 2014).

The Western Australian Government attempts to achieve an Aboriginal 'archetypal' design that could be constructed at multiple locations is interesting. The single-storey designs built at Clayton View and Swan Region children and family centres referencing Noongar ethno-architecture with circular, semi-outdoor form may indeed be flexible spaces but it is difficult to understand how the architectural meanings and significance would be legible to all users. It is also difficult to understand how an Aboriginal 'archetypal' design would allow individual communities to variously express their identities.

There are several centres specifically designed to cater for the socio-spatial needs of Aboriginal clients. Both Kununurra and Roebourne Aboriginal children and family centres are designed considering Aboriginal avoidance practices and the need to separate genders and provide privacy for certain users. Both designs also take into account the cultural significance of views from the centres to provide a culturally appropriate backdrop for learning.

All of the projects vary in the manner in which cultural identity was included into the design. One exemplar is the design of TAC Risdon Cove. This project was achieved through intensive community consultation with the aim of recreating a landscape of Tasmanian Aboriginal history heritage, knowledge and identity. The TAC Risdon Cove design has layers of complex meaning which appear to embody the visions of the client.

The naming of place is of fundamental significance in Aboriginal cultures (Mountford 1976) and it is pertinent to note that many projects have been given names in Aboriginal languages. By naming projects or landscapes they become invested with mental or emotional energy (Stanner 1979) take on Aboriginality.

In consideration of the culturally appropriateness of facilities, SNAICC's submission to the Federal Government's National Quality Framework (2008) outlined principles required in the development of culturally appropriate services and facilities. The principles included that a culturally appropriate location is essential for the successful implementation of such services and recognition of Indigenous values, culture and tradition.



## **PART THREE: Christies Beach, Whyalla and Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centres**

### **The Development of the South Australian Aboriginal Children and Family Centres**

The development of Aboriginal Children and Family Centres at Christies Beach, Ceduna and Whyalla were different to other projects across Australia. In 2009, the South Australian Department for Education and Child Development established an Aboriginal Early Childhood Development Team to oversee the development of the projects. The team was required in consultation to select school sites and appoint Community Development Coordinators (CDCs) for each site by April 2010. Each Community Development Coordinator was to lead local Aboriginal community engagement in the development and use of the Aboriginal Children and Family Centres and to establish both Stakeholder and Aboriginal Parent Advisory Groups at their allocated site. The Stakeholder and the Aboriginal Parent Advisory Groups were to be responsible for making key decisions regarding the location of the centre and the design of building.

The Department for Education and Child Development assets team in consultation with the internal Aboriginal Early Childhood Development Team in consultation developed briefs which stated that each centre needed to provide:

- Reception/foyer,
- Public toilets,
- Director's Office,
- Office with four workstations,
- Two consulting rooms,
- Store,
- Laundry,
- Pre-School space, including kitchen,
- Occasional Care space, with adjoining sleep area,
- Withdrawal space,
- Teacher preparation area,
- Storage area to service the Preschool and Occasional Care areas,
- Staff/access toilet,
- Children's toilets,
- Outdoor learning areas,
- Outdoor play-space,
- Community/Learning Together, including kitchen and store and
- 14 car parking spaces (for use by staff, DECD visitors, and holders of an Australian disability parking permit).

Facilities were required to comply with the Building Code of Australia and relevant Australian Standards and in some instances other standards where specifically required. The Department for Education and Children's Services also had a design standard and guidelines document for Early Childhood Facilities for children from birth to eight years old to which designers were to adhere (see Appendix 3).

Project officers from DECD Assets were then appointed to manage the planning and delivery of each project. The Aboriginal Early Childhood Development Team recognised that the design of the Aboriginal Children and Family Centres provided unique opportunities to make statements on the importance of education and caring for children and incorporate the socio-spatial and cultural needs of the users into the planning and design process.

An architectural anthropologist was appointed to assist with community consultations, prepare briefs on the needs of Indigenous users for designers and to work with the design team. The aim of this process was to identify ways of meeting the needs of the users, including identifying methods of incorporating Aboriginal signs and symbols and legibility into the design, methods to create strong relationships between the internal and external environments in attempts meet the complex socio-spatial and cultural needs of the various Aboriginal users.

A large body of research indicated that there were common socio-spatial needs shared by many Aboriginal people. These included:

- The need to have an environment which supports people focused on living within a pre-existing social/family group that promotes continuing contact with family and kin,
- Maximum contact with the external environment while retaining comfort,
- The need for appropriately designed spaces to avert feelings of 'shame' and the need for appropriate spaces to retreat to when feeling 'shame',
- A need for private spaces when dealing with 'private' matters.

From examining the age demographics and characteristics of the specific user groups it appeared likely that there were shared socio-spatial needs. These included:

- The need to have spaces which allow people to dissipate or be separated quickly and discreetly at times of conflict.
- The need to have flexible spaces which can be used by several smaller or larger groups of people.
- The need for spaces specifically designed for people with fluctuating hearing loss, foetal alcohol syndrome, cognitive impairment or suffering trauma (e.g. people in cycles of grief and loss, and victims of domestic violence).
- The need for spaces to be designed for people with complex health issues.
- The need for spaces to be designed to take into account the needs of bariatric users with consideration of how environmental characteristics present barriers that hinder or support healthy habits.
- The need for spaces to be designed for people with a range of mobility issues.
- The need for way finding mechanisms throughout the building to support young users.
- The need for spaces to be adequately supervised without intruding on personal privacy.
- The need for flow between internal and external areas and flexibility in use.

These characteristics were then considered as part of planning process.

The Government of South Australia, Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI) were engaged to develop concept plans with chief architect, Denis Harrison heading the DPTI design team. The concept plans were developed in conjunction with the Aboriginal Early Childhood Development Team, DECD assets team and the architectural anthropologist (Elizabeth Grant) and were taken back to the Stakeholder and the Aboriginal Parent Advisory Groups for discussion. Physical models were developed by the architect for the consultation processes. Issues with the budgets and meeting the timelines required by the Federal Government became apparent and a series of meetings was held to resolve the issues. DPTI architects chose landscape architects (Outer Space Landscape Architecture in conjunction with Viesturs Cielens Design) and a public art coordinator (Cath Cantlon) in a limited tender process. These parties had considerable experience working collaboratively on similar Indigenous projects. The design team went on to develop concept designs, plans and landscape designs for each project. The community arts coordinator proceeded to identify artists and commence a dialogue on public arts projects that could be integrated into each design. Different artists and cultural advisors were engaged for each site. At Ceduna the Aboriginal artists were: Verna Laurie, Elizabeth Ryan, Elma Laurie, Christine Tschuna, Estelle Miller and Beaver Lennon. All of these artists work out of the Ceduna Aboriginal Arts Centre simplifying the identification and collaboration process. Michael Colbung, Noeleen Cox and Alana Smith from the

Department for Education and Child Development provided cultural guidance. A number of non-Aboriginal artists collaborated by delivering elements for the Ceduna project. These included John Turpie (responsible for whale shaping and floor markup), Roger Goss (who manufactured the whale tail), Chris Gasgoyne (mosaic artist), Cath Cantlon (who oversaw the floor template production) and Tiffany Bell (who produced the digital window files). The identification of artists and collaboration at Ceduna was simplified by the presence of an existing Aboriginal Arts Centre. The Ceduna Aboriginal Arts Coordinator, Pam Diment, assisted with the production of ceramic with community and project liaison. At Whyalla, Laurresha Champion and Sonia Champion were engaged as artists and cultural advisors. A number of non-Aboriginal Artists delivered elements including: Roger Goss who crafted the steel centre name, Dianne Turner who assisted Laurresha Champion with the mosaics and entry 'mandala', John Turpie who designed and manufactures the serpent and seating shaping and render, Cath Cantlon who took responsibility for the floor mark up and template production and Tiffany Bell who worked on the digital window and exterior screen files.

At Christies Beach, it was more difficult to locate Aboriginal artists and the CDC, Susan Roberts worked alongside her son, James Williams as artists. Again, there were a number of non-Aboriginal artists delivering elements. Roger Goss crafted and manufactured the whale tail for Kondoli. Violet Cooper and Susy Chapman completed the ceramics in collaboration with Susan Roberts. Violet Cooper and Susan Roberts designed and completed the mosaics and Deborah Sleeman and Tom Reeves designed and produced the bronze Tjirbruki spring names. The budget for the public arts component was \$40k per site which had to cover all artists' materials, processes, freight, installation percentage, travel costs and fees. Arts SA provided an initial grant of \$12k to cover the costs of the arts coordinator's time and travel expenses.

The preliminary documentation for the three centres was completed by DPTI in October and presented to the South Australian Parliamentary Committee on Public Works in November 2011. The committee's role is to inquire into any public work over the Ministerial threshold of \$4 million. The reports to the Parliamentary Public Works Committee were tabled in December 2011 and approval given for the application of taxpayer funds to the Aboriginal Children and Family Centre projects.

The Department for Education and Child Development decided at this point to change the delivery strategy and move to a design and construct model. Design and construct is a project delivery method where the contractor takes responsibility for both the design and construction of the project based on a concept and requirements specified by the client. The contractual merger of design and construction activities has the potential to reduce the project delivery time in some cases.

A tender call was made by DPTI (on behalf of DECD) in November 2011 and the design and construct contracts were awarded in January 2012. Tagara Builders, in conjunction with Adelaide architectural firm, Wiltshire and Swain were awarded the contracts to design and construct Whyalla and Ceduna Children and Family Centres. The Isis Group Australia Pty Ltd, in collaboration with architectural firm, JPE Design Studio and BCA Engineers were awarded the contract to design and construct the Aboriginal Children and Family Centre at Christies Beach. In the first instance, each consortium was required to complete the working drawings for planning approvals. The planning approvals were granted in February 2012 and construction commenced immediately.

As construction proceeded, DECD appointed a Director for each Centre. The Director became the line manager for Community Development Coordinator. One of the roles of the Director (in collaboration with the existing Community Development Coordinator) was to oversee the construction of the centre in an informal capacity and be responsible for the procurement of all furniture and some fittings for the centres.

The completion of construction for the three projects was planned for December 2012. There were challenges in adhering to the timelines. All centres took a limited intake of preschool children in Term 2, 2013. Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre was officially opened in July, 2013. Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre and Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre were officially opened in August 2013.

## Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre

### Overview

The Christies Beach Primary School was determined as the preferred location for the Aboriginal Children and Family Centre. Co-location with the school was seen to provide opportunities to support children's transition to school. Christies Beach Primary School has 450 students (with approximately 10% identifying as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent) and a number of programs to support Aboriginal children and their families. It was identified that Aboriginal users for the project were likely to come from a number of language groupings including Kurna, Ngarrindjeri, Narrunga, Adnyamathanha and intra and interstate language groupings with English as their first language. It was identified that many of the Aboriginal people using the Centre would be living urban lifestyles but at the same time have strong links with their traditional community. It was also noted that users would range in age from 0 - 100 years and may have complex physical and mental health issues. It was anticipated that the centre would have to cater for people some with fluctuating hearing loss, cognitive impairment, varying levels of disability or limited mobility. It was also recognised that the centre would be used by non-Aboriginal people living in the surrounding areas.

The site chosen for the Christies Beach Aboriginal Children and Family Centre was the north eastern corner of the school bordered by Maturin Avenue and Price Street.<sup>1</sup> The rectangular site is bounded by the school boundaries (east and north) the existing school buildings (west) and the oval (south) and included a staff car park (which was relocated to another area within the school grounds), the junior primary play area (which was relocated to an area between existing teaching buildings and adjacent to the gymnasium). The alternate sides of Maturin Avenue and Price Street are residential with housing located relatively close to the site. The site has a slight rise to the north east corner and has a number of mature trees along northern and eastern boundaries. Some of the trees were removed to accommodate the development.

In consultations, the Christies Beach Aboriginal Children and Family Centre Enabling Group defined their vision for the centre. The Group envisaged a place that would be:

- Culturally welcoming,
- Inclusive of people from all ethnic backgrounds especially from local Aboriginal people and families.
- A place for mothers/sisters/aunties/father/uncles/grandfathers to drop in and feel welcome,
- A showcase for Aboriginal cultures, values, traditional and contemporary customs,
- Accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander viewpoints and perspectives,
- Child-friendly and focused,
- A place for the Aboriginal community to come together,
- A place of healing, wellbeing and relationship building,
- Committed to student learning and welfare,
- Culturally appropriate design, following the land and environment,
- A beautiful exemplar design (both the building and landscape),
- A showcase and statement on the importance of education to Aboriginal people,
- A place where the inclusive partnership of the Aboriginal community and government services was evident and transparent,
- Responsive and proactive to community and individual needs,
- The first port of call and referral point for health, education and other services (including social) with an Indigenous and holistic approach.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that this was not the preferred site by all members of the Christies Beach Children and Family Centre Enabling Group. Some members noted that they preferred that the centre be located on the western aspect of the school grounds. The location of the Centre was eventually determined by the Christies Beach School Council.





Figure 70: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre – Plan (Source: Outerspace Design).

LEGEND	
	EXISTING TREE
	EXISTING PINE TREE
	NEW BUILDING
	VERANDAH/SHADE
	EXISTING BUILDING
	LANDSCAPED AREA
	LAWN AREA
	PLAY AREA
	OUTDOOR LEARNING
	NATURAL PLAY
	PAVED AREA/PATH
	CULTURAL AREA
	SHED
	SERVICE AREA/ RW TANK
	EXISTING FENCE
	NEW PERIMETER FENCE
	NEW LOW FENCE (900mm HIGH)
	GATE
	EASEMENT

The Group also envisaged that the centre would promote a sense of belonging and Aboriginal perspectives on child rearing and cultural knowledge through its design. The project brief indicated that the children's space needed to have capacity to accommodate 50 children and the capacity to divide areas to two areas (area one to accommodate 15 children aged two years and under and 35 children aged over 2 years of age). The areas were to comply with National Quality Framework (ACECQA 2012) and have a sleeping room, staff preparation area, office, kitchenette, bottle preparation area, store, nappy changing facilities, toilets, direct access to outdoor play, verandah and shade (Government of South Australia date unknown p. 6).

The Christies Beach Aboriginal Children and Family Centre was designed to accommodate 56 children (44 preschool children and 12 occasional care places). The facility consists of two single storey buildings constructed either side of a six metre wide easement which are linked at roof level. The buildings are separated due to an easement running through the land. The separate buildings provide more privacy for different areas.

The buildings are steel framed structures on concrete slabs. The external materials are a combination of rendered and painted lightweight masonry wall panels and corrugated Zinalume wall cladding and predominantly corrugated Zinalume roofing. Internal linings are a combination of painted plasterboard and stained plywood panelling.



Figure 71: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre - View of exterior of the main building. The building houses the administration, the preschool and occasional care areas.

The children's area and community centre are housed in the building on the western side. Reception, common space and the director offices are sited centrally in the main building with service offices, health services on one side and the preschool and childcare on the other. Centrally locating the reception/waiting area and director's office allows staff, visual connection to the public areas. The Director's office has a commanding view over the front and rear of the building. Some people visiting the centre for services should not be in contact with children and centrally locating the reception area allows people to be screened and streamed to the appropriate service.



Figure 72: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre - Entrance and Community Centre outside area

At the heart of the design is a circular room, which is the children's preschool indoor activity space. The main activity area of the preschool was designed as a cylinder to break down the straight lines and introduce organic form to the design. Sensitively designed with state of the art facilities such as a teaching kitchen, dedicated spaces of staff, storage and quiet areas and toilets designed to take consideration of gender sensitivities, the preschool is equipped to cater for the health and cultural needs of Aboriginal children (e.g. hearing loss) with acoustically treated features throughout the preschool. The design is flexible to allow a variety of children's curriculum activities to be set up with sufficient and uncluttered space for active play, smaller spaces set aside for individual and quiet play. Children are able to move from one activity to another with little intervention required by caregivers. The windows provide natural light at different times of the day and a strong connection to the outside environment. The kitchen is located centrally in the circular activity space. It provides a focus of activity, much as the kitchen is the heart of any home. People in the kitchen have a commanding view over children in the space as well as those entering and exiting the external play space. Adjoining the circular preschool area are the staff preparation, learning and storage rooms and staff toilets. The high ceiling of the preschool creates a sense of space with a series of square windows located high on the structure to increase the connection of the activity room to the external environment.

Considerable thought went into the design of the children's toilets to service the preschool and occasional care as in consultation as Aboriginal children's need for privacy was of particular concern. The toilets are mixed gender but have two entrances from the play area (and one entrance from the preschool) so that they may be separated into gender specific facilities if required at later date. All cubicles are at 1950 mm high with doors at the same height to provide greater privacy and prevent children climbing on them. A nappy change area is provided in the children's toilets.





Figure 73: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre – Preschool Area.

The occasional care area is located adjacent to the preschool. The brief for the centre stipulated a separate occasional care area with a kitchenette and sleep room be provided and the architect designed the occasional care area so that it could function separately or be opened up to become part of the preschool. The centre is an integrated centre (i.e. that is child care and preschool are combined) and the initial design consultations indicated that most users would prefer the two areas to be fully integrated with no separate areas.



Figure 74: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre - Occasional Care Area



Figure 75: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre - Occasional Care Area

The children's external play area was designed with a number of different elements. A path leads around the play area which can be used as a bike path or to lead the child to the next activity. There is a lawn for running, throwing and skipping games and for group learning. The mature trees provide shade and opportunities for play with cones and other natural items. The mulch areas under the trees provide opportunities for running, throwing and skipping games.



Figure 76: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre - Outside Play Area.

A separate building houses the community centre. The community centre has a large kitchen, kitchenette, storage room and toilet. The room can be divided into two areas via bi-fold doors. The most easterly end of the community centre is fitted with a full kitchen used for cooking classes and community events. This kitchen has counter space spanning the width of the building and is fitted with barriers so that children can be excluded from the kitchen area. The western end is fitted with a



kitchenette. A handicapped toilet and storage room are located on the northern side. The community centre looks onto a cultural area which complete with fire pit, stone seating and other features. The area behind the community centre can be used as a quiet outdoor area.

Across Taikurrendi, there are visual references to the Kurna Dreaming story of Tjilbruke. One version of the Tjilbruke (*alt spelling* Tjirbruki) Dreaming Story tells of a time when all the people lived in accord with peaceful trading Laws which governed people's lives. The Law was brought to the land, and 'Old Tjirbruki' who lived as an ordinary man, a keeper of the Law which came from the South, after the water covered the land. Tjirbruki's dearly loved nephew was killed; for breaking the law and killing a female emu; he came and carried the body of his nephew down the Fleurieu Peninsula coast of Gulf St Vincent, after his nephew was killed while hunting. The path Tjilbruke took along the coast is referred to as the Tjirbruki Dreaming Tracks and the trail is marked by the tears of Tjirbruki, which created seven natural springs. The Kurna names of each of the seven springs are located on plaques in the children's outside play area.



Figures 77 A & B: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre – Kurna names of the Seven Streams. These are located on plaques around the sandpit area.

The other Dreaming Story to be embedded into the design is the Ramindjeri and Kurna story of Kondili the Whale. One version of story states that there was a man called Kondili. Whenever Kondili walked or moved his feet sparks and fire flew out from them. People were fascinated by the sparks as they had never seen fire before. One day a man called Tiritpa saw Kondili's fire and he decided that he would like to have some. Tiritpa spoke to his friend Tjintrin about a plan he had to take some of Kondili's fire. Kondili's friends, Nakkudla, Watteparu, and Mandiltu were invited to a party on the beach. Kondili made a warm fire and everyone was enjoying it when Tiritpa and Tjintrin came out of the bushes with their spears. One spear hit Kondili in the neck and fire sparks flew out everywhere. Kondili was hurting so much he jumped into the sea and transformed into a whale. Water spurted out of his wound. His friends jumped into the sea after him and Nakkudla became a shark, Watteparu became a seal, and Mandiltu became the stingray. Tiritpa and Tjintrin where punished for spearing Kondili and they became a lark and the Willywagtail as we know them today and they were never able to use fire.



Figure 78: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre – Play Area. The sandpit with Kondoli the Whale in the foreground. The whale's body has a water spout with the water running down under the bridge and into the channel between the whale's body and tail.

Waves lap across the paving outside the entrance of the centre. The user follows the path of the whale inside the building with artworks located strategically and floor coverings designed also to function as way finding tools. The intent of the landscape design is to provide a range of outdoor play spaces that offer cultural learning experiences. A central element of the children's play area is a mosaic sculpture of Kondoli the whale located in the sandpit.

There are other Indigenous references and representations throughout the design. Common language and meaning is developed through the integration of architectural elements, landscape, play and art using culturally appropriate signs, symbols, representations, materials and colours. These include echidna paw prints on all full length windows.



Figure 79: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre – Etchings on Windows. Echidna paw prints are printed on the full length windows to both deter people from walking into them and repeat of the Kurna motif.

The Isis Group Pty Ltd won the South Australian 2013 Master Builders Building 'Excellence in a Commercial or Industrial Building \$2m to \$5m' award for their work on Christies Beach Aboriginal Children and Family Centre. The citation read the "The MBA judges were most impressed by the level of collaboration between ISIS and the client, including the opportunities created for the local Aboriginal community" (Master Builders Association 2013).



Figure 80: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre - Entrance from street



## Post Occupancy Evaluation Findings

### Introduction

Data was gathered at the Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre over a two week period. Behaviour mapping, child focussed activities and non-participant observations were conducted. A community meeting attended by approximately twenty people was held at the Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre. This involved a yarning circle, individual discussions and sheets for people to record their views on the Centre. Researchers also collated the community design recommendations from the Indigenous Design Brief and the DECD Design Standards and Guidelines for Early Childhood Facilities for children from birth to age 8 (see Appendix 3) to see if the design had fulfilled the expectations of the community and conformed to the Department for Education and Child Development's expectations.



Figure 81: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre - Community Meeting



Figures 82 A, B & C: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre - Community Meeting

Twenty semi-structured interviews were also conducted with users of the Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre. The interviewees included staff of the centre, service providers and the adjacent school, parents and carers of children and community members. Eight in-depth interviews were conducted with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander users and twelve interviews with non-Aboriginal users. Of those interviewed, 60% of the people were accessing a service at the centre while 40% of the interviewees were people employed by the centre or another service provider.

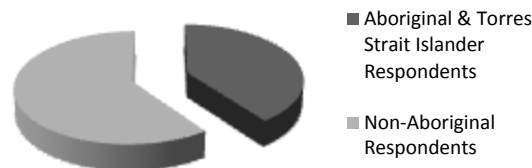


Figure 83: Percentages of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal People interviewed for the Study.



Figure 84: Percentages of Staff v other people interviewed for the study

### Perceptions of the Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre

There was a great deal of positivity about the design and layout of Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre. Some of the terms used to describe the Centre were “awesome”, “unique”, “modern”, “state of the art”, “beautiful”, “welcoming”, “a magnet for the Aboriginal community” and “deadly.” One person stated;

Taikurrendi is an important place with a unique cultural identity. It provides a safe respectful place where Aboriginal families feel they belong.

All of the people interviewed were very impressed with the quality of the buildings and the external spaces. A number of parents had taken their children from other kindergartens to attend Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre as they perceived the centre to be inclusive and welcoming of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Other people saw Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre as a place for people to learn about Aboriginal cultures. One non-Aboriginal grandfather brought his Aboriginal grandchild because he perceived the child would not be able to connect with Aboriginal cultures otherwise. He stated:

XXX needs to learn about their culture and we have no way of doing that because XXX does not see the Aboriginal side of the family due to domestic violence. This place provides an opportunity to connect with Aboriginal culture. That is important and will be more important as time goes on.

One Aboriginal Elder said:

I am so proud to see my culture and stories integrated into the building and garden. The design is modern and contemporary but I know my grannies will hear the stories that are important to us and the survival of our culture.

A non-Aboriginal parent said:

I want XXX to learn about Aboriginal cultures and coming here seemed to be the best way to achieve that. XXX learns songs and about Kurna culture.

A common perception among users was that the high quality of the built environment indicated quality education. One parent stated:

We travel to get here by two buses. It takes about 40 minutes each way. The bus either gets here 15 minutes early or 10 minutes late so we get the early bus and wait around. There is a kindy near home, but we want XXX to get the best education available.

Other parents had enrolled into the preschool because of the convenience in being co-located with the Primary School. One parent said:



It is great having the preschool here. It is going to be a very easy transition for XXX to go the school.

Other parent found the centre convenient because they already had a child attending the adjacent Christies Beach Primary School. One parent stated:

This is a great idea having the preschool next to the primary school. It makes it easy for drop off and pickups. It is also reassuring for XXX (child in junior primary school) to know that I am not far away.

There was an interesting difference in perceptions of the Centre from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people (excluding staff). Aboriginal people saw the Centre as an Aboriginal community meeting place. Eighty percent of the Aboriginal people interviewed thought that more community activities should occur at the centre. It was suggested that there should be regular Elders meetings and gatherings for the Aboriginal community. Ninety percent of the non-Aboriginal people interviewed saw the centre as a mainstream pre-school delivering some additional services. Most non-Aboriginal people did not realise that the Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre had been initially provided to meet the needs of Aboriginal people in the area.

### Entrances

People enter the grounds of the Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre through one of three gates: the main gate from Price Street, the gate from the car park or the side gate from the Christies Beach Primary School junior primary playground (on the western boundary). The majority of people (70%), either arriving by car or on foot entered through the car park.

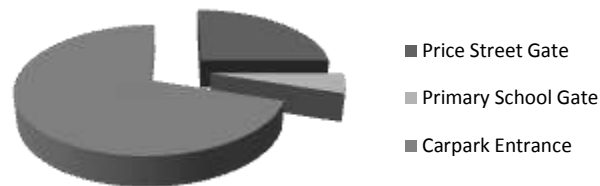


Figure 85: Percentages of people (excluding staff) using various entries over three day period.



Figures 86 A & B: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre – Entrance from the car park

The carpark is provided for staff, DECD visitors and centre user's holding an Australian disability parking permit. No one interviewed was aware that it was a staff and official visitor car park and the majority of people accessing the centre used the car park or entered through the carpark entrance. Observing pedestrian and vehicular movement through the car park, there appeared to be a number of safety concerns:

- There is no separate pedestrian path resulting in people (including young children, frail and elderly people) and vehicles intermixing.
- Carers often had several children (a number who were observed riding bikes or running) with them. Many of the children appeared to be not closely supervised and allowed to 'dash' across the car park for the entrance to centre.
- The adjacent oval is not fenced and primary school children were observed retrieving balls from under cars.
- The car park is outside the line of sight from the centre and activities are unsupervised.

While the 'duty of care' in DECD car parks lies with the users, there appears to be a number of issues which need to be addressed. In this situation, it would appear prudent that car parks for early learning centres are designed with a clearly delineated pedestrian pathway and barriers be erected between car parks and play areas. The existing carpark could be signed to indicate that it is a staff and visitor parking area only and the adjacent school should consider the installation of a fence between the play area and the car park.

There are reasons why people frequently used the car park entrance. Carers stated that the main gate was difficult to negotiate while pushing a pram and leading young children and that there is limited street parking on or near Price Street. In siting a CFC, it appears that easy and safe access for people arriving with small children by car should be carefully considered during the design phase.



Figures 87 A & B: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre – Views of the Car park.

The gate from the junior primary area of Christies Beach Primary School was only used by a small number of carers. The use of this gate appeared problematic as there was no clear line of sight by staff to this access point. There is no security on the main gates of Christies Beach Primary School and in theory any one could enter the children's outside play area without being seen by a staff member of the Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre. People entering through this entrance may also pose a potential security risk to staff working at the centre outside school hours. To ensure the safety of staff and children, it is suggested that this gate is either changed so that it can only be opened from the Taikurrendi (eastern) side or is locked for security purposes.



Figure 88: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre - Connecting Gate from Primary School.

The entrances are all signed. At the main and car park entrances, a small A4 sign attached to the fence marks the entrance to the centre. The sign uses a combination of the Kurna language and English.



Figure 89: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre- Price Street frontage.



Figures 90 A & B: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre- Street Signage



Figure 91: Taikurrendi Children and Family - Signage at Reception Entrance

Eighty five percent of people interviewed indicated that larger, more prominent signage would be advantageous. Members of the Aboriginal community noted that they would like a large sign erected at the car park entrance indicating that the centre was an “Aboriginal Children and Family Centre” in the location where the project sign is currently erected (Note: this would direct people into the staff car park). Seventy four percent of Aboriginal community members wanted a large sign to tell people they are welcome here. The current entrance from the car park was deemed not to be “welcoming”.



Figure 92: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre –Project sign in the Car park.





Figure 93: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre –Gate to Play Area.

The majority of people entered the building through the reception area. It was observed that a small number of people used the gate to the outside play area to access the preschool or occasional care services. This is potentially problematic as the outside play area may not be supervised by staff. This may be a security issue and people who should not be in contact with children can directly access the external play area. It seems logical to stream all people accessing services through reception by having the gate to preschool play area only opening outwards or by locking the gate.

#### **Administration and Consultation Areas**

The position of the reception is excellent and people stated that they find it easy to locate the entrance. The design of paths and the use of way finding tools result in an area which is easy to negotiate. The reception area is multi-functional. Adjacent to the reception area is a small waiting area furnished with comfortable sofa, chairs and a couple of tables. The area of reception adjacent to the preschool entrance acts as a pram/bike storage area, a place to display notices and other sundry uses. Sixty one percent of people interviewed would felt the waiting area could also function or be set up as a 'yarning area'. For example one person said:

It would be nice to be able to sit down and talk to other parents for a short time when I pick up XXX. It would be great if there were tea and coffee.

Another person stated:

It would be nice to have somewhere to sit down and have a quiet chat or a rest.

The reception/waiting area of Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre may not have sufficient space for this, but consideration should be given when designing similar centres. Having social space allows people to add to and reinforce their support networks.



Figures 94 A & B: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre – Reception and Waiting Area

From reception, people are streamed in two directions. People are directed to services delivered in the consulting rooms and family area or the children’s preschool/occasional care area. This streaming is particularly useful and allows all members of the community (including those with criminal records) to use the centre.

Adjacent to the waiting and reception area is the director’s office. The office has a commanding view over the exterior of the centre and to the staff courtyard. The role of a CFC Director is relatively new and they have diverse responsibilities. The Director is responsible for the operation of the centre and tailoring it to the needs of children and families in the area, maintaining a welcoming learning environment for children and families that celebrates and provides high quality educational programs that extend children’s knowledge and skills. The Director is responsible for the day-to-day operation, financial and staff management and oversees all programs. At many centres, former preschool directors are transitioning into the new roles.

With the diverse range of responsibilities the Director needs to move around the centre to oversee various programs. It would be useful to consider the functional relationship between the director’s office and the reception/preschool areas in the design of future similar centres. Aboriginal educators are generally very connected to their charges and may suffer anxiety if physically separated (Malin 1990; Mann et al. 2011). It would be useful if the director’s office had a visual and aural connection to the reception area and a visual connection to the preschool/occasional care areas. In Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre, the director’s job would be made much easier if the position of their office and reception were reversed and the director’s office had a window into the preschool/occasional care and a visual/aural connection with the reception area.



Figure 95: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre - View from the Director’s office

The office areas for family services staff are well located with commanding views over the community centre and external area. The shared office spaces appear to be working well for the occupants. Two desk spaces are occupied by permanent staff and two desks designated as 'hot seats' for service providers. The need for confidentiality when dealing with Aboriginal clients is well documented (see Vicary and Bishop 2005; La Rochelle 2013; Lee 2014). There may be issues with security of confidential information and taking sensitive telephone calls/interviewing people in a shared space into the future, but this appears not to be a problem at this point. During fieldwork, the office was not occupied by four people at any time but this may change as more services are provided in the centre.



Figures 96 A & B: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre – Views and Work areas

Two consulting rooms are also provided in the service area. During fieldwork only one consulting room was used by service providers while the other consulting room was used to house the photocopier. The other consulting room was set up to service medical/infant health/counselling services. It had been fitted out with a built in desk and secure cupboards, seating and baby table. To soften the environment, a mat had been purchased for the room. The consulting rooms are typical clinical settings. The rooms are set up to service one or two clients at any one time and Aboriginal family groups may require larger rooms. Consultation rooms need to be large enough to avoid unnecessary or culturally inappropriate physical contact. The researchers also wondered whether a better visual connection to the exterior environment could improve the functionality of the consulting rooms for Aboriginal users. In some Aboriginal health centres, consulting rooms lead onto a private courtyard to allow Aboriginal users a less formalised setting. The inclusion of the rear exit is to be commended and may be very useful in cases where people using the consulting rooms need a discrete exit. In future designs for similar centres, the consulting areas may warrant a rethink in terms of the number of people to be accommodated and the connection of the area to the external environment. An area for the photocopier also needs to be considered for new centres.

The staff room is located in the consulting/administration arm of the centre. The room was well used, providing staff with a private area and an informal meeting space. The staff members interviewed were very happy with this space as it provided adequate privacy from the public and was pleasant and comfortable. The staff room leads onto the staff courtyard. This provides an excellent connection with the external environment and visual relief. While the external courtyard was not used extensively, staff members appreciated the area and were pleased to be able to go outside away into a semi-private area. The courtyard was being used periodically as a small program space for children during a period of extreme weather and it functioned well for this purpose. There are some negatives about the staff courtyard area – the air-conditioning units are located adjacent to the seating area, making it an unpleasant place to sit and the type of seating could have been more user-friendly.



Figure 97: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre - Staff Room.



Figures 98 A & B: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre - Staff Courtyard.

The consulting/administration area includes a laundry, store, showers and toilets. The laundry was well used during the fieldwork period. A dedicated laundry appears to be a useful resource for such centres. The store room was required in the brief and allows materials to be stored so clutter does not accumulate in other areas. The store provides service providers the capacity to store materials securely onsite. As the number of services provided by outside providers grows, the presence of a store room in this area of the building will be advantageous. The shower is used by individual staff members and teaching staff to shower children after they have visited the nearby beach. Teaching



staff noted that being able take children who had soiled themselves to a separate shower away from the teaching spaces was dignified for both children and staff.

There are three toilets located in the administration/consulting area of the centre. A number of the adult visitors did not use the toilets provided as they did not know they existed or thought they were only for staff use only. One parent stated that he assumed that the toilets were not for his usage as they were labelled 'ambulant' and 'handicapped' and he did not know the meanings of these words. Signage for the toilets could be improved at Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre and in future centres it may be useful to consider locating the public toilets adjacent to the reception area. It would also be useful to consider the literacy level of possible users of toilets when choosing signage.



Figures 99 A, B & C: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre –Toilet Signage

There does not seem to be a need for three toilets in this area given that there are toilets in the community centre and children's space. In future projects, the provision of two toilets may be adequate.

### **The Community Centre**

The provision of a community centre has been welcomed by the Aboriginal community and users of the project. The Aboriginal community would like to see this area become a permanent Aboriginal community centre where community events are held and people meet regularly informally and formally. Seventy percent of Aboriginal people interviewed indicated that there was a capacity for the family program area to house a community controlled peak body for Aboriginal people in the area and/or for Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre to grow to be a community controlled organisation.

The Department for Education and Child Development and other service providers use the space for program delivery. A variety of programs (including fathers groups, cooking classes, young mothers programs, yarning circles, youth programs, baby play groups) are delivered in the space. During fieldwork, the researchers observed a juvenile justice intervention program with young men being conducted. The young men participating were comfortable, engaged, relaxed and happy in the space. The operation of the program out of a family focused centre appeared to be a stark contrast to the typically hard setting where such programs are usually run. The young men's behaviour was appropriate to an environment where there are children present.

The area is a very flexible space, being used on a continual basis. The ability to divide the space into two areas using bi-fold doors is necessary due to the demand for the space. The various pieces of furniture purchased were observed to be good quality, aesthetically pleasing and flexible. It was noticed however that setting and packing up of the room for each activity was time consuming.



Figure 100: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre – Community Centre Internal Space

There is a high demand to use the community centre as a program space. During interviews, staff and parents from the Christies Beach Primary School indicated that they would like to be able to use the community centre for teaching activities related to Aboriginal studies.

The ability for the building to be opened up and for people to move between exterior and interior was commended by all of the people interviewed. The quality of the design of the external cultural area and gardens were praised by ninety percent of the people interviewed and at the community meeting. While the fire pit is only used intermittently, its presence was valued by the Aboriginal community. One Elder stated

...gathering around a fire is central to our culture. I found it deadly that that we could have a fire at place where there are young children. The designers have incorporated the fire pit in a way which is safe.

Another community member said:

The fire pit with the seating around it and the garden is deadly. It is central to the whole design of the centre.

The design of the garden was appreciated. One community member said:

I just love the garden and the cultural area. It is so peaceful and beautiful. It is a healing place.

One parent stated:

I love coming into the centre through the garden near the centre. It is so beautiful and it just smells wonderful.



Figures 101 A & B: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre – Garden and Entrance



Figure 102: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre – Cultural area with Fire Pit





Figure 103: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre - External Seating. The seats are three-dimensional translations of Western Desert people's depictions of people sitting. The seats allow two or three people to sit as a group but are situated in relation to each other so that direct eye contact can be avoided (necessary in many Aboriginal cultures) between people seated in different seats. The seats have had local motifs added by local artists. Note minor cracking to the render.

### **The Children's Area**

The children's area consists of the circular activity space with a kitchen, learning space, staff preparation and storage rooms, staff and children's toilets, occasional care area and sleep room and outside play areas.

The people interviewed were very impressed with the quality of the environment and the design. Sixty percent of the people interviewed discussed the importance of the open layout and the space and 'airiness', fifty percent of this group thought the central location of the kitchen was important as it replicated a domestic setting with the kitchen as the heart of the home.

The central activity space functions to allow free flow play for children. The teaching staff have developed clearly defined activity areas that flow from one activity to another. During fieldwork, there were many activities on offer including: free art, reading, dress up, cubby, dramatic play, fine motor skills, maths, science and discovery activities. The space was flexible and large enough to have room for activities while having space set aside for children to retreat and play alone or with another. The setting up of small group/individual play next to the window to the staff courtyard is ingenious. The separate outlook provided children with visual relief and different form of lighting. This area was observed to be occupied continually.



The choice of furniture and materials has followed the ethos of the design with a subdued colour palette, natural materials and organic shapes. The tables and chairs are wooden, there are comfortable couches and cushions sit on, baskets are used instead of plastic containers and many items are made of natural materials. The environment appears comfortable, muted and relaxed which is crucial for Aboriginal children.



Figures 104 A & B: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre – Preschool Area.

The furniture and accessories made from natural finishes with a muted colour palette have been chosen to create a calm and relaxing environment.

The importance of having procurement expertise and funding for furniture and fittings that enhanced the design of the centre was apparent. In the case of Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre, the procurement of furniture and fittings was completed by the Director in consultation with the Community Development Coordinator and an interior design consultant. Their careful selections have had a major impact on the design outcomes.



Figure 105: Children’s Play Items. These include purnu (wood) sculptures and other cultural artefacts.

The kitchen is a crucial element of the design of the children’s space. The kitchen has a commanding view of the internal spaces and allows supervision of the children’s activities. The kitchen is well designed for preparation, storage and as a teaching area. The kitchen was fitted with a child proof barrier. In practice, the barrier was not secured frequently as staff would like children to use the kitchen in a domestic manner when possible.



Figure 106 Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre – Preschool Area. View of circular preschool activity space, kitchen, main entrance, entrance to staff preparation area and lockers prior to completion. Note patterns on floor coverings and central location of kitchen.



Figure 107: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre - Preschool Kitchen

The entrance to the preschool becomes congested at the beginning of each session. The location of the children's lockers and noticeboard makes people congregate in this area. More thought could be put into the design of the entrances of similar centres to alleviate the congestion. The congestion

does not occur at the end of the day as children participate in teacher led activity in the learning room and are released as their parents arrive.

The children's toilets have been designed with two exits to the outside play space and one entry from the play space. The toilets were designed to allow gender separation if necessary but at this stage it has not been required. The designers paid careful attention to ensure privacy for children by increasing the heights of the partitions and ensuring cubicle doors provided privacy. The staff toilet opens onto the children circular program area. The location of this toilet has been questioned by some people as it is seen to be in a public location. Due to staff/student ratio regulations, teaching staff are unable to leave the program space during sessions, so it is convenient. The staff toilet acts as a more private place to change children if required.



Figures 108 A & B: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre – Children's Toilets

The learning room is glass fronted and located adjacent to the circular program area. The room serves as an intensive teaching space and is used for each preschool session. The room is carpeted and fitted with audio-visual equipment (installed in cupboards and beyond reach of children). A square has been marked on the carpet with tape so that children are gathered together in the middle of the room. Custom designed carpeting would be ideal for this room for this purpose. The researchers wondered if a carpet with an Aboriginal motif (as seen in many airports) would have enhanced the room. The manner in which room is fitted out means it can be used as another play space for children.

The occasional care area is located adjacent to the circular program area and is separated by a glass partition (which may be pulled back). The occasional care area is equipped kitchenette and sleep room and shares toilets. Taikurrendi have adopted the practice that occasional care and preschool children are integrated and play together. This practice has developed from the culturally appropriate model for service delivery that Taikurrendi has adopted. In Aboriginal families, siblings are rarely separated. Older brothers, sisters and cousins are expected to care for younger siblings. This care may include protecting them, dressing them, helping them use the toilet and sharing food.



Older brothers, sisters and cousins are significant models for younger siblings in terms of language and behaviour and separation anxiety may occur when children are physically separated. The children from the occasional care group are integrated into the preschool group. The National Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standards require the provision of separate facilities for occasional care where this service is provided, but in practice these facilities are likely to be underutilised in Aboriginal Children and Family Centres. The sleep room adjacent to the occasional care appears to be rarely used. The children at Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre are free to choose when and where they sleep. If they do go to sleep it is generally on a couch or comfortable cushion. Staff members report that carers generally do not want their children to sleep at occasional care. During fieldwork, it was noticed that babies are generally nursed to sleep by a staff member and then either carried around or put in a pram and stay with the staff member. In all, the provision of separate facilities for occasional care appears to be a duplication of facilities.



Figures 109 A & B: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre – Views of the Occasional Care Area. The sleeping room was being used as an activity space during our visits.

The outside play area for children was seen by people we interviewed as “innovative”, “well-designed” and “brilliant.” Children are easily able to access the outside play area and move freely between areas engaging in free flow play. It was observed that children used most areas of the outside play area. In discussions with the children they stated their favourite components in the play area were the tyre swing and the sand pit. Many children on arrival at the centre and went straight outside. The tyre swing in the shade of the tree was very popular at the beginning of sessions.



Figures 110 A & B: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre – Entrance to Preschool & Grassed Area





Figure 111: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre – Play Area adjacent to Occasional Care

The sandpit is in continual use. Kondili the whale is used as a slide, a place to bury things and is a focal point of the sandpit. A number of Aboriginal staff encouraged children to pat and say hello to Kondili each day. Through this method, the Dreaming story is transmitted to the children. The water feature attached to the whale was very popular with the children but not used during the fieldwork period. The debris was collecting in the channel and the water was too deep and had been deemed unsafe. The children were keen however to demonstrate how the water feature worked even though it was not operational. The children were also very keen to show researchers the concrete pad placed in the middle of the sandpit. The pad was used in a number of imaginative ways. During play, the pad became a table in a game, another time it was a launching pad for a rocket.

The sandpit is well located with access directly from the occasional care and the children's toilets. The toilet door was always open during our visits. It would appear that locating the sandpit near the building makes for ease of supervision as the pit is an area where children congregate. The cover over the sandpit allows children to play there in most weather conditions.

Around the sandpit are a number of rocks with Kurna text naming the seven springs of Tjilbruke. The children we spoke to did not appear to understand the significance of the Kurna text. However, they liked the texture of the rocks and the metal plates and enjoyed running their hands over them. Most children were observed gravitating to the rocks as they provided climbing places and challenging spaces to negotiate.



Figures 112 A B & C: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre – Outside Play Area  
These images include views of the sand pit and the stage.

The outside play area provides has a series of activities where children can participate in free flow play. The children were keen and active in demonstrating to the researchers the links and paths between the activities and pieces of equipment. All of the children demonstrated the play area with considerable enthusiasm with each piece of equipment exhibited in order. Often children showed the researchers what should (and should not) be done with equipment. One particular example was the arched ethnoarchitectural form constructed of mesh and covered with shade cloth. The form was designed to replicate an example of Aboriginal vernacular architecture (e.g. a wurlie, wiltja, humpy or gunyah). The girls showed the researchers how to use the shelter as a cubby while the boys showed how one could climb, bounce off the side and slide down it. Apparently the latter activities were “not allowed.”





Figures 113 A & B: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre – Play Element

Figure A is the cubby inspired by ethnoarchitectural forms constructed at Taikurrendi Children and Family. Figure B is an image of a Yolngu (*alt. spelling* Yolŋu) dry weather shelter. The cubby was installed at the centre does not resemble ethno architectural forms relevant to any of the language groups of the area. Physically, it has a resemblance to the Yolngu (*alt. spelling* Yolŋu) architectural form constructed of bent over stringy-bark built in north-eastern Arnhem Land (Source: National Library of Australia).



Figures 114 A & B: Ngarrindjeri Architecture

Figure A is an image of a structure in Encounter Bay intricately constructed of whale bones last century. Figure B shows a closed dome-shaped structure consisting of a complex framework of sticks covered with available materials for cold and wet conditions. There has been a resurgence in the passing on of Aboriginal construction techniques over the last decade and it may have been more appropriate to use local ethno-architectural forms as design triggers for the cubby (Source: State Library of South Australia)

There was a timber cubby house originally installed in the outside play area. Designed for domestic purposes, it was felt that the cubby would not withstand continual use and was removed. In a 2014 visit to the play area, it was noted that a small boat had been installed. This indicates that play equipment chosen needs to be durable enough for preschool use. Choosing items intended for domestic use may not be a cost effective in the long term.

All of the children showed interest in the wooden stage area. It had a multitude of uses from a fort to a stage for budding musicians playing air guitar. The swings were much enjoyed as was the area under the mature trees where there was a range of natural materials. The series of in-set balancing logs, interspersed with portable equipment was also much enjoyed by the boys. They liked to collect the seed pods from the mature trees and store them in the seating. The pods were used for a range of games acting as currency and tickets while the researchers were in the play area. The retention of the existing mature trees appears to have been an asset to the play environment. Small branches and bark are used in imaginative play in conjunction with other materials. The seed pods, leaves and

small stones are be used in different ways providing opportunities for children to explore simple science and maths concepts such as classifying and counting.



Figures 115 A & B: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre – Path in Play Area.



Figures 116 A & B: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre – Play Equipment  
Views of outside play area with balancing equipment and a collection of pine cones inside seat.

The grassed areas in the outside play area provide visual relief, areas for children to sit, roll, tumble and sit and provide a cooling effect on hot days. The outside play area includes a garden where children can grow their own plants, range of planting which provides resources such as gumnuts, seed pods, small branches, flowers and bark and areas of pebbles, gravel, coarse sand and small rocks.

Interestingly, it was noted that an outside eating area had not been installed. It was not apparent whether children ate meals outside but the building had been designed with a servery window from the kitchen to the verandah. This appeared not to be used. During the consultation process, the community had expressed that they hoped that children would benefit from eating and sharing meals as a group.

There are a number of very appealing aspects of the outdoor play area. Very few primary colours have been used. The colour palette used is natural tones and the area appears earthy and calm. The play area appears to be easily supervised and has good connections with the internal spaces. The placement of the steel art façade pieces on timber columns softens the area, defines the area and detracts from the fencing. The steel pieces had been designed to be installed on the façade of the building to provide additional shading, but were repurposed for this use.



## Other Topics

In discussions, the appropriateness of the name 'Taikurrendi' was discussed. The term 'Taikurrendi' means 'mixing together' or 'coming together' in the Kurna language. Ninety five percent of people thought interviewed felt that it was an appropriate name. Aboriginal community members interviewed discussed at length the amount of time that had gone into choosing a name to define their vision and the importance of a name in bringing an identity to the centre. Some of the terms used to describe the name Taikurrendi included: "beautiful", "deadly", "excellent", "well-suited" and "fine".



Figure 117: Percentage of users approving of the centre being named 'Taikurrendi'

Eighty percent of the Aboriginal people interviewed thought that the title of the centre should be the 'Taikurrendi Aboriginal Children and Family Centre'. Many people did not understand why the term 'Aboriginal' had been dropped from the name and wanted the term 'Aboriginal' included.

Interestingly, while all but one of the non-Aboriginal people interviewed approved of the name, no one interviewed knew the meaning of the word. One person stated that they thought the name had been given as "a welcoming gesture for Aboriginal people". Another non-Aboriginal user stated that the name was important because the centre was on Aboriginal land. Many of the non-Aboriginal users found the name hard to pronounce or spell. One parent stated that she couldn't find the telephone listing for the centre because they could not spell Taikurrendi.

At the community meeting, there was discussion around the need for a bus for the centre. The provision of a bus had originally been a component of the project which had not eventuated. The community saw that the provision of a bus to be an important aspect of the Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre project as many Aboriginal families in the area did not have private transport. As well as a bus service for preschool children, many Aboriginal Elders wanted a service that provided transport for other family members to the centre. One Elder stated:

I would like to here with my grannies watching them and coming to community events. I don't have a car so I can't do that.

Given that one of the barriers identified preventing access by Indigenous children to preschool is a lack of transport, this issue was considered by the Department for Education and Children Services. Due to the requirements for children to be transported in car seats and the training required for such, the Department for Education and Children Services decided to provide the centre with an allowance for the taxi transport of children.

The materials used to construct the building were another point of discussion. A number of Aboriginal people stated that they would prefer that materials for the building did not include zincalume. Historically, corrugated iron has been used as a material for the remote and rural Aboriginal housing and institutional buildings and some people associate the material with poor quality housing and the missionary era.

Another matter was discussed was the physical relationship between the Christies Beach Primary School and Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre. There were clear divisions among the people interviewed. Approximately one third of the people interviewed wanted the centre to have been

designed as part of the school. The other people interviewed wanted a clear physical delineation between the two entities. One person suggested that the centre should have been designed facing west so that it was visually connected to the school. The Elders present at the community meeting were of the view that the centre should be a separate entity and that the current design reflected this.

Another issue that arose during the course of discussions was the heating and cooling of the building. The buildings are installed with ducted reverse cycle air conditioning systems. The air conditioning unit for the two buildings is zoned with the preschool and the reception area being one zone. Due to the size, high ceiling and the constant opening of doors in the preschool, the temperature has had to be set at a lower/higher temperature to provide thermal comfort in the preschool area. The temperatures in the reception area are thus colder/hotter than comfortable. The other issue related to heating and cooling was the recurrent operating costs. During fieldwork, there were concerns about the operating costs of the building. At the time, the solar panels had only been recently installed hence this may be a matter for later review. More consideration could be given in the design of similar centres to maximise ventilation to reduce air conditioning requirements. Such centres should be responsive to the climatic conditions to reduce the need for heating and cooling.

### **Discussion**

Centres such as Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre are in a unique position to present Aboriginal cultures as proud and living. The incorporation of Kurna and other cultural symbols and representations into the design has had a real impact on the Aboriginal people using the centre. They were proud and excited about the centre. Some people thought that Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre should extend to become a community centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the area. Some people stated that the centre should become a community controlled organisation. There was a sense of community ownership and understanding of the importance of creating an 'Aboriginal place' with pride of the design, ethos and programs of the centre.

The project was very ambitious given the timelines and period allowed for community consultation. There was some dissention among Aboriginal community members during this period and it should be realised that a more realistic timelines for community consultation and design by DECD are required for future projects. The community dissent appears to having largely dissipated, but it must be noted that did result in fractured relationships for a period.

Community involvement in any Aboriginal project is vital for its ongoing success. The community naming of the facility has been important and most members of the Aboriginal community approve of the name. Eighty percent of people interviewed would like it to be called the 'Taikurrendi Aboriginal Children and Family Centre.' The opening ceremonies proved to be an important part of the acceptance of Taikurrendi as an Aboriginal place. The smoking ceremony conducted at the opening served to assist in the sense of community ownership and participation and rid the site of bad spirits and/or negative history while providing a sense of renewal.



Figure 118: Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre – Opening Ceremony. Kurna Cultural Bearer and Community Leader, Karl 'Winda' Telfer being assisted by the then Federal Minister for Education, the Hon. Peter Garrett in the fire lighting ceremony for the opening of Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre (Source: Outerspace Landscape Design).

Aboriginal people are using the centre. Enrolments at the preschool in 2014 are at near capacity. There are early indications that this is having flow on effects to the adjacent school as there have been significant increases in Aboriginal enrolments at Christies Beach Primary School. It is not known if these increases have led to decreases in enrolments at other early learning centres in the area or whether Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre has attracted clientele who would not normally engage with early learning education. It is important that this is measured over an extended period.

## Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre

### Overview

Whyalla is home to people from a number of Indigenous language groups including: Barngarla (*alt. spelling* Pangkala, Barngala), Adnyamatharna (*alt. spelling* Adnyamathanha), Gugada (*alt. spelling* Kokatha, Kokata) and South Australian Aboriginal people from other language groups. Western Australian groups such as Nyoongars, Yamiitji, Wongatha and groups from the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands (Anangu and Luritja), New South Wales, Queensland, and Victoria also reside in Whyalla. Indigenous people in Whyalla are fragmented into relatively small family groups. Most are likely to be urbanised Aboriginal people with English as their first language and are likely to have strong links with community in a mixture of traditional and modern ways.

The motivation for setting up an Aboriginal Children and Family Centre at Whyalla was related to a number of factors. Whyalla has a population of approximately 21,400 people of which 690 identify as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent (approximately 90 families). Proportionally, the population of Indigenous people is higher than Adelaide (Grant 2011). Whyalla's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is also young, with 55.1% of Indigenous persons aged under 20 years, and 30.1% of the population aged under 10 years of age. The median age of the Indigenous population in Whyalla is 16 years of age compared to the non-Indigenous median of 35 years. (Grant 2011).

It is recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Whyalla may be socially and economically disadvantaged (Grant 2011). Whyalla and the surrounding areas are a mix of 'blue collar' and 'lower middle income' households with significant pockets of unemployment and there are indications that a number of Indigenous families in Whyalla suffer inter-generational unemployment. The area was also under-serviced by culturally specific services. The Indigenous community had reported a lack of services for primary mental health care, prevention and support programs, a lack of employment opportunities, poor education outcomes and risky behaviours resulting in overrepresentation across all types of income support, and few Aboriginal advocacy organisations. Gregor McTan Research (2006) noted that Whyalla's Indigenous community had concerns that the town does not have "...a cultural centre to practice and showcase their art and culture [and this was] ...important in terms of passing on stories, skills and culture to following generations and impart a greater sense of identity and pride in young Aboriginal [people]" (Gregor McTan Research 2006 p. 127). Given the Whyalla's Indigenous population is very young and growing, the community is underserviced and there is a desire for Barngarla cultural reclamation, Whyalla was chosen as the site for one of the South Australian Children and Family Centres.

The Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre was constructed on the north eastern corner of the Hincks Avenue Primary School site in Whyalla. The Hincks Avenue Primary School was determined as the preferred location for the Children and Family Centre because of the existing preschool (in need of replacement), the capacity to increase Aboriginal enrolments, the capacity to support preschool to school transitions and the availability of land. An existing prefabricated preschool with limited facilities was already located adjacent to the site. This building was demolished as part of the project.

The Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre was designed as a 56 place centre with 44 preschool and 12 occasional care places. The project comprised of:

- The construction of a single storey building comprising preschool and occasional care, a community learning area, sleep and withdrawal spaces, meeting, consulting and office spaces, wet area, kitchen and toilet amenities.
- The development of outdoor areas providing children's outdoor learning and play space and meeting areas for the community.



- The construction of a 14 car park spaces for staff and visitors including two access car parks.
- The demolition of the existing transportable building currently accommodating the Hincks Avenue Children's Centre.

The Enabling Group had a clear vision for the centre envisaging a place that would be welcoming with a sense of belonging for people from all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. They desired an environment which achieved sense of unification, belonging and trust and was secure and safe. The Enabling Group wanted the centre to be a child focused place, free flowing with seamless indoor and outdoor connections which allowed children to be experimental, active and take risks. They also wanted a place where Aboriginal people could drop in and feel welcome. The centre was to be a showcase for Aboriginal cultures, values, traditional and contemporary customs that reflects the natural world. As Whyalla does not have an Aboriginal community meeting centre, many saw this as an opportunity to create a place for the Aboriginal community to come together.

The Enabling Group envisaged a rounded, blunt boomerang shaped building (much like a pair of hands cupping) as the form of the building. This was explained during consultations as a metaphor for holding the child and family close (Grant 2011). The Enabling Group described how they wanted the internal and external building materials and cladding to be two dimensional and textural to reflect the colours of the earth and the sea around the Whyalla area. They also articulated that the design, colours and design should include the Barngarla (*alt spelling* Pangkala, Barngala) 'Seven Sisters' and 'Rainbow Serpent' stories and include the theme of the 'land meeting the sea'.

The centre was designed as a steel framed structure with a concrete slab. External materials are a combination of rendered and painted lightweight masonry wall panels and corrugated zincalume wall cladding and predominantly corrugated zincalume roofing. Internal linings are a combination of painted plasterboard and stained plywood panelling. The budget for the project was \$5.05M (excluding GST).

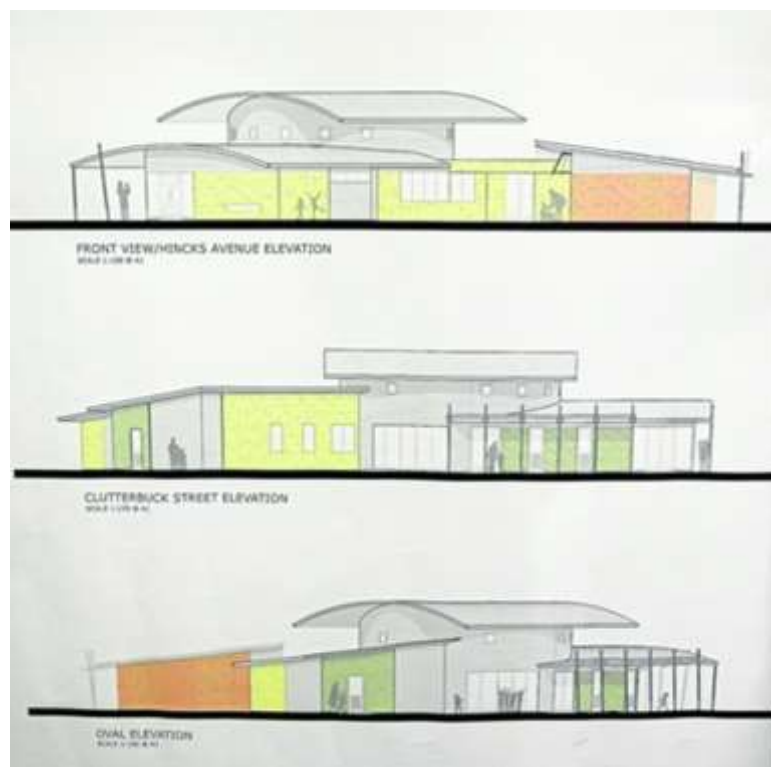


Figure 119: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre – Elevations (Architect: Denis Harrison, DPTI).





Figure 121: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre – Design Generator  
The preferred form of the building is demonstrated by one of the Whyalla Enabling Group members (Source: Grant 2011).



Figure 122: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre – View of the Centre



The gecko was chosen as a motif for the centre. The gecko was identified as a significant creature in the Barngarla landscape and chosen by the community it was resilient (i.e. growing back its tail). The community felt that it was an appropriate motif as wanted their children to grow to be resilient and flourish.



Figure 123: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre – Gecko Motif

The entrance to Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre is from Hincks Avenue either via the pedestrian access or through the car park. The angle formed by two parts of the building gathers visitors and directs them into the centre’s reception area. The external space outside has had seating areas and signage installed and the area is paved and with areas of planting. At the entrance to the centre, a mosaic has been installed to mark the entrance.



Figure 124: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre – Mosaic at Entrance. The mosaic at the entrance to be centre is to present the theme of the land meeting the sea. This theme was chosen to recognise that in the Whyalla region Aboriginal people lived both on the land and on sea. The artists for this work were Di Turner and Sonia Champion.





Figures 125 A & B: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre –Entrance. The Hincks Avenue entrance has the door centrally placed. Bespoke metal signage, garden beds, seating and paving are the main elements at the entrance. The timber shades installed on the windows of the family program space can be seen on the right. Reception is located in the centre. The signage was made from surplus steel donated for the facades.



Figure 126: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre - Detail on Seating. Sculptures of animals were made and painted by children from the Hincks Avenue Primary School and the Wynbring Jida Child Care Centre to embed the theme of 'the land meeting the sea' into the project. The sculptures were affixed to seating located around the centre. The children were assisted by artists, Di Turner, Laurresha Champion and Sonia Champion.

The reception is sited centrally with the service offices located directly behind it. A corridor leads from the left side of the reception area to the Directors Office and then down to the consulting rooms and staff room. The reception and director's office allows staff visual connection to the public areas and some limited views over the front and rear of the building. The location of the reception area does however allow people to be screened and directed to the appropriate service. Depictions of the mythical rainbow serpent run through the building on the floor for way finding. The serpent moves through the building on the floor and then outside, where it transforms into as a seat. The rainbow serpent then runs between occasional care and preschool in the foyer, under the reception desk and reemerging outside in the sandpit.



Figure 127: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre -Reception Area. The administration office space is located directly behind the reception area with the Director's office located to the left. Note the rainbow serpent on the floor.



Figure 128: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre -Reception Area. The public toilets are located adjacent to the reception, waiting area and the family program area.

The preschool and children's areas are housed on the eastern side of the building with the external play area opening up to a long range view of Hincks Avenue Primary School. Like Taikurrendi ACFC, the heart of the design is the circular room which is the children's preschool main indoor activity area. The main activity area of the preschool was designed as a cylinder to break down the straight lines and introduce organic form to the design. Sensitively designed with state of the art facilities (such as a teaching kitchen, dedicated spaces of staff, storage and quiet areas and toilets is designed to take consideration of gender sensitivities) the preschool is equipped to cater for the health and cultural needs of Aboriginal children (e.g. hearing loss) and has acoustically treated features throughout.



Figure 129: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre –Circular Preschool Area. The preschool space is circular and includes children's and staff toilets, staff preparation and storage areas, and a kitchen. The occasional care space is located at the rear of the image and has a glass partition dividing the space. The high square windows have artwork transposed onto them displaying the 'Seven Sisters' story.





Figures 130 A & B Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre – Kitchen in Preschool Area. Note: Stairs have been placed in kitchen to allow children to access bench space.

The space is set up with a 'sign in' area which includes locker spaces and notice boards. The space is flexible to allow a variety of children's curriculum activities to be set up with space for active play, smaller spaces set aside for individual or quiet play. The windows provide natural light at different times of the day and there is a strong connection to the outside environment. The kitchen is located centrally in the activity space. Staff have a commanding view from the kitchen over children in the circular space as well as those entering and exiting the external play space.

Adjoining the circular preschool area are the staff preparation, learning and storage rooms and staff toilets. The high ceiling of the preschool creates a sense of space with a series of square windows located high on the structure to increase the connection of the activity room to the external environment. The occasional care area is located adjacent to the preschool. The separate occasional care area with a kitchenette, withdrawal or sleep room is provided. The design consultations indicated that many people would prefer the two areas to be integrated.

The occasional care area was designed so that it could function separately or be opened up to become part of the preschool (note the preschool and occasional care are integrated). The external area of the occasional care area is partitioned off from the preschool play area and currently children who wish to use the larger play space must enter through the preschool.

The children's external play area faces east with a long range view of the Hincks Avenue Primary School. A small number of existing trees were maintained is located in the middle of the play area (adjacent to the sandpit) and near the occasional care outdoor play area. Other planting has been established as part of the project. The play area has a number of different elements. A path leads around the play area which can be used as a bike path or to lead the child to the next activity. There is a lawn for running, throwing and skipping games and for group learning.





Figure 131: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre –Entrance to Preschool from the Play Area. Note the facade includes the gecko motif. The gate at the right of the image is to the separate play area for occasional care.



Figures 132 A & B: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre - External Play Area. The left image shows the paving, stage and sandpit surrounded by the concrete representation of the rainbow serpent, while the right image shows the built up area for the slide and areas of garden mulch.



Figure 133: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre – External Play Area. Images of the sandpit with mosaic detail and a stone water feature. The rainbow serpent is placed on the edge to the sandpit to symbolically protect children

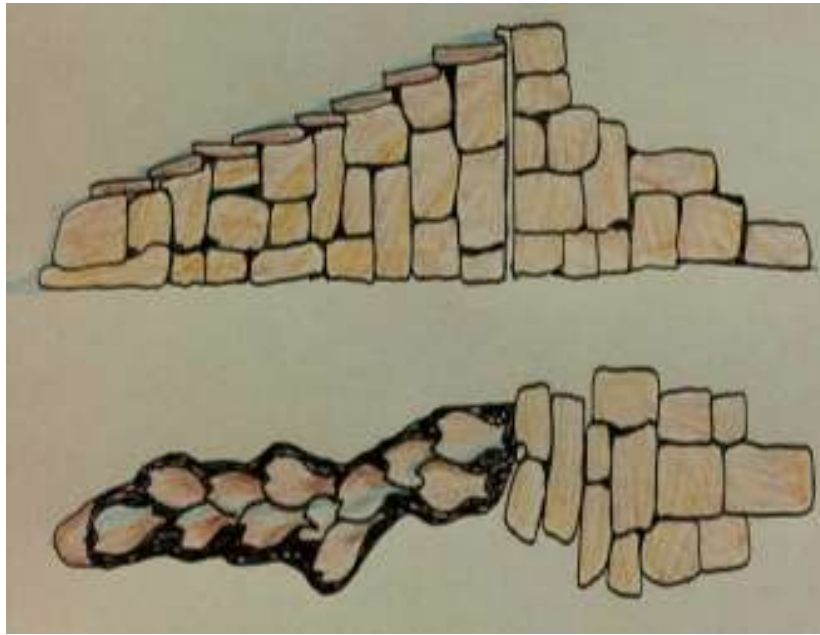


Figure 134: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre – Drawings of the stone water feature.



Figure 135: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre – Lawn and Shelter in Play area.

The community centre is housed in the western wing of the building and has a large kitchen, kitchenette, storage room and toilet. The room can be divided into two areas via bi-fold doors. The most northerly end of the community centre is fitted with a full kitchen (used for cooking classes and community events). This kitchen has counter space spanning the width of the building and is fitted with childproof barriers. The southern end is fitted with a kitchenette. The community centre has views of the entrance on the eastern side and opens to the cultural area on the western side. The cultural area contains a fire pit, stone seating and other features. The area overlooks Clutterbuck Street and housing located on the westerly side of the street.





Figures 136 A & B: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre – Community Centre.



Figure 137: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre – Community Centre. The area can be divided and in this instance is set up for baby play group.



Figure 138: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre – Exterior of the Community Centre. Note the metal facade and cultural area with seating and fire pit. The façade on the community centre side is designed with waves with half circles to make circles. These represent people coming together in a circle to symbolise the community centre as an Aboriginal meeting space.



Figure 139: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre –Community Centre interior. A kitchenette is located at the other end of the area. The rear wall is decorated with an art piece and is designated as the 'Healing Wall.' The wall colour chosen was a purple hue, familiar of the vegetation of the area and seen to be calm and soothing. A glass plaque featuring Aboriginal bush medicine plants was installed.



## Post Occupancy Evaluation Findings

### Introduction

Data was gathered at the Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre over two one week periods. Behaviour mapping, child focussed activities and non-participant observations were conducted. A community meeting was not able to be organised so researchers conducted small yarning circles at various locations around the town and held individual interviews at the centre. Sheets were placed at the exit point to allow people to record their views. Researchers also collated the community design recommendations from the Indigenous Design Brief and the DECD Design Standards and Guidelines for Early Childhood Facilities for children from birth to age 8 to see if the design had fulfilled the expectations of the community and conformed to the Department for Education and Child Development expectations.

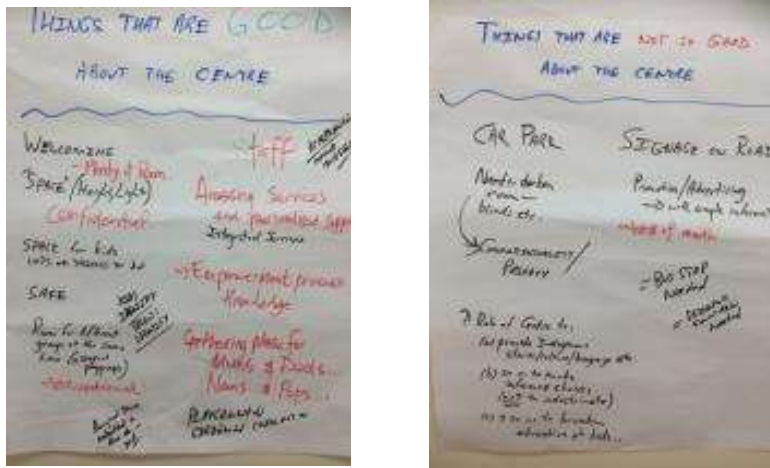


Figure 140: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre – Sheets used to collect views.

Thirteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with users of the Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre. The interviewees included staff of the centre and the adjacent school, service providers, parents and carers of children and community members. Seven in depth interviews were conducted with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander users or stakeholders and six interviews with non-Aboriginal users. Of those interviewed, 80% of the people were accessing a service at the centre or community stakeholders while 20% of the interviewees were people employed by the centre or another service provider.



Figure 141: Percentages of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal People interviewed for the study.



Figure 142: Percentages of Staff versus other people interviewed for the study

### Perceptions of the Children and Family Centre

There was a great deal of positivity about the design and layout of Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre. Some of the terms used to describe the centre were “friendly” “beautiful”, “welcoming” “deadly”, “an excellent environment for children” One person stated;

This is a great place to bring my son, it is beautiful and friendly.

All of the people interviewed were very impressed with the quality of the buildings and the external spaces. Parents and carers giving liked the centre for practical reasons. Sixty percent of the people interviewed indicated that they used the centre because it was easy to get to, close to home and there was ample parking.

There was an interesting difference in perceptions of the centre from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people interviewed. Eighty percent of the Aboriginal people interviewed expressed the view that the centre should operate as an Aboriginal community meeting place. Most non-Aboriginal people interviewed saw the centre as a pre-school delivering some additional services to meet socio-economic disadvantage felt by particular groups in the community.

In discussing the reasons why the development was important, forty percent of the people interviewed expressed that Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre should be a place to learn about Aboriginal cultures. One woman said

It is so important in Whyalla that more is taught and known about Aboriginal culture.

Whyalla is a racist place and people need to know about our cultures.

One carer said

I love that my child comes here and learns about Aboriginal culture. That is really important to me and our family.

### Entrances

People enter the grounds of the Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre from Hincks Avenue either via the car park or the pedestrian access. The majority of people (80%) arrived by car and most entered through the car park.



Figures 143 A & B: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre - Path from car park

The path to entrance is partially obscured by placement of tank. People in wheelchairs need to go to another path for ramp access. The route past the tank was most commonly used.

The Department for Education and Child Development provide car parking only for staff, official visitors and people holding a disability permit. Entry to the centre is accessed through the car park. This appears to present a number of issues. Observing pedestrian and vehicular movement through the car park, there appeared to be a number of issues:

- There is no separate pedestrian path resulting in people (including young children, frail and elderly people) and vehicles intermixing.
- The car park is outside line of sight from the centre and activities are unsupervised.
- The placement of tanks and other fixtures should be considered in regard to access

It would appear prudent that car parks for early learning centres are designed with clearly marked pedestrian pathways or for car parks to be located away from the main entrance and clearly marked only for staff use.

The Whyalla region can experience extreme temperatures with records showing on average over 50 days per annum with temperatures of over 30°C. The area outside the entrance to the centre was extremely hot during the fieldwork period. It may be useful to consider more shading to centres located in areas that experience extreme weather conditions in the future.

The entrances are all signed. A large sign is installed over the entrance to the centre. People interviewed did not see any issues with the current signage and had no difficulties finding their way into the centre. The majority of people entered the building through the reception area. It was observed that a small number of people attempted to use the side door adjacent to the reception area. This door was predominately locked during the period of fieldwork and some people had to walk around the centre to gain access. The staff locked this access as the wind blew into the centre. It seems logical in terms of security to stream all people through the main entrance although this may inconvenience people attempting to access the centre from the Clutterbuck Street side.

#### **Administration and Consultation Areas**

The position of the reception is excellent and people stated that they find it easy to locate the entrance. The design of the paths and the use of way finding tools result in ease in negotiation into the building. The reception area is multi-functional. Adjacent to the reception area are chairs and an area where children's work is displayed. During some periods of fieldwork, the reception counter had had a large table in front of it with free loaves of bread.



Figure 144: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre – Reception. On certain days, bread given by a local supplier is placed in the reception area for people to take. There was some discussion among the researchers as whether this practice gave the impression that the centre was a charity organisation rather than a place where Aboriginal children and families could be empowered.

Sixty two percent people interviewed would thought the waiting area could also function as an informal meeting area for users of the centre. For example one person said:

It would be good to have a yarning area. I would like a place to sit down and talk with friends.

Ninety percent of the respondents discussed the choice of furniture in this area. One person said

The chairs in the reception are uncomfortable. It is like a doctor's waiting area and you want to get out of there as quickly as possible.

Another older person stated:

The chairs aren't comfortable enough to sit down. They need a couple of couches there.

One breastfeeding mother thought there should be a sofa to allow her to breastfeed her baby while she waited for her child to finish preschool. Another carer thought that using the current seating was "a bit of a shame job." The reception/waiting area of Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre may not have sufficient space to be used as an informal meeting or yarning area, but consideration should be given to providing such when designing similar centres. Having informal social spaces allows people to add to and reinforce their support networks.

The reception area at Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre also acts as a display area for the preschool children's work and progress books. While this is a convenient use of space, one wonders if the confidentiality of the identities of the children attending the centre is maintained especially in the case of families in conflict. Using this area as a display area for children's work may overemphasise the role of the preschool within the centre.





Figures 145 A & B: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre – Reception Area.

The public toilets are located between the reception area and the community centre of the centre, accessed through a separate passage. There is signage in the reception and the toilets are easy to find. During fieldwork the toilets were used on a constant basis by staff, preschool parents and carers and people using the community centre. The location is convenient while people are afforded a degree of privacy.

From reception, people are streamed in three directions. People are directed to services delivered in the consulting rooms, community centre or the children's preschool/occasional care area. This method of streaming is particularly useful and allows all members of the community (including those with criminal records) to use the centre.

Adjacent to the waiting and reception area is the director's office. The office has a limited view over the reception and the exterior children's play area. The director spends a great amount of time away from the office engaged with staff, users and various activities. It would be useful to consider the functional relationship between the director's office and the reception/preschool areas in the design of future similar centres. Ideally, the director's office would have a visual and aural connection to the reception area and a visual connection to the preschool/occasional care areas. In Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre, the director's job would be made much easier if the position of their office and reception were reversed and the director's office had a window into the preschool/occasional care and a visual/aural connection with the reception area.

The office areas for other staff have views over the reception can supervise people accessing the consulting rooms and to the external staff area. The shared office spaces appear to be working well for the occupants. One desk space is occupied by a permanent staff member and two desks designated are used intermittently for service providers. There may be issues with security of confidential information and taking sensitive telephone calls/interviewing people in the shared space into the future, but this appears not to be a problem at this point. During fieldwork the shared office space was used on a continual basis for meeting with parents, carers and other users engaged with programs. During fieldwork, the office was not however occupied by four people at any time but this may change as more services are provided in the centre. The offices face west and users have issues with light reflection on screens etc. The need to use blinds to reduce glare means that staff members are unable to supervise external areas from the area.



Figure 146: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre – Shared Office Area.

Two consulting rooms are also located in the service area. One room was set up to service health providers while the other was set up with softer furnishings as family therapy/counselling space. The rooms had been set up to service one or two clients at any one time. Consultation rooms, large enough to avoid unnecessary, culturally inappropriate, physical contact may be more appropriate. The rooms are quite stark and carpeting may be considered for these areas in the future to better fit the activities being conducted.



Figures 147 A & B: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre – Consulting Area

#### Corridor leading to consulting rooms and reception

The staff room is located in the consulting/administration arm of the centre. The room was well used, providing staff with a private area and an informal meeting space. The staff members interviewed were happy with this space and it was observed to be continually used for a variety of functions. The staff room leads onto an external area which overlooks Clutterbuck Street. While we observed staff on occasion use the outdoor area, it was not continuously used, perhaps due to the weather or the lack of privacy.



Figure 148: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre –Staff Room.



Figure 149: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre –External Area for Staff.



The corridor housing the consulting/administration area also includes a laundry and store. The laundry was well used during the fieldwork period. A dedicated laundry appears to be a useful resource for such centres. The store room was required in the brief and allows materials to be stored so clutter does not accumulate in other areas. The store provides service providers the capacity to store materials securely onsite. As the number of services provided by outside providers grows, the presence of store room in this area of the building will be advantageous. There is a shower located in the laundry, but it did not appear to be used regularly.



Figures 150 A & B: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre –Store Room and Laundry

### **The Community Centre**

The community centre has been welcomed by the Aboriginal community and users of the project. The Department for Education and Child Development and other service providers use the space for program delivery. A variety of programs (including cooking classes, young mothers programs and baby play groups) are delivered in the community centre. The community centre is a very flexible space, being used on a continual basis. The ability to divide it into two spaces using bi-fold doors is useful given the demand on the space. The various pieces of furniture purchased for the community centre are good quality and flexible but it was noticed that setting/packing up the room for each activity was time consuming for staff.

The ability for the room to be opened up and for people to move between exterior and interior was commended by many people interviewed. The quality of the design of the external cultural area and gardens were praised by many of the people interviewed, although the external area has not been used extensively. There have been issues regarding the maintenance of garden areas of the centre.

The current use has not fully met the aspirations of some members of the Aboriginal community. Given the Whyalla Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community do not have a regular place to meet, it was hoped that the community centre in the Children and Family Centre may fulfil this function. It is important to note that this was an aspiration of the community, and the brief and information given to the community did not convey this message. The Aboriginal community



continue to aspire to the centre becoming an Aboriginal community centre where events are held and Aboriginal people meet regularly.



Figures 151 A & B: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre – Garden  
The planting in the garden on the western side of the centre has been lost due to poor maintenance.

There were issues in regard to privacy when using the community centre. The windows of the area look out to the entrance on the eastern side and to Clutterbuck Street on the west. Staff members were concerned regarding about people being observed while engaged in programs. This appears to be a valid concern. Staff also reported that glare in this area hindered their use of projectors. The installation of blinds would solve the glare issue. There are valuable lessons can be learnt regarding orientation and location for the design of future community centre from this example..



Figure 152: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre – Views from community centre.

The corridor from reception to access the community centre was commended by thirty percent of the respondents interviewed. This space was furnished with a number of stools and the spades used in the sod turning ceremony were mounted on the wall. People interviewed liked having the artefacts on display and saw the area as useful for private conversations. The choice of seating was seen as problematic by some people interviewed. Respondents noted that they would prefer that comfortable seating with arms be provided and it be arranged to allow conversation.



Figure 153: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre – Corridor to community centre  
Note the gecko motif on the glass. The seating provided is aesthetically pleasing but did not appear to meet the needs of the users interviewed.

### **The Children's Centre**

The Children's Centre consists of the circular activity space with a kitchen, learning space, staff preparation and storage rooms, staff and children's toilets, occasional care area and sleep room and outside play areas.



Figure 154: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre – Preschool/Occasional Care Entrance

The people interviewed were unanimous in being impressed with the quality of the environment and the design of the children's area. Many people discussed the importance of the open layout and the feeling of space and 'airiness'.



Figures 155 A & B: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre – Parent Hub

The kitchen is a crucial element of the design of the Children's Centre. Sixty two percent of people interviewed thought the central location of the kitchen was important as it replicated a domestic setting with the kitchen as the heart of the home. The kitchen has a commanding view of the internal spaces and supervision of the children's activities is possible. The kitchen is well designed for preparation, storage and as a teaching area.

There were some issues in the Children's Centre. Congestion occurs at the entrance of the children's centre at the beginning of each session with parents congregating around a 'Parent's Hub' which contains lockers and notice areas. More thought could be put into the design of a series of transitional areas for similar centres to alleviate the congestion and yet provide parents privacy to engage with a staff member or their child.

It was noted that the main door to the outside play area could not be used in certain weather conditions due to the wind. The door was locked and people accessed the outdoor play area via the side door. This is inconvenient affecting supervision and the circulation patterns between internal and external areas.

The placement of electrical switches was also noted in the children's area. Children were able to access electrical switches at various locations both inside and outside the building. There were also taps that could be turned on and fences that could be climbed which presented potential safety issues in the outdoor play area.





Figure 156: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre – Taps and Fences

One tap located in the children’s play area is able to be turned on by children and the adjacent fence is constructed of materials which can be climbed.

Other issues relating are linked to the way areas have been furnished. For example, researchers observed children accessing items from drawers in the kitchen via set of moveable steps placed to allow children access to the benches. These stairs are a safety hazard and should be removed.



Figures 157 A & B: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre – Entrance to Play Area.



The choice of furniture and materials varies at Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre. While the ethos of a subdued colour palette, natural materials and organic shapes has been attempted, many primary colours and items made from plastic and artificial materials have been purchased or brought from the former preschool. The net result is an over furnished environment with more play equipment than required to present a muted and relaxed environment (crucial for Aboriginal children). Staff may consider rationalising the amount of furniture and play items present and consider storing and rotating some materials.

The importance of having procurement expertise and funding for furniture and fittings that enhanced the design of the centre became apparent in discussions. The issues in the lack of buying power and lack of choice in regional areas were mentioned. Staff were offered the opportunity to engage with an interior designer but declined.

Some of the art installed into the Children's area was discussed in the course of the interviews. The artwork installed on the windows depicting the 'Seven Sisters' story has been controversial. The Seven Sisters narrative exists in many forms throughout Aboriginal Australia. The story and artistic representations of it extend from the north near Balgo Western Australia to the River Murray in South Australia. In discussions, some Aboriginal people were opposed to have depictions of the story in the children's area as they considered it to be either a women's story, sacred knowledge or violent and inappropriate for children.



Figure 158: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre – Windows in Preschool  
Windows with artwork representing the story of the 'Seven Sisters' have been controversial among the Aboriginal community.

The children's toilets have been designed with two exits to the outside play space and one entry from the play space. The toilets were designed to allow gender separation at a later stage if necessary. The designers paid careful attention to ensure privacy for children by increasing the heights of the partitions and ensuring cubicle doors provided privacy. The staff toilet opens onto the children circular program area. Due to regulations, teaching staff are unable to leave the program space during sessions (due to staff/student ratio requirements) so it is convenient. The staff toilet acts as a more private place to change children if required.

The learning room is glass fronted and located adjacent to the circular program area. This room serves as an intensive teaching space used for each preschool session. The room is carpeted and fitted with audio-visual equipment. The projector and other equipment have been set up on a table and are accessible to children. Unfortunately the room cannot be used as an additional quiet play

area if required. The space would be more flexible had the auto-visual equipment been installed in a child proof cupboard.



Figure 159: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre – Learning Room

The occasional care area is located adjacent to the circular program area and is separated by a glass partition (which may be pulled back). The occasional care area is equipped with a kitchenette and sleep room and shares toilets with the preschool. Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre has adopted the practice that occasional care and preschool children are integrated and play together. This culturally appropriate model of child care mirrors Aboriginal families where siblings are rarely separated and older brothers, sisters and cousins are expected to care for younger siblings. This care may include protecting them, dressing them, helping them use the toilet and sharing food. Older brothers, sisters and cousins are significant models for younger siblings in terms of language and behaviour and separation anxiety may occur when children are physically separated.

The National Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standards require the provision of separate facilities for occasional care, but in practice these facilities may be underutilised in Aboriginal Children and Family Centres. For example, the sleep room and the separate external play area for the occasional care for Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre appear to be rarely used. There may be cost savings should be the duplication of facilities for occasional care be rationalised.



Figure 160: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre – Fenced Area for Occasional Care.

The main outside play area for children was seen by people we interviewed as “innovative”, “well-designed” and “brilliant.” Children are only able to access the outside play area via the side door (due to prevailing winds), but can move freely between areas engaging in free flow play. It was observed that children used most areas of the outside play area. In discussions with children, they stated their favourite component in the play component was the sand pit.

We observed the sandpit in continual use and noted that it could be located closer to the building. Given its popularity, the provision of shade from the verandah to the sand pit would be optimal so that children can use it under all weather conditions and not be exposed in extreme heat. The sand pit is partially surrounded by a piece of public art, one part of the depiction of the rainbow serpent. Forty percent of the people interviewed felt that the work was not recognisable as a serpent. None of the children interviewed knew the meaning of the sculpture but liked having it there as it provided a challenging space to negotiate. The adjacent water feature was not being used during fieldwork as debris was continually collecting in the channel.



Figure 161: Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre – Rainbow Serpent

The outside play area provides a series of activities and the children were keen and active in demonstrating to the researchers the links and paths between the activities and pieces of equipment. The retention of the existing trees appears to have been an asset to the play

environment. Small branches and bark are used in imaginative play in conjunction with other materials. The seed pods, leaves and small stones are be used in different ways providing opportunities for children to explore simple science and maths concepts such as classifying and counting. The grassed areas in the outside play area provide visual relief, areas for children to, roll, tumble and sit and provide a cooling effect on hot days. The outside play area includes a garden where children can grow their own plants, range of planting which provides resources such as gumnuts, seed pods, small branches, flowers and bark and areas of pebbles, gravel, coarse sand and small rocks. The planting areas were being developed at the time of fieldwork.

Interestingly, it was noted that an outside eating area had not been installed. It was not apparent whether children ate meals outside but the building had been designed with a servery window from the kitchen to the verandah. This appeared not to be used. During the consultation process, the community had expressed that they hoped that children would benefit from eating and sharing meals as a group.

### **Other Topics**

In discussions, the appropriateness of the name 'Gabmididi Manoo' for the centre was discussed. At the time that the centre was established, a revival of the Barngarla language had commenced in Whyalla and the greater Eyre Peninsula region. The term 'Gabmididi Manoo' was proposed by Professor Ghil'ad Zuckermann from the University of Adelaide in consultation with the Barngarla community. The term means 'learning together'.

Fifty percent of the people interviewed had difficulties with pronouncing the name of the centre. At the same time, eighty percent of the people interviewed stated that it was important that the centre had an Aboriginal name. Sixty percent of the people interviewed continued to call the centre 'the Hincks Avenue Kindy'. Only forty percent of Aboriginal people interviewed thought that the title of the centre should be the 'Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre'. Some Aboriginal people expressed the opinion that there should have been a longer period of consultation regarding the name. Other people did not understand why the term 'Aboriginal' had been dropped from the name and wanted the term 'Aboriginal' included.

The materials used to construct the building were another point of discussion in interviews. A small number of Aboriginal people (twenty percent) stated that they would prefer that materials for the building had not included Zinalume. Researchers explored this issue further and found that respondents were concerned with the historical use of corrugated iron. Corrugated iron has often been used as a material for the remote and rural Aboriginal housing and institutional buildings and some people interviewed associated the material with poor quality housing and the missionary era.

Another matter was discussed was the physical relationship between the Hincks Avenue Primary School and the Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre. A small number of people interviewed (15 percent) stated that the centre was located too far from the school for the services to be considered to be associated. It should be noted that at the time of planning the centre, the site had been identified as available and appropriate by the leadership group of the Hincks Avenue Primary School. This viewpoint appears to have changed and some people voiced the opinion that locating the CFC closely to the school may have increased enrolments at the school.

As with Taikurrendi, the building is installed with ducted reverse cycle air conditioning systems and the temperature has to be set at a lower/higher temperature to provide thermal comfort in the preschool area.



## **Discussion**

Centres such as Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre are in a unique position to provide services to Aboriginal people from disadvantaged circumstances. Enrolments at the preschool within Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre include many Aboriginal children. Many Aboriginal people thought that Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre should extend to become a community centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the area. Some people stated that the centre should become a community controlled organisation. One Aboriginal Elder said:

Aboriginal people in Whyalla are split into small family groups. We don't have anywhere to meet in Whyalla and we can't get together and discuss things like we should as a group. It would be good if the centre was a community space and could make our culture here strong.

The project has been very ambitious given the timelines and period given for community consultation. There has been dissension among Aboriginal community members during this period and the community dissent appears to have continued. This has resulted in fractured relationships between some Aboriginal families. Community acceptance of the centre beyond its role as a preschool appears still to be established.

## Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre

### Overview

The existing Ceduna Preschool, a facility that was showing its age, was seen as the clear choice of location for the Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre. The site is 0.39 hectares in size, and is bordered by Kelly Street, the Ceduna Area School, Minya Bunhii Childcare and Kindergarten, and a private residence. It occupies a commanding position at the highest point of the precinct, with views to the ocean from all entrances, though at the same time exposed to both summer and winter winds. Situating the centre here was seen as providing for ongoing colocation with Ceduna Area School, and affirming the sense of it as an integral part of an educational precinct that provided a solid educational foundation in early childhood years.

Coordinated through the Enabling Group, wide-ranging consultation regarding the purposes, functionality and design of the centre was undertaken with the both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Ceduna community, with some four years elapsing between the initial conversations and the actual start of building phase. The Enabling Group was charged with developing a vision, philosophy and governance structure for the centre. As a major aspect of that brief, it was envisaged that the centre would operate with a sense of Aboriginal child-rearing and educational practices, and would include cultural knowledge throughout its design.

Through the consultation process, the Enabling Group defined their localised vision for the centre. The Group envisaged that the centre would be:

- A place of belonging,
- A place of cultural safety,
- A place of early childhood development excellence, with a strong focus on Aboriginal culture
- A place where all extended family members could feel comfortable and welcome - mums, dads, uncles, aunties & grandparents alike,
- A safe and stimulating environment that promoted diversity, acceptance and intercultural learnings, and
- A place that laid down strong educational foundations and provided for a smooth transition into formal schooling.

The original project brief indicated that the children's space should have capacity to accommodate 50 children with the capacity to divide areas to two areas, one able to accommodate 15 children up to the age of two, and the other able to accommodate 35 children over the age of 2. The areas were to comply with child care licensing requirements and have a withdrawal sleeping room, staff preparation area, office, kitchenette, bottle preparation area, store, nappy changing facilities, toilets, direct access to outdoor play, verandah and shade (Government of South Australia, date unknown, p. 6). During the design and consultation period, the projected capacity increased to 56, consisting of 44 pre-school and 12 occasional care places, requiring an expansion in the overall floor space. With a proposed budget of \$5.950M (excluding GST), the project consisted of the following components:

- The design and construction of a single storey building comprising preschool and occasional care, a community learning area, sleep and withdrawal spaces, meeting, consulting and office spaces, wet area, kitchen and toilet amenities,
- The design and construction of outdoor areas providing children's outdoor learning and play space and meeting areas for the community,
- The construction of 14 space car park,
- The demolition of the existing buildings currently accommodating the Ceduna Preschool.

The building is a steel framed structure on a concrete slab. External materials are a combination of rendered and painted lightweight masonry wall panels and corrugated Zinalume wall cladding and predominantly corrugated Zinalume roofing. Internal linings are a combination of painted plasterboard and stained plywood panelling.

The facility consists of a one single storey building constructed with three functionally distinct areas under the one roof. As the construction is under the one roof, once inside the building the user is not exposed to the elements if traversing between any of the three components, an important consideration given the extremes of weather experienced in this region. However, the building design works very effectively to maintain a high degree of separation, both visually and aurally, between these areas. On several occasions during our evaluation, when the centre was running parallel activities involving approximately 40-50 people on site across the different areas, there was a good sense of isolation of each activity and very little noise spill between them.

On entering the building, the locations of the three main functional areas of the centre are visible and readily accessible. The reception, common space and the Director's office are situated centrally in the main building with service and staff rooms on one side and entry to the preschool and childcare area on the other. Centrally located the reception/waiting area and director's office allows staff visual connection to the public areas. The strategically placed Director's office has a view over the front and rear of the building. Those people accessing services at the centre who should have limited or restricted contact with particular children or families are to be screened and streamed to the appropriate services discreetly.



Figure 162: Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre - View from the southern car park



Figure 163: Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre - Entrance from the Ceduna Area School car park

A striking feature of the design is a high circular room in which the main indoor preschool activity takes place. The high ceiling of the preschool creates a sense of space and diffuse light, with a series of square windows situated high on the structure, with Aboriginal art motifs illuminated by sunlight. The effect of the cylinder is to counteract the box-like nature of traditional educational spaces, and to bring about a more natural, organic feel. Fitted out with a kitchen, dedicated spaces for staff, quiet areas and toilets designed to address gender sensitivities, the preschool also takes account of the high frequency hearing loss commonly experienced by Aboriginal children with acoustically treated features throughout the preschool. The design is intended to promote free choice and flexibility, and to enable a range of separate learning activities to be set up with sufficient uncluttered space for active play, together with smaller spaces set aside for individual and quiet play. It is intended that children move freely and spontaneously from one activity to another. There is ample natural light through the extensive windows and a strong sense of connectedness to the outside environment. A teaching kitchen occupies pride of place in the circular activity space, and provides staff with a view of the internal play area and exits to the outside space.

The preschool internal activity area is the largest of the three centres covered in this evaluation, and has been well set-up to provide for a smooth and uncluttered flow through the mixture of arrival/departure, inside activity, external access and more structured kitchen and learning space activities. The activity stations are set out effectively, readily identifiable as separate, self-contained loci of activity, and with pathways between them that can accommodate spontaneous movement and shifts of attention of pre-schoolers.



Figure 164: Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre – Circular Preschool Area

Considerable thought went into the design of the children's toilets as initial explorations of the design principles indicated that Aboriginal children's need for privacy was of particular concern. The toilets are mixed gender. All cubicles are at 1950m high with doors at the same height to provide greater privacy and prevent children climbing on them. A nappy change area is provided in the children's toilets.

The occasional care area is located adjacent to the preschool. The brief for the centre stipulated a separate occasional care area with a kitchenette, withdrawal or sleep room provided. The design consultations indicated that many people would prefer the two areas to be integrated. The architect designed the occasional care area so that it could function separately or be opened up to become part of the preschool.





Figure 165: Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre - Occasional Care Area

The external play area contains a range of elements. Adjacent to the internal play area are a garden (to the left of the external doors) while to the right are the sandpit/whale, wet play area and the shelter. Further to the left there is a small lawn area, which the occasional care doorway faces out to. And on the further side of this are the swings. Circling around the whole play area is a paved pathway, for riding bikes and wheeling toys around. There are established trees along the fence line, but they only provide limited effective shading for the utilisable play area. Given the extreme heat the area is subject to, the lack of available shade introduces some limitations into the use of the external play area. Providing shelter between the main building and the sandpit/shelter area may ameliorate this, as it would allow more ready movement to and from the internal area during the hot weather, which currently involves crossing a couple of metres across hot paving in full sun.

The Community Area is a bright, flexible space, which can be divided into two separate rooms via bi-fold doors. There are doors out to a cultural area on the Ceduna Area School side of the centre, where there is a fire pit, seating and other features, but which is yet to be fully landscaped with sustainable plantings. At one end of the Community Area is a full kitchen, spanning the width of the building, and with a large island bench with barriers that can be closed off to prevent children accessing the kitchen. The area is fitted with audio-visual facilities that can be used for video, computer displays, teleconferencing and a range of other learning and teaching, and community development, activities. The area is readily configurable for a range of needs (e.g. seating around a table, with mats for children and babies to play on, with cushions and beanbags for relaxed discussion, or in traditional class mode with chairs in rows) and the space and light make for a calm and contemplative atmosphere. However, at the same time, the glass surrounds that provide all the light also can make for a sense of being visible to, and on show for, passers-by, especially from the adjacent school car park.

There are representations of local Aboriginal culture, artwork and iconic motifs throughout the centre, with an account of the story behind the floor design proudly proclaimed in large text on the wall next to the door to the Preschool.



Figure 166: Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre - Children's Outside Play Area.



Figure 167: Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre – Detail of lattice work



Figure 168: Ngura Yadirirn Children and Family Centre – Explanation of Floor Design

The floor design is explained in large format at the entrance to the centre in the reception foyer of the centre.

Embedded in the floor design of the reception area is a large representation of a waterhole, or ‘rock hole’. From this pool, as a type of “rippling effect”, it is said that learning grows and spreads out through the community. The rock hole also represents the ongoing source of the many phases and levels of Aboriginal education that informs people through their life journey, from childhood through to becoming an elder. The floor then shows trails that lead to the varying learning and development areas of the centre. A blue path leads to the preschool area whilst an ochre yellow track goes into the consultation and staff area. A further ochre trail leads to the Community Area. In that area the floor design has the traditional motifs for people coming together at a meeting place: concentric circles around which are the familiar ‘U’ shapes. Again these symbols are represented in earthen ochre-like colours that are associated with Western Desert Aboriginal cultures.





Figure 169: Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre – Floor Design



Figure 170: Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre – Floor Design





Figure 171: Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre - External Play Area.

There are many Aboriginal motifs in the outdoor play area, which is intended to provide a range of outdoor play spaces that offer cultural learnings. The sandpit area in particular strongly reflects the cultural significance of the marine environment of Ceduna. The most important representation is a mosaic sculpture of the large Southern Right whale, a species that has for millennia regularly migrated through this region of South Australia on the way to breeding grounds at the head of the Great Australian Bight. The whale is a significant Dreaming creature to the Mirning and Wirangu nations that share ownership of the Ceduna coastal region.

There are other Indigenous references and representations throughout the centre, including small frosted prints of whales on all full-length windows. These have been positioned so as to be regularly in line of eyesight of both adults and children. The intention is that the presence of such integrated and prominent Aboriginal symbols will be part of the affirmation and transmission of Aboriginal learnings that takes place in the centre, using culturally appropriate songs, stories, materials and colours.

A distinctive feature of the centre, compared to the other two involved in this study, is the setting up in the foyer of a small sitting area (yarning area), to one side between the entrance door and the reception. There is a variety of reading material on display, including pamphlets about services, health matters and community issues, as well as children's reading books, and there is a TV on the wall, and the toilets are accessible via an adjacent corridor. While not part of the original design, and perhaps not architecturally pleasing, the sitting area appears to serve a very useful function, as a stopping off and organising point in entry/departure, and as a general waiting area which is relaxed and unpressured, and where people can be occupied – and even educated – while waiting.



Figure 172: Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre – Whale motif  
Prints on the full length windows both deter people from walking into them and provide repetition of the local motif.



Figure 173: Ceduna Aboriginal Children and Family Centre - reception foyer.  
The foyer area is able to accommodate a considerable amount of people comfortably

## Post Occupancy Evaluation Findings

### Introduction

Data was gathered at the Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre primarily over a one-week period, with some supplementary follow-up for checking and clarification of data. Data gathering involved structured observation, behaviour mapping, some child-focussed activity and discussions with centre users, Ceduna community members and centre staff, in the form of semi-structured interviews, group discussions and short entrance/exit surveys. A community meeting (attended by approximately 15 people) was held at the centre in conjunction with a playgroup session) devoted two hours to a facilitated in-camera discussion of the centre, from design, educational and cultural perspectives. This involved a yarning circle, reflective small-group discussion and both public poster sheets and private note-paper for people to record their opinions. Overall, not including centre staff, 65 percent of our respondents identified themselves as being of Aboriginal descent. In addition, the research team also checked the centre as built for alignment with the community design recommendations from the Indigenous Design Brief and the DECD Design Standards & Guidelines for Early Childhood Facilities for children from birth to age eight (see Appendix 3).

For both the community meeting and the entrance/exit surveys of centre users, researchers set up on display boards two A2 sheets of paper, one labelled *'What do you like about the centre?'*, and one labelled *What needs to improve?* After discussion with researchers, participants were encouraged to

add notes to each of these sheets as they saw fit, by way of anonymous feedback on the centre that would be used to make any required improvements. There was a generally enthusiastic response to this invitation, with most participants making a contribution. Compared to the two previous centres where we had sought to interview the community about their views on and experience of the centre, we found fewer people at Ceduna able to make time available for an extensive interview, largely due to other family and work time pressures, but also because the majority of them suggested that they could readily encapsulate their views in a few short summary statements. Most people who contributed notes to the poster sheets read through the postings already on display, and their own notes added to that emerging dialogue.

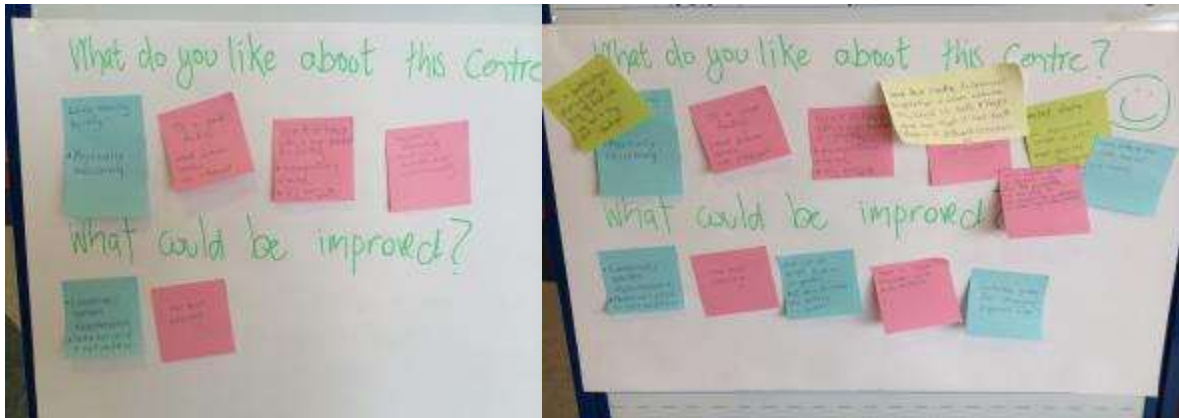


Figure 174: Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre - Data Responses

### Perceptions of the Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre

The general community/users evaluation of the centre was overwhelmingly positive. This not only covered the precinct design and the mix of services it delivered, but also extended to the staff, spontaneously so, since the researchers had explicitly not sought to generate assessments of staff in their discussions. The centre was variously described as 'deadly', 'awesome', 'fantastic', 'incredible' and even 'perfect'. One comment was:

We are spoilt to have such a high standard facility in Ceduna. It is all encompassing. It is a safe and easy place to be.

Many other comments were in a similar vein:

It's a fantastic, bright, welcoming centre to bring my child into. We love to visit, we love to stay.

Love the awesome staff firstly. Love the big high ceiling in the kindy room, such a bright and airy space. Lots of creative ideas for kids' play.

Love this centre, it's spacious, bright and has a warm welcome. My child is safe & happy, and I love that it has multi rooms for playgroup and family education.

There was unanimous acclaim amongst the people we spoke to for the quality of the design and the build. The centre was viewed as being a class above any other building in Ceduna. The centre was seen as imparting, from the point of entry, a sense of light and space and peace and serenity, and the staff were seen as having as much responsibility for that as the architecture itself. Response after response reinforced the idea that the centre was a 'welcoming' and 'safe' place where one could be part of community and educational activity without being 'crowded'.

Interestingly, there were only a few spontaneous comments which explicitly considered the quality of the programs being run at the centre, and these were to the effect that children left the centre being 'stimulated' in their learning, and that the atmosphere was 'creative'.

Similarly, the spontaneous commentary, that is, the initial set of responses from users and community associating with the centre when asked what their thoughts about it were, only occasionally referred to its Aboriginal profile and use. When prompted by researchers, informants did express strong support for the Aboriginal design elements and the accompanying educational possibilities, for example:

You can see Aboriginal story everywhere here, great to see, it's explained, right up there on the wall, so everyone can learn, learn about that, kids can learn about that.

It's like learning paths, like that's the way kids can learn, learn Aboriginal way. We could have more art, more Aboriginal art, community art, kids' art, make learning paths.

There was no clear differentiation of views on the centre between respondents who identified as being of Indigenous descent and non-Indigenous people. The overall assessment from both groups was extremely positive. While all the respondents interviewed gave positive responses to the centre, there were improvements that could be made which were identified. Many were discrete, specific items for correction or improvement, and are covered in the separate sections below. No significant major or conceptual negatives emerged.

### **Entrances**

People can enter the grounds of the Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre through one of two car parks: the main car park accessed from Kelly Street or the Ceduna Area School car park. Over a four day period, 60 percent of arrivals were via the school car park, with 40 percent via the Kelly Street car park. Most of the school car park arrivals were by parents who were also dropping off or picking up children from the school. Ceduna Area School is one of the few public schools in South Australia which provides a car park for parents and they have become accustomed to this privilege. Although the centre car park was provided for DECD employees, official visitors and those holding a disability permit, parents and carers in Ceduna have become accustomed to the provision of on-site parking. The issues of negotiating through car parks with young children that were observed at the centres at Whyalla and Christies Beach were also an issue at Ceduna.

The Kelly Street car park itself is ample for staff and parent use with capacity for 14 cars and an unproblematic entry and exit, there is also an issue with the unsurfaced sandy surrounds and the 15 metre or so unpaved pathway to the entrance of the centre. The path is difficult to negotiate for people with young children and people pushing strollers and needs some immediate attention. Some of the imprints of feet remaining from a bout of wet weather prior to our evaluation suggest that the surface penetration may be dangerous rather than simply inconvenient.





Figure 175: Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre – Entrance from the southern car park

Access from the school car park is also not without its perceived perils. The car park is under intensive use at school commencement and finish times, with vehicles parking both in the centre and the sides of the car park. Congestion is increased when vehicles need to do U-turns at the eastern end of the park so that they can exit to the west. For people walking between the school and the centre along the eastern perimeter of the car park this creates a perception of danger, and causes some discomfort to users of the centre taking this pathway. There is no fence between the pathway to the centre and the edge of the car park, and there is a sense that there is erratic movement of vehicles, as cars move in and out of parking spaces and exiting vehicles move to avoid them.

The concerns regarding transiting between the school and the centre was reiterated numerous times by different respondents and was supported by numerous observations. While the Department for Education and Children's Services state that their 'duty of care' does not extend to car parks, it is important to consider these as an element of CFCs and future designs be developed which reduce the likelihood of injury.

The school and the centre have come to a very sensible arrangement about staggered start and finish times, to facilitate parents with children at both facilities. However, this does not really ameliorate the problem, as parents are still moving along the eastern perimeter of the car park when the school day finishes. The parents concerned have suggested that a fence be erected to protect the pathway from the car park traffic. We recommend that this be investigated and acted upon as appropriate.

Another logistic issue is that the shortest route through to the entrance of the centre from the eastern side is to cut across a garden bed to the paved eastern apron of the centre, by the windows of the Community Area. The set path, as laid out circles more widely around, south of the grassed area, to join up with the main path to the entrance. As a result, many people shortcut the path. This is perhaps a minor issue, but it is not a desirable situation, and could well impact on the perceived privacy of activities taking place in the Community Area. Landscape modification could create a more

direct path from the eastern end of the centre to the entrance to deter people in a hurry from passing too close to the Community Area.

We observed that there was another entrance to the centre, through the door to reception from the middle of the northern side of the building. This is currently out of use and locked, as it is felt that security is compromised if there is a need to monitor a second point of entry/exit to the building. In any case, opening of that entrance may provide for a sense of faster and readier access for users coming from the northern side, but would have no bearing on the traffic problem encountered in movement between the school and centre.



Figures: 176 A & B Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre – Views of southern car park and eastern Ceduna Area School car park.



Figure 177: Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre – Main Entrance

### Signage

While well set-up with signage and information displays internally, there was no external signage for the centre at the time of fieldwork as the final decision for a name for the centre had not been negotiated and agreed upon.

### Administration and Consultation Areas

Despite the lack of signage, the pathways and fencing, guides people clearly into reception. On entry the reception area and the entrance to the preschool / occasional care area is to the left. A central corridor leads past reception to the consulting rooms and administration areas, while the family room is located on the right. The waiting / yarning area is located at reception and clearly signposted toilets are located along a short corridor to the right. There is ample space in the entrance area and the waiting space does not impinge on the movement of people. There is sufficient space in front of the reception desk and in front of the door to the preschool area for people to gather and to exit/enter without a sense of crowding. This makes it possible for parents, guardians and other users of the centre to linger and to socialise in the reception area, without feeling that they are getting in the way, thus assisting in the development of a sense of community amongst the users.

Adjacent to reception is the Director's office. The office doorway faces reception, and there is a window out to the foyer area, as well as a window to the end of the external play area. There is however no view into the preschool, something that might be considered for implementation in future buildings of this type.



Figure 178: Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre – Yarning Area adjacent to reception





Figure 179: Ngura Yedurirn Children and Family Centre - View from Director's office

The shared office area for staff is located down the corridor to the right. It effectively sits behind reception and has a window over the reception area. The room could support up to four desk spaces, and has a meeting table in the middle. During fieldwork, the room was not under intensive use and it remains to be seen how well it will cope with increased occupancy as programs and services expand. On a minor note, it appears that some desks have been moved from their originally intended positions, resulting in power and computer ports being displaced from the working areas on the desks. The resultant safety issues need to be monitored carefully, considering that the centre is an environment in which young children are present.



Figure 180: Ngura Yedurirn Children and Family Centre – View from shared office for service providers.



Two consulting rooms are also provided, situated along the corridor from reception. As in the other centres we reviewed, the consulting rooms are typical clinical settings, and our concerns about their appropriateness are also relevant here. In particular, especially in the case of Aboriginal services, ability to move from the clinical room into an outside setting may be beneficial, and some capacity to access and exit more discreetly than is currently provided for, for example, through an external security door, may be desirable.

The staff room is also located off the corridor. The room is well equipped, bright and spacious by contemporary standards. External doors open out to an outdoor setting. Staff were very pleased with this amenity, as it provided separation from the public and client areas of the centre, was a quiet space where one could relax and regather one's energy and was well suited as a meeting space.



Figure 181: Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre – Staff Room.

### **The Community Centre**

While the delivery of community programs is still in its early development phase at Ceduna, the community centre is in regular use, primarily for baby playgroups, yarning circles, young mothers programs and the like, and the facility appears to be highly valued by its users. It is seen as a bright, comfortable, welcoming and spacious area, and one that is to some degree isolated and insulated from the external world, a kind of personal and cultural sanctuary. Comments about community centre included:

A great space. Open atmosphere. You feel like talking here. Everyone is welcome. You can say things without feeling intimidated.

My kids are looked after. It's free and easy. So you can talk, think.

At the same time, while looking to further multiple uses of the space, users were concerned that greater privacy might be needed for some programs and utilisations, with a sense that the extensive windows might make for too great a visibility on more sensitive occasions. This could be addressed by the fitting of appropriate blinds, and would enhance the capacity of the area for being seen as a suitable location for advancing important issues in the Aboriginal community.

Further, the intention in the design for a flow from the Community Area to an external sitting, socialising and cooking area, around the fireplace, has yet to be fully realised. The external area is not at this stage well planted, and is not, in the eyes of users, very well defined. It has been suggested that some further fencing might better define that external area, and might make it easier to look after young children.

### **The Children's Centre**

As with the other centres that we reviewed, the children's centre at Ceduna consists of the circular activity space with a kitchen, learning space, staff preparation and storage rooms, staff and children's toilets, occasional care area and sleep room and outside play areas. The choice of furniture and materials is consistent with the design principles, with natural materials and organic shapes, and a muted, natural colour palette. The tables and chairs are wooden – a feature noted approvingly by several of our respondents - and there are couches and cushions to sit on. The environment has a very natural and organic feel, and appears welcoming and accommodating, which are all important attributes for Aboriginal community users.

The central activity space functions to allow a range of free choices for children, and there is sufficient room for groups to assemble spontaneously together over exciting activities, and at the same time for children to play in their own space, free from interruption. The teaching staff have established a rich and well-defined variety of activities that give each activity station a clear purpose and a distinct set of developmental/educational outcomes. Children can move readily from one station to another as their interests, attention spans and moment-to-moment needs direct.

All respondents were extremely happy with the design, fit-out and working environment of the children's centre, and many parents commented on how much their children enjoyed being at the centre, and the degree to which they emerged from the day's activities happy and excited. Activity tracking conducted by the research team at different times over several days bore out parents's sense that children were generally stimulated and motivated by the activities presented to them, and engaged in them for suitable periods.

The kitchen is important conceptually to children in respect of both sustenance and family. As in the other centres, the kitchen was designed as an inviting space that is an integral part of the indoor area, and from which staff have a full view of the indoor area. As in the other centres, the kitchen is well designed for preparation, storage and as a teaching area. It is fitted with a child proof barrier that can be opened up at staff discretion, when they can supervise children's activity in there; teaching children in the kitchen is seen by staff as an important educational opportunity.



Figure 182: Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre - Preschool kitchen

The children's toilets have an entry from the internal preschool area and from the external play area. The design and access seems to function well, and no major issues have been identified for them.



Figure 183: Ceduna Children and Family Centre - Preschool/Occasional Care Toilets

The learning room runs off the circular program area, and there are windows into it from the circular area. This room is used for more structured class-based activity, including watching videos as a group, of the type that help prepare children for the more controlled setting of school. There is less capacity for free movement and impulsive behaviour in this smaller space, and staff work to inculcate the appropriate rules. No issues, however, have been identified for this space, and it appears to work as intended.

As with the other centres addressed in this review, the occasional care area is located adjacent to the circular program area and is separated by a glass partition. The National Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standards require the provision of separate facilities for occasional care where this service is provided, but in practice these facilities are likely to be underutilised in Aboriginal Children and Family Centres, given that the separation of younger siblings from their older brothers and sisters is not a practice that is sanctioned in Aboriginal society, where instead brothers, sisters and cousins are expected to look after and tend to younger siblings. Similarly, the sleep room accessed from the occasional care area is rarely used. In all the provision of separate facilities for occasional care appears redundant. Interestingly between our visits in March and June 2014, the sleep room had been furnished with cots.



Figures 38 A & B: Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre – Sleep Room

Between visits to the Centre the sleep room had been furnished with cots. Note the low window to allow children to sleep on mats or cushions on the floor.

The outside play area for children is used extensively and enthusiastically by children, and is viewed by parents as a major defining aspect of the centre. Parents described the design as ‘amazing’, ‘perfect for our kids’, and as something ‘the kids talk about all the time when they’re not there’. There is fluid movement between the internal play area and the external space, with painting and craft activities available under the eaves of the building, and more robust play in the wider outside area. The sand pit, alongside the whale, proved to be a consistently popular locus of activity, with the swings in the far corner coming a close second. When asked to identify their favourite pastime the majority of children would also typically indicate either the sandpit or the swings, but a number of them would simply dart off on a round of the play area, encouraging researchers to follow them from one activity to another.

The outside play area also includes a garden, which children appear to find fascinating, and which can be the stimulus for educational activity, especially in relation to Aboriginal culture and knowledge. The sandpit/whale area is intended to accommodate water play. However, the channels for water run off constantly become silted up with sand, creating blockages and water run-off issues. This needs to be remediated, as water play is a popular activity for children, and given the symbolic Aboriginal cultural importance of the whale.





Figure 184: Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre – Children’s Play Area



Figure 185: Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre – Play Feature

Further, as we have commented above, there is a general absence of shade across the area that limits outside play in the warmer weather. Mature trees are predominantly on the boundary of the outside play area and contribute little to shading it. In addition, while the sandpit is well shaded, children need to cross hot sand and concrete in order to get to it, as there is a gap of several metres between the sandpit roof and the main building. It would be desirable to eliminate this gap, if at all possible, as it would provide for readier utilisation of the external play area in the hot weather.

#### **Other Topics**

Many community members suggested that Aboriginal take up of educational and other services at the centre would be greatly enhanced by the provision of a dedicated bus service, indicating that the centre was otherwise too difficult to get to without your own car, and that taxis were ‘too dear’. The

suggestion was that such a bus service would be both for children attending pre-school and for elders and other community members coming to the centre for Aboriginal meetings and programs. Given that one of the barriers identified preventing access by Indigenous children to preschool is a lack of transport, this issue needs to be considered by the Department for Education and Children's Services.

As with Taikurrendi and Gabmididi Manoo Aboriginal Children and Family Centres, the cost of air conditioning, both summer and winter, was raised as problematic by staff. The particular design of the air conditioning, with limited options for controlling discrete zones in the building, together with the open space nature of much of the building, results in high running costs which, we understand, impact heavily on the centre's operational budget. It remains to be determined to what degree solar panels might reduce this budget impost, but certainly reduced reliance on ubiquitous air conditioning should be a factor for consideration in future. Similar costing questions were asked about the security lighting at night, which staff are concerned is excessively bright and perhaps therefore unnecessarily expensive.

## **PART FOUR: Findings**

### **Introduction**

Across the world, there is an emphasis on early childhood and integrated approaches to learning and care and how to meet the needs of children. How best do we encourage children and young people to lead their own learning and what role can spaces and places play in this? How do we design space which supports inclusive approaches to education enabling children to learn together? How do we reflect the importance of families and communities as key partners in the learning process? How do we increase the contribution that buildings can make to the environment and children's understanding of the impact of their activities on the environment? And, above all, how can we offer buildings and design which inspire?

While much is known about the needs of young children in general, there is a paucity of information on the design of settings for Aboriginal children and their families. The Taikurrendi, Gabmididi Manoo and Ngura Yedurirn Children and Family Centre projects presented opportunities to address the often neglected design issues for Aboriginal peoples with the potential for the centres to be designed, structured and staffed to promote and facilitate the enhancement of Indigenous wellness and provide improved outcomes for Aboriginal children and families.

### **Perceptions of the Centres**

At the three sites, the centres have been welcomed. People's reactions to the design of the centres has been overwhelmingly enthusiastic and the designs have evoked comments from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal users alike such as "beautiful", "awesome", "deadly", "a great place" "welcoming". Each and every person interviewed felt that the centre added aesthetic appeal to the existing environment. Many people felt that a new standard had been placed on the design of preschools in South Australia from the development of these centres.

At each site, the enabling group had independently discussed visions of having 'beautiful' and 'welcoming' and 'inviting' centres for their clients. The Taikurrendi, Gabmididi Manoo and Ngura Yedurirn Children and Family Centre projects have achieved these visions.

Aboriginal people at each site also discussed the importance of their centre being 'an Aboriginal place.' The majority of people interviewed felt that this had occurred. The predominant features of each design which people saw contributing to the centre being an Aboriginal place were:

- The inclusion of large open spaces,
- Seamless connections between the inside and the outside of the buildings.
- Windows,
- The ability to access outdoor areas easily,
- Views to observe people in other areas of the building,
- Informal meeting areas,
- Comfortable seating areas,
- Cultural areas,
- The inclusion of fire pits,
- Floor coverings which conveyed oral history,
- Natural colours,
- Furniture and fittings made from natural materials,
- Visual relief in a close connection to the natural environment,
- A choice of places to retreat for private conversations,
- Plantings of indigenous plants,
- Public art pieces conveying culture, oral histories and legends,

Many the respondents discussed how centres reflected the landscape and culture in which it was set. They saw them as unique environments where both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people could come together. Most Aboriginal people were immensely proud of their culture/s being on display and being able to interpret stories in the design and felt that the importance of Aboriginal spirituality and attachment to the land had been taken into consideration in creating the centres. For some members of the communities, they said that this was one of the first recognitions in their area that their culture was “proud and living”.

Not all non-Aboriginal people using the centres were aware of the cultural significance of the designs of the centres. For some people, the quality of the building had attracted them to become clients of a particular centre. There was a perception that a new and well-designed Children’s centre equated to a higher quality of education. Interestingly, a number of people who voiced these opinions had accessed other services at the centre, after enrolling their child into the preschool. Many non-Aboriginal people using the centres were also not aware that the projects had been developed to service Aboriginal people. Most thought they were a new mainstream development of the Department for Education and Child Development. Conversely, a small number of non-Aboriginal people had enrolled their child into services at each of the centres because they wanted their child to have a grounding and appreciation of Aboriginal cultures.

During the course of discussions with Aboriginal adult users, there were many instances where people indicated the importance of Indigenous staffing at each centre. This was not meant as a criticism of existing staff. Most Aboriginal people interviewed viewed that Aboriginal staff would be in the best position to understand and implement Aboriginal cultural and child rearing practices and support families in a culturally appropriate manner.

At most centres there discussions at community level of the possibility of their centre moving to becoming community controlled organisations. Many Aboriginal participants were interested in a CFC governance model which allowed the local Aboriginal community to govern and determine the protocols or procedures. It appears that the creation of these ‘Aboriginal places’ has provided momentum for the empowerment.

### **The Naming of the Aboriginal Children and Family Centres.**

The naming of place is of fundamental significance in Aboriginal cultures (Mountford 1976) and two of the Aboriginal Children and Family Centres have been given names in Aboriginal languages. The importance of names should not be understated in the Aboriginal world. By naming projects or landscapes they become invested with mental or emotional energy (Stanner 1979) and take on their own entity.

Most people thought the name given to the CFC at Christies Beach was appropriate name to define the centre’s identity. Some of the terms used to describe the name Taikurrendi included: “beautiful”, “deadly”, “excellent”, “well-suited” and “fine”. Sixty percent of the Aboriginal people interviewed thought that the title of the centre should be the ‘Taikurrendi Aboriginal Children and Family Centre’. Many people did not understand why the term ‘Aboriginal’ had been dropped from the name and wanted the term included. Some non-Aboriginal people interviewed could not pronounce Taikurrendi and did not understand the significance of the name.

There was more dissention in Whyalla Aboriginal community regarding the name given to the CFC at that location. Many people had problems pronouncing ‘Gabmididi Manoo’ and did not know the meaning of the name. The underlying reasons appear to be that the centre was named in the early stages of the Barngarla language revival. While community members agreed on the name at the time, in hindsight some people feel that they should have committed more time to the naming process. Everyone interviewed agreed however that the Aboriginal Children and Family Centre



should have a Barngarla name. Again, there were discussions on the loss of the term 'Aboriginal' from the title. Most Aboriginal people interviewed thought that the term should have remained. As there was formerly a preschool adjacent to the current Aboriginal Children and Family Centre, many people call the centre the 'Hincks Avenue Kindy' or the 'Hincks Avenue Childcare'. The Ceduna Children and Family Centre was not officially named until after this study was complete and the authors were unable to ascertain reactions to the choice of name.

### **The Use of the Aboriginal Children and Family Centres**

All of the centres were at capacity or near capacity for their preschool programs during fieldwork. Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre were considering a establishing a priority system to allow Aboriginal children precedence in access to preschool and other services. The children at Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre and Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre were predominately of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent. Exact numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children numbers were not available.

At the Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre, the ratio of Aboriginal children was approximately 50 percent and they reported that Aboriginal enrolments were rapidly growing. The Aboriginal children enrolled at the Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre were reported to be from Wirangu, Mirning, Gugada (alt. sp. Kokatha, Kokata) language groups living in Ceduna with a small number of Aboriginal children attending whose families originated from other regions of South Australia or interstate and now live in Ceduna. It was reported that there no Anangu children were attending the preschool; although according to various sources, many Anangu children stay with their families in Ceduna for extended periods.

At Christies Beach, the delivery of preschool program at the centre has had a flow on effect at the Christies Beach Primary School. The enrolments of Aboriginal children at that primary school have grown from 30 to 50 children since the Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre has been operational. Hincks Avenue Primary School in Whyalla did not report similar flow on effects from the establishment of the Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre. It was reported that the children attending preschool services at the Whyalla centre may be likely to attend other primary schools due to factors such as available bus services. Children enrolled in preschool at the Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre were to be likely to progress to the Ceduna Area School as this was the only public primary school option available in Ceduna.

All of the centres are developing programs or partnering with service providers to deliver services into the centres. Programs include baby play groups and cooking, parenting, teenage mothers' and father classes and TAFE training delivery. Dividing the community centre space into two separate areas allows a crèche to be run or for two classes to be run simultaneously. Some of the centres are encouraging innovative initiatives such as juvenile justice intervention programs to be run out of their centres and are seeing positive outcomes from engaging youth at the centres. Many centres are reported that initially they allowed most groups to book spaces, but now are becoming more selective as demand increases. One centre reported that the primary driver for demand for the community centre space was the absence of fees.

Service delivery through the consultation rooms appears to vary between centres. One consulting room is used at Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre. The room is predominately used for health screening (e.g. baby health and hearing checks, etc.). Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre have two consulting rooms operational. One room is used for health screening while the other has been set up as a counselling space. The latter room is primarily used for counselling by the Family Services Coordinator. Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre have two consulting rooms operational. One is furnished with soft fittings to allow specialised hearing checks while the other is used for other health screening activities.

In discussions with users and other stakeholders, they were generally happy with the type of services delivered out of the ACFCs. At Christies Beach and Whyalla where there are few places the Aboriginal community can gather, Aboriginal community members noted that it was important to build the sense of Aboriginal community by holding informal sessions (e.g. weaving classes, yarnning circles and Elders sessions) and regular community events at the centres. The Aboriginal communities at these two locations would like to see the ACFCs operate as community centres as well as Aboriginal Children and Family Centres.

### **The Design of the Taikurrendi, Gabmididi Manoo and Ceduna ACFCs**

Much of the design recommendations and attitudes contained with the Department for Education and Child Development documentation appear to espouse the Reggio Emilia philosophy. This approach is based on twelve fundamental values. These are:

- The image of the child,
- The hundred languages of children,
- Participation,
- Listening,
- Learning as a process of individual and group construction,
- Educational research,
- Educational documentation,
- Progettazione,
- Organisation,
- Environment, spaces and relations,
- Professional development and
- Assessment (Reggio Emilia Australia Information Exchange 2011).

In particular, the Reggio Emilia philosophy (Reggio Emilia Australia Information Exchange 2011) suggests interior and exterior spaces for babies and young be designed in interconnected forms that foster interaction, autonomy, explorations, curiosity and communication and are offer places for children and adults to research together. The environment should be able to be modified by the projects and experiences of the children and adults. Thus a constant dialogue between architecture and education is created. Aesthetically pleasing environments, furniture, objects and activity spaces generates psychological wellbeing, as well as a sense of familiarity and belonging are promoted. In particular, the environment is recognised for its potential to inspire children. Hence, the environment is designed to be filled with natural light, order and beauty. Under such an approach, the environment is designed to have adequate storage to open spaces free from clutter. No centre designed under the Reggio Emilia philosophy will look the same; each will develop its own identity dependent on the context, location, users and the available resources.

In many ways, the philosophies of Reggio Emilia for the design of spaces mirrored the visions that Aboriginal stakeholders had for the centres. In initial consultations, Enabling Groups defined visions for centres. Commonly the visions articulated were environments which are beautiful exemplar environments committed to people coming together. Enabling groups wanted centres which were culturally welcoming, culturally appropriate, emphasised natural elements, followed the cues of the land and lore and were child-friendly and focused. In creating Aboriginal spaces, the Enabling Groups talked about creating culturally significant places for Aboriginal people to heal and learn. While there are some cosmetic similarities between the appearances of the three different centres, each has been designed and is evolving its own unique identity. The layout and design of the centres meet the current needs of the users and are likely to meet a growing cohort of children and families for some time to come.

Spaces for children need to have considerable flexibility to adapt to varying circumstances. There appear to be a number of requirements currently contained in the DECD briefs which may need

further consideration in regard to Aboriginal Children and Family centres. Taikurrendi, Gabmididi Manoo and Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centres are operating as integrated centres where children from various age groups intermingle. In integrated centres, the need for separate occasional care spaces should be questioned. It may be more useful to have a larger activity space with several quiet spaces adjacent so that young children can be separated if and when required.

The replication of facilities also needs to be questioned. For example, if a separate occasional care area is required then perhaps the kitchen of the preschool could be shared with occasional care. It appears uneconomical to have two kitchens within short distance from each other. The Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre has been the only one of the three centres to fence off a separate outside play area for children. The area is rarely used and appears to be a loss of space and a waste of resources. The sleep room is only used for that purpose at the Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre. At this location, the sleep room has been recently furnished with a number of cots. Given the original discussions at enabling group level for the project to incorporate Aboriginal child rearing practices, and the installation of low windows so that children could sleep on the floor, the introduction of cots was a little disappointing. The DECD criteria currently state that a sleeping room is required. This should be reviewed for Aboriginal Children and Family Centres. It is likely that a smaller area that could double as a quiet play area is all that is required.

The learning rooms are essential spaces. At Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre, the learning room doubled as a quiet play space. The additional space for children added to the sense of calm in the preschool. The installation of technical equipment within children's reach at Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre meant that children needed to be excluded from the room when there was no adult supervision. Consideration of the type of equipment should be made and how can be installed to enable the learning room to double as play spaces as required for future projects.

The design of the outside play areas have been well received by children, parents, carers and staff and were described as 'innovative' and 'exciting.' The public art components in the outside play areas conveying Aboriginal legends and cultural information have been very well received. Aboriginal parents and carers stated that they were "essential parts of the play area for Aboriginal children." The play spaces emphasise natural materials and allow children to interact and shape their environment.

Parents and carers were impressed by the outside play areas at all three centres. It appeared very important that children were able to be free to feel, touch, dig, eat, climb, roll, run, hide and pretend. The retention of mature trees means the play areas change with the seasons, the weather and from the manner in which the children use the space. There needs to be a revision of design for water features to allow them to be used without continual maintenance. The sand pit was the most popular play feature for children at each location. It was noted that the sandpit needs to be located with adequate shade close to the entry to the preschool.

The community centres were seen as innovative and useful spaces by the people we interviewed. The Aboriginal community at Christies Beach is very attached to the space and are eager to use it for a range of functions. The orientation of the community centre at the Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre meant there was often a great deal of glare affecting the capacity to use the room for certain purposes. The room also faces the street and the entrance and lacks privacy. More thought could be made to locating the community centre rooms to enable adequate privacy for both the room and the outside cultural area.

### **Planning and Consultation Processes**

The development of the South Australian Aboriginal Children and Family Centres at Christies Beach, Ceduna and Whyalla took a different approach to consultation processes used in other states and

territories. The establishment of an Aboriginal Early Childhood Development Team with Aboriginal representation to oversee the projects was an excellent method of commencing consultation. The team was required to conduct a variety of tasks such as the selection of school sites. The Aboriginal Early Childhood Development Team appears to have conducted a thorough needs based analysis in regard to the locations of the ACFCs.

The next stage was to appoint Community Development Coordinators (CDCs) for Christies Beach, Whyalla and Ceduna. Aboriginal people with existing standing in each community were appointed to each position. The CDC's role was to lead local Aboriginal community engagement in the development and use of the Aboriginal Children and Family Centres and to establish both Stakeholder and Aboriginal Parent Advisory Groups. The Stakeholder and the Aboriginal Parent Advisory Groups were to be responsible for making key decisions regarding the location of the centre and the design of building. From our discussions, the tasks assigned to CDCs in the early stages were challenging. Presenting new and yet unseen projects to the various (often over-consulted) Aboriginal communities concerned was difficult. Establishing partnerships with stakeholders and parent/carer groups was also difficult as the nature of projects were still evolving.

Consultation with Aboriginal organisations and individuals at community level is complex. Many communities have been over-consulted and are sceptical and wary of government organisations. Aboriginal community operated organisations and early childhood services in some locations viewed the ACFCs as competition to their programs and possible future funding. Gathering together parent/carer groups was extremely difficult a year or more in advance of proposed services delivery. In some instances, relationships between Aboriginal family members and communities were strained as a result of the consultation process. It is important for Government agencies to understand that in appointing Aboriginal people to complete consultation processes that their personal relationships be affected and they may be placed in invidious situations.

The people appointed to the CDC roles all had extensive experience in education and community consultation but lacked building project management experience or experience in developing an architectural project. The appointment of a specialist consultant to conduct participatory planning exercises, identify best practice examples and the Indigenous design considerations for each project addressed this skill-set deficiency.

It is to be commended that the CDCs took responsibility and ownership of the individual projects and worked cohesively as a group to support each other. They were required to gain a multitude of additional skill-sets in short periods of time to be able to manage their responsibilities. As the projects reached planning and construction phase, DECD assets project managers were appointed. The parties were located in different locations and the communications required to co-manage a complex project were at times difficult. In some instances, there were misunderstandings regarding the responsibility of each party.

As the projects were constructed, ACFC Directors were appointed at each location and the line management of the CDCs changed with them reporting directly to the ACFC Director. At this point, the CDC's autonomy was reduced and they were required to enter in joint decision making processes. As one might expect, there were instances where this arrangement was difficult for both parties.

In future projects, other staffing models could be considered. The roles could be split and various people could responsible for:

- Aboriginal community liaison for program development
- Building of relationships with stakeholders,
- Project supervision.



For the duration of future projects it is important that DECD to consider appointing:

- An on-site project officer with building expertise and community consultation experience to manage the project until practical completion/handover to the ACFC Director,
- A specialist consultant to complete participatory planning consultations, identify indigenous design considerations and work with the community and design team.

### **Construction Materials**

The three centres are steel framed structures with concrete slabs on ground. The external materials are a combination of rendered and painted lightweight masonry wall panels and corrugated Zinalume wall cladding and predominantly corrugated Zinalume roofing. Internal linings are a combination of painted plasterboard and stained plywood panelling.

Some of the Aboriginal people consulted stated that they would prefer that materials for the building did not include Zinalume. Historically, corrugated iron has been used as a material for the remote and rural Aboriginal housing and institutional buildings and some Aboriginal people associate the material with poor quality housing of the missionary era. Other people felt the use of Zinalume defined the buildings as contemporary and striking pieces of architecture. Distinctive Australian architecture is recognisable from the rural icons of 'the Queenslander', the 'wool shed' and the 'beach house' which have developed in response to climate, history, place and identity. Characteristically, these designs use local materials and corrugated iron and emphasise space and light as well as a connection to the landscape. The types of materials to be used need more consultation in future projects. In this study, we found materials with 'natural' finishes were highly admired. For example the stained plywood acoustic panels installed in the preschool areas were seen to be 'natural'.

It is also important that each Aboriginal Children and Family Centre have a distinct Aboriginal identity that references the history and culture of the language group where it is located. Developing an 'archetypal' design for Aboriginal Children and Family Centres as commissioned by the Department of Education, Western Australia and constructed at Middle Swan and Clayton View appears to be a flawed approach to the design of an Aboriginal Children and Family Centre. It does not take into account the need to develop an individual identity for each project and does not appear to respect or acknowledge the diversity of Aboriginal cultures.

### **Functional Relationships**

The Department for Education and Child Development currently uses a functioning relationships diagram (see figure 175) to assist with the design and planning of early childhood centres. In our observations and in discussions with users, it appears that there needs to be a number of minor changes to use this model to adequately design an ACFC.

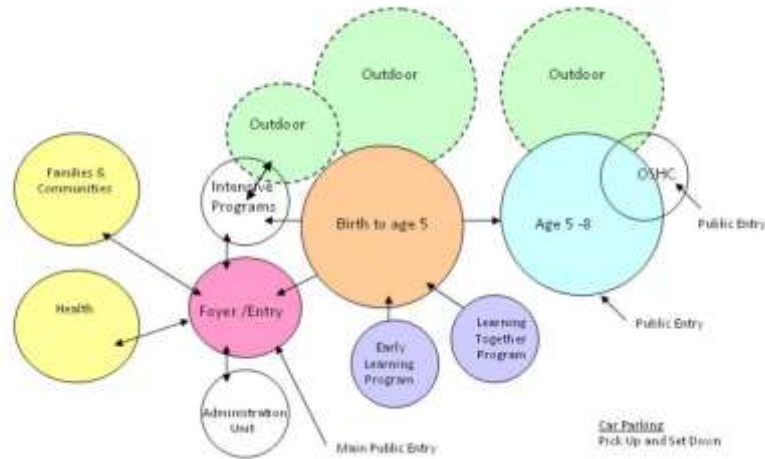


Figure 186: Functioning Relationships Diagram for SA Early Childhood Facilities (birth to age 8)  
(Source: DECD Design Standards and Guidelines)

On consideration, the following changes are suggested:

- The Aboriginal centres are integrated so all children should be shown together with an overlap into the external space.
- There needs to be visual link between the Director's Office and the Children's space.
- Family/communities and health should have external areas and these should be linked to the internal areas.
- Public toilets should be shown on the functional diagram and these should have a close connection to the reception and should be on the route to the families/community and health areas.
- There needs to be an alternative egress for Family/communities and health

### Timelines

The Department for Education and Child Development noted that there were a number of key timelines for achieving the requirements of the Indigenous Early Childhood Development National Partnership. The 2010 DECD Fact Sheet on Aboriginal Children and Family Centres (see Appendix 2) notes that to meet the National Partnerships deadlines, South Australia would need to:

- Select school sites by April 2010,
- Establish Stakeholder and Parent Advisory Groups by April 2010,
- Appoint Community Development Coordinators by April 2010,
- Undertake a feasibility study & building design by June 2010,
- Appoint Family Services Coordinators by December 2010,
- Commence construction by 2010, and
- Centres operational by the end of 2011.

For various reasons, design teams were not engaged on the projects until mid-2011. To achieve funding milestones, timelines became extremely tight and periods to engage in consultation and design were limited. Despite these constraints the projects were delivered in a timely manner.

### Building and Construction Procurement Method

Procurement systems can be categorised as traditional, design and construct, management and collaborative. The choice of a building and construction procurement method is generally made with consideration of the client resources, project characteristics, ability to make changes, cost issues and deadlines. In the first instance, the Government of South Australia, Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI) were engaged to develop concept plans for the Taikurrendi,

Gabmididi Manoo and Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre projects under a traditional procurement method.

In the traditional approach, the client accepts that the design work will be separate from construction and consultants are appointed for design and cost control and builders are responsible for carrying out the works. This responsibility extends to all workmanship and materials, and includes all work by subcontractors and suppliers. The contractor is usually appointed by competitive tendering on complete information, but may if necessary be appointed earlier by negotiation on the basis of partial or notional information. Typically, the architect supervises the construction. Traditional procurement has a number of advantages in that there is design certainty and greater cost control prior to awarding a construction contract, greater control over quality or specialist design spaces and it is most tried and tested procurement method.

The preliminary documentation for the three centres was completed by DPTI and approval for expenditure given by the Public Works Parliamentary Committee. The Department for Education and Child Development then decided to change the delivery strategy and move to a design and construct model. Design and construct is a project delivery method where the contractor takes responsibility for both the design and construction of the project based on a concept and requirements specified by the client. The contractual merger of design and construction activities has the potential to reduce the project delivery time in some cases as construction work can be started early as a great deal of detailed design can proceed in parallel.

The design team from the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI) (those responsible for the original concept design) then stepped away the project when the consortia won the tenders for the projects. While the landscape architects responsible for the concept design were retained, they were not involved in further consultation with the Aboriginal users and stakeholders. The move to the design and construct method was described as 'problematic' for some parties already involved in the project. The issue in using a design and construct model in this instance was that pre-existing relationships between the design teams and the Aboriginal clients ceased. Designers involved with the Taikurrendi, Gabmididi Manoo and Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre projects had invested personally in the project. Each designer interviewed discussed the capacity of the projects to have positive impacts on the lives of the Children and Families that used them and their commitment for excellent outcomes. While projects were delivered to DECD and Commonwealth Government deadlines, it was felt that further development of the designs could have occurred and the design outcomes may have been enhanced.

### **Procurement of Furniture, Fittings and Equipment**

Furniture, fittings and equipment play an essential role in the use and operation of buildings. In addition to contributing to how people perceive and feel about a building, they are often necessary to achieve the functional requirements programmed for interior spaces. In essence, appropriate furniture and furnishings reinforce the design concept of the building. The procurement and installation of furniture, fittings and equipment was an important and essential activity in the establishment of ACFCs. Items purchased needed to fit with the design ethos, operational and occupational safety and health requirements of each ACFC.

A number of specialist skills are required for a successful procurement of furniture, fittings and equipment. These include:

- Technical knowledge of furniture products and materials,
- Ability to define furniture, fittings and equipment requirements,
- Ability to develop appropriate furniture, fittings and equipment solutions,
- Ability to prepare accurate cost estimates,
- Knowledge of procurement options and procedures and

- Knowledge of furniture and fittings installation practices.

Ideally, consideration should also be given to sustainable procurement. This means that when buying goods there will be a consideration of the strategies to avoid unnecessary consumption and manage demand, minimising environmental impacts of the goods and services over the whole-of-life of the goods and services, suppliers' socially responsible practices including compliance with legislative obligations to employees and the value for money over the whole-of-life of the goods, rather than just initial cost.

In the development of the Taikurrendi, Gabmididi Manoo and Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centres, the procurement of furniture, fittings and equipment was the responsibility of the Director and the CDC. A set budget was developed for each centre and Directors were responsible for the budget allocation and procurement. The services of an interior designer was available should staff seek it.

Procurement is a specialist activity, typically conducted by an interior designer to ensure the furniture, fittings and equipment fit with the design. Generally the specialist is able to source products and has buying power and leverage due to industry exposure and experience. In the course of this study, a number of the people involved with procurement discussed the issues of buying power and lack of choice when purchasing from regional locations. It would have been a difficult task to procure the furniture, fittings and equipment for each ACFC, even more difficult if the designated person did not possess the necessary skillset. The quality of the furniture and fittings purchased for the ACFCs are predominately of good quality and generally fit with the conceptual designs. The furniture, fitting and equipment purchased for Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre in particular is a testament to the dedication of the staff involved and was completed with the assistance of an interior designer. The level of detail given to the purchase of the most minor items (such as the choice of Aboriginal wooden artefacts as children's toys) shows a high level of commitment to creating an Aboriginal environment which is culturally welcoming, natural, exploratory and inclusive. The Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre appears to be over furnished, resulting in some areas appearing cluttered. There was an existing preschool at Whyalla and some of the existing furniture and fittings were brought into the new centre. Many of the items do not enhance the ethos of a natural, calm and relaxed environment.

It is important that each ACFC develop its own identity with furniture, fittings and equipment purchased for the locations and local Aboriginal people be involved in the procurement process so that locally made Aboriginal items or symbolic artefacts are included in ACFCs, however this is an area for specialist assistance.

### **Public Art**

The marriage of public art and architecture has the capacity to animate the experience of a building and provide important touchstones for the sense of place and legibility to create a positive experience of space. Through a combination of architectural design, landscape design and public art 'place making' occurs and projects are enhanced.

Place making is of critical importance in Aboriginal architectural projects. A place has social, political, spatial and temporal characteristics; its specialness as opposed to its ordinariness is defined by the interplay of these characteristics. Place making is a conscious negotiation of this interplay, to emphasise those elements, or create new elements which are special, positive and unique and understate elements that are negative. The place making process has both objective and subjective criteria. Some elements, such as the behaviour of the sun or whether a place floods can be considered objective criteria, while others such as the value of an historical monument or the aesthetic value of a garden require subjective judgements. A place can be imbued with a sense of belonging, excitement or respite. Interpreting and reflecting the social and political mood of a place,



public art is often a process of infusing places with stories of historical and community significance and especially the history and cultures of the original custodians.

The use of public art has been crucial to the success of the Taikurrendi, Gabmididi Manoo and Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre projects. Overwhelming, the respondents involved in this study discussed the importance of the various art pieces in each of the projects. The pieces were seen to have enhanced community ownership, increased the aesthetic appeal and provided prompts for the passing on of oral traditions. Many people thought that more art pieces would be “deadly”.

The use of Indigenous signs and symbols as sources of inspiration for the architectural design in Aboriginal Children and Family Centres assists Indigenous people to perceive that the staff and the centre are sensitive and aware of Indigenous cultures. It is known that architectural symbolism (literal or implied) should only result from an informed and culturally-appropriate design process and the signs and symbols should be appropriate for the users and other people (including Aboriginal people from other language groups) visiting the centre. The use of the Seven Sisters Dreaming story has been controversial at Whyalla. Although there was extensive consultation on the portrayal of the story within the building and Elders emphasised the importance of children knowing the legend, Aboriginal people from other areas have deemed the Seven Sisters inappropriate content to be portrayed within an Aboriginal Children and Family Centre. This example indicates the importance of extensive consultation and the early involvement of artists.

The Taikurrendi, Gabmididi Manoo and Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre projects have shown the capacity to which Aboriginal clients embrace having their cultures and stories expressed in various art forms. From this perspective, all centres have shown the capacity of public art to enhance the Children and Family Centre concept.

### **Processes for Public Art**

An arts coordinator was engaged to work with Aboriginal artists for the Taikurrendi, Gabmididi Manoo and Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre projects. The budget for the public art component was limited in comparison to similar projects with a proportion of the arts budget coming from a funding body.

It is generally critical to engage the arts coordinator during concept design phase in Indigenous architecture projects. The artists and the design team can then work collaboratively to integrate art works into the concept design and architecture. There are large bodies of Aboriginal environmental knowledge and cognitive styles and meaning systems, which provide capacity for generating semantic ideas for architectural expression. By working collaboratively, Aboriginal people are able to define their collective identity through participation. The involvement of artists at an early stage also has benefits to the design team. They may be alerted to site specific environmental phenomena or Indigenous knowledge that may become other design generators. In the South Australian projects, the arts coordinator did not commence work on the project until the concept design was almost at completion.

Certain issues arose in the public art process. The arts coordinator noted that it was difficult to locate artists in some areas. At one location, the CDC worked unpaid as an artist on the project due to the lack of other artists in the area. Typically, arts coordinators work with the artists in a series of workshops, identifying projects and ways of transferring work in various mediums into architectural components. By this method, layers of meaning are built up in the project. While this was accomplished to some degree, the artists and others involved in the public art process felt that they could have achieved more had they had additional funding and time.

## Conclusion

One strategy for tackling Aboriginal disadvantage has been through education. From a health perspective, it has been found for every year of education an Aboriginal person receives one additional year is added to their life (NSW Department of Education and Training 2004) and education is seen as a mechanism to close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal life expectancies and improve the socio economic position of Aboriginal people in Australian society.

Participation in education from an early age can have a number of benefits. The centre for Community Child Health (2000) reviewed studies of various methods in addressing the risk factors in early childhood associated with adverse outcomes and found that participation in a preschool program promotes cognitive development in the short term and prepares children to succeed in school and preschool experience appears to be a stronger positive force in the lives of low income than advantaged children (Boocock 1995).

It is important to have places where Aboriginal people can engage with education without apprehension. In developing facilities for Aboriginal people, there must be recognition of the diverse nature of Indigenous cultures. Each design project must be approached independently, in order to recognise the scores of cultures which exist amongst Indigenous people (as well as non-Indigenous people) across Australia. There is no one solution. It is important to build a social profile of the users to understand their composition in terms of distinct cultural groups. 'Aboriginalising' projects is vitally important but it must be directed and monitored by the Indigenous community.

The main lesson to be learnt from the experiences of developing Taikurrendi, Gabmididi Manoo and Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centres is that Aboriginal involvement in the process is essential. Involvement must be drawn from Aboriginal staff, parents and caregivers, traditional owners, local leaders and representatives from Aboriginal organisations. Building and maintaining relationships based on trust is vitally important for Government agencies engaging with Aboriginal people and organisations. To achieve design outcomes suitable and accepted by the community, a consistent network of people communicating and consulting throughout the design and construction phases is vitally important. Ultimately what is most symbolic and powerful about the meaning of the Aboriginal Children and Family Centres for people is that they participated in the process whereby the building came about and were involved in the place-making and creative thinking that generated the complex. This element may be more important in making an 'Aboriginal' building than any design elements. Such processes take time and often frustrate those with deadlines.

It seems obvious that the types of environments that children and their educators inhabit will affect not only what they learn but also the ways in which they learn. Many learning environments in the past have been built as a reflection of a model for learning where a homogeneous group of children are placed in a confined space for a set period ensure they have learned a predetermined curriculum and move them to the next cycle of the education system. Many people, designers and educators have called this model and the environments that accompany it into question, as it perpetuates a linear and predictable image of learning. The Department for Education and Child Development and the various Aboriginal stakeholders have invested considerable time and energy to develop Taikurrendi, Gabmididi Manoo and Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centres as exemplar projects in the design for Aboriginal Children and Families. The projects richly deserve the awards they have won (the Isis Group won the Excellence in a Commercial Building \$2-5M category for Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre and Outerspace Architects were awarded the Highly Commended Award in the Education and Care Services category of the 2014 Kidsafe Playspace Awards for their designs for the three Aboriginal Children's and Family Centres). The Taikurrendi, Gabmididi Manoo and Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centres are precedents for the future, where facilities will be designed for Aboriginal children and families that reflect preferred Indigenous lifestyles and child

rearing practices is a respectful way and respond to the cultural identity and spirituality of Indigenous children and their families.

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Appendix 1: List of Aboriginal Children and Family Centres by State/Territory.

<b>Victoria</b>
Whittlesea Children and Family Centre
Bairnsdale Children and Family Centre
<b>New South Wales</b>
Ballina Aboriginal Children and Family Centre
Brewarrina and Lightning Ridge Children and Family Centres
Gunnedah Children and Family Centre
Toronto Children and Family Centre
<b>Queensland</b>
Cairns Children and Family Centre
Doomadgee Children and Family Centre
Ipswich Children and Family Centre
Logan Children and Family Centre
Mareeba Children and Family Centre
Mornington Island Children and Family Centre
Mount Isa Children and Family Centre
Palm Island Children and Family Centre
<b>Western Australia</b>
Roebourne Children and Family Centre
Swan Region Children and Family Centre
Fitzroy Crossing Children and Family Centre
Halls Creek Children and Family Centre
Kununurra Children and Family Centre
<b>Northern Territory</b>
Palmerston Child and Family Centre
Yuendumu Child and Family Centre
Gunbalanya Child and Family Centre
Ngukurr Children and Family Centre
Maningrida Child and Family Centre!
<b>South Australia</b>
Ceduna Children and Family Centre
Christies Beach Children and Family Centre
Ernabella Children and Family Centre
Whyalla Children and Family Centre
<b>Tasmania</b>
Bridgewater Children and Family Centre
Geeveston Children and Family Centre

## Appendix 2: Department for Education and Children's Services (SA) 2010 Fact Sheet.



**Aboriginal  
Children  
and Family  
Centres**

A Council of Australian Governments Closing the Gap initiative



### Aboriginal Children and Family Centres - Fact Sheet

#### The Indigenous Early Childhood Development National Partnership

The Indigenous Early Childhood Development National Partnership (IECDNP) brings the Commonwealth and State Governments together to plan to improve the early childhood outcomes of Aboriginal children and to make sure they get the best start in life.

The IECDNP has 3 parts:

- Element 1: Integration of early childhood services through Aboriginal Children and Family Centres
- Element 2: Increased access to Antenatal care, Pre-pregnancy and Teenage Sexual and Reproductive health
- Element 3: Increased access to, and use of Maternal and Child Health Services by Aboriginal families

The Department of Education & Children's Services is leading Element 1 and the Department of Health is leading Elements 2 and 3. Both departments are working together.

#### What is an Aboriginal Children and Family Centre?

Aboriginal Children and Family Centres aim to improve the learning, health and wellbeing of Aboriginal children by increasing access to integrated child care, preschool, health and family support services.

The Aboriginal Children and Family Centres will be a place for children and families to connect, grow and learn together, reflecting and strengthening Aboriginal identity within the wider community.

The centres are funded by the Australian Government through the Indigenous Early Childhood Development National Partnership.

#### Where will the centres be located?

Four centres are being developed in South Australia at Ceduna, Whyalla, Christies Beach/Noarlunga and Pukatja on the APY Lands.

The Aboriginal Children and Family Centres will be located at a school in these locations. Having the centre at a school means that the services a parent might need for their children and for themselves can all be at one place.

#### Why do we need an Aboriginal Children and Family Centre in our community?

Ceduna, Whyalla, Christies Beach/Noarlunga and Pukatja each has a significant Aboriginal population with a high number of families with babies and young children. They also already have some existing services that can work together with the new centre to meet the needs of the community. More services mean that children and families have more choice about the services they attend.

Aboriginal people have said '*Agencies working together for Aboriginal children and families is what works best for the whole community*'.

Evidence tells us that 'Closing the Gap' in health, education and social wellbeing increases an Aboriginal child's life opportunities. Children and Family Centres will help give children in your community the best start.

#### What will be available from the Aboriginal Children and Family Centres?

Young children and parents can use early childhood development services and schools as places where children can learn, grow and develop.

Early childhood programs will cater for children from birth to five years old and their families and offer programs such as:

- Early Childhood Education and Child Care Services
- Child Health Screening
- Occasional Care & Crèche Programs
- Playgroups
- Parenting programs for families
- Family support services
- Consulting rooms for visiting specialists

#### When will the Aboriginal Children and Family Centres be ready for families?

During the first half of 2010, the Aboriginal Children and Family Centres will be planned with the community through the Stakeholder Group.

Building of the new centres will commence in late 2010 and continue throughout 2011.

Some programs and services can get underway during the second half of 2010 when the sites have been identified. A Community Development Coordinator and a Family Services Coordinator will be employed in 2010 to start working with families and agencies in your community.





## Aboriginal Children and Family Centres

A Council of Australian Governments Closing the Gap initiative



### What is the role of Community Development Coordinators and Family Services Coordinators?

Community Development Coordinators (CDCs) work from a strengths based approach and lead local Aboriginal community engagement in the development and use of the Aboriginal Children and Family Centres.

The CDC provides opportunities for parent participation and involvement in planning for the centre, link in with existing services, programs and projects, and engage families in employment, training and volunteering.

Family Services Coordinators specialise in helping families to get the support, advice and referral to other services that they might need.

They can provide good advice about programs and services for you and your family and help you connect with them.

Applicants for these positions are required to be registered with Aboriginal Employment Initiatives (AEI). Contact Minnie Walters, Employment Broker on 8463 5541 or freecall number 1800 627 849.

### Who will make decisions about the Aboriginal Children and Family Centres?

The Department of Education and Children Services (DECS) will lead the establishment of a Stakeholder Group and an Aboriginal Parent Advisory Group in 2010.

The Stakeholder Group will be responsible for making key decisions about the centres in partnership with the Aboriginal Parent Advisory Group and with representatives from state and commonwealth governments and non-government agencies.

Some of the important decisions that the Stakeholder Group and the Aboriginal Parent Advisory Group will be a part of are deciding which school the centre will be located at, what services the children and families need and what the building will look like.

### What are the key timelines?

There are a number of key timelines for achieving the requirements of the Indigenous Early Childhood Development National Partnership:

- Select school sites by April 2010
- Establish Stakeholder and Parent Advisory Groups by April 2010
- Appoint Community Development Coordinators by April 2010

- Undertake a feasibility study & building design by June 2010
- Appoint Family Services Coordinators by December 2010
- Commence construction by 2010
- Centres operational by the end of 2011

### How will families and agencies get information?

Information sessions started in November 2009 and will continue until the end of February 2010.

Aboriginal Community Leadership workshops will be offered throughout 2010 to support families to be involved. Regular newsletters and information updates will be provided from the stakeholder group meetings.

Community information sessions will be held in each location each term.

South Australia's planning for the Aboriginal Children and Family Centres has been outlined in an implementation plan which will soon be available on the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) website.

### Who to contact for more information

The DECS Aboriginal Early Childhood Development Team is leading the project to develop the Aboriginal Children and Family Centres:

Debbie Moyle: (08) 8463 7505  
email: [debbie.moyle@sa.gov.au](mailto:debbie.moyle@sa.gov.au)

Megan Hickman: (08) 8226 1750  
email: [megan.hickman@sa.gov.au](mailto:megan.hickman@sa.gov.au)

### Other Contacts

#### For the Ceduna and Whyalla centres contact:

DECS Port Lincoln office: (08) 8682 3788  
DECS Whyalla Office: (08) 8645 6568  
Country Health (Early Childhood): (08) 8226 7018

#### For the Christies Beach/Noarlunga centre contact:

DECS Southern Metropolitan Office: (08) 8207 3700  
Southern Adelaide Health Service: (08) 8201 7801

#### For the Pukatja centre contact:

DECS Far North & Aboriginal Lands Regional Office at Northgate on: (08) 8359 4626

Department for Families & Communities: APY Programs West: (08) 8413 8134

National Partnerships: Indigenous Early Childhood Development [www.coag.gov.au/coag\\_meeting\\_outcomes/2008-10-02/docs/indigenous\\_early\\_childhood\\_NPA.pdf](http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2008-10-02/docs/indigenous_early_childhood_NPA.pdf)

Appendix 3: Department for Education and Children's Services (SA) Early Childhood Facilities  
(birth – 8 years) Design Standards and Guidelines



Government  
of South Australia

Department of Education  
and Children's Services

# EARLY CHILDHOOD FACILITIES (birth to age 8)

## DESIGN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES





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# PREFACE

## Early Childhood Facilities

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The Early Childhood Facilities (birth to age 8) Design Standards and Guidelines inform the planning and design of new early childhood facilities and the redevelopment of existing facilities. The guidelines support the delivery of integrated education, care, health and family programs / services for children from birth to age eight and are inclusive of Children's Centres for *early childhood development and parenting*, *preschools*, *child parent centres*, *school based preschools* and *rural integrated services*.

The guidelines reflect the state government's commitment to a holistic approach to service provision for young children and families and draw on the expertise of early childhood practitioners and policy makers across government.

These guidelines inform the design of high quality facilities that enable the effective delivery of connected, continuous programs and services into the early years of school.

Any reference to 'parents' in this document refers also to carers and legal guardians.

This document provides schedules of accommodation applicable to early childhood facilities of various sizes and types and general descriptions of basic provisions and room information, including suggested layouts that have proved successful.

In some areas the requirements are prescriptive as indicated by the word "shall" where it is important to comply with specific details for safety, security, compliance with licensing regulations, adherence to National Quality Standards to enable a site to achieve a high quality rating, maintenance or performance reasons.

Facilities are all required to comply with the Building Code of Australia and relevant Australian Standards, and in some instances to higher standards where specifically identified in this document for particular agency requirements.

Other agency policy, standards and guidelines documents are referenced in this document where more detailed information is provided on particular aspects of facilities requirements.

## The Learning Environment in Prior to School Settings

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Prior to school settings are inclusive of children in early learning and care programs and their families. These settings may include preschool, long day care, occasional care, integrated services and children's centres. In some sites provision is made for the integration of a range of health services, community support services and other programs including children with disabilities. Children attending programs provided in these settings can be 3 months up to six years of age.

The Learning Environment and planned curriculum is guided by The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, *Belonging, Being and Becoming*. The vision encapsulated in the Framework is that 'All children experience learning that is engaging and build success for life.'

Young children's learning is dynamic, complex and holistic. It is crucial that the physical, social, emotional, personal, spiritual, creative, cognitive and linguistic aspects of learning are all intricately interwoven and interrelated. Each child needs spaces where they can feel safe, secure and supported as well as developing a sense of belonging to a group and engaging in positive relationships with both their peers and educators.

The learning environment needs to cater for different learning styles and capabilities. Welcoming spaces that reflect and enhance the lives of children and families participating in the centre are crucial.

### Implications for planners:

- Learning environments must be responsive and enabling to the needs of children as well as to the intention of the educators
- Environments that support children to explore using all their senses and develop dispositions for learning such as curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity, persistence and imagination are important
- Indoor and outdoor spaces must be flexible and responsive to the interests and rights of individual children and this includes access to quiet spaces for thinking and wondering and more active spaces for sharing, laughing, building, climbing, digging, gardening, creating, dancing and being active
- There needs to be opportunity for children to make choices and develop autonomy and independence, being encouraged and supported to make more complex decisions and follow through on their interests and ideas
- The indoor and outdoor learning environment must provide a range of spaces and opportunities for active exploration through play and the investigation of meaningful ideas including investigation with a range of technological resources and being able to problem solve, inquire, experiment, hypothesise, research and investigate
- Children need a range of spaces to be able to fully engage in all forms of The Arts
- Educators need quiet and private spaces to meet, discuss, reflect and plan for children's learning.



**Recent research from Reggio Emilia** regarding environments lists the following aspects as being important in the development of learning environments for children.

**They are:**

- **Aesthetics:** a place that has beauty and light and reflects the lives and interests of the people who occupy the space
- **Active learning:** supported by a stimulating environment that offers choices and a range of open-ended materials
- **Collaboration:** supporting children to develop skills for working with others in group situations
- **Bringing the outdoors in:** attention on the importance of the natural world in children's lives and learning
- **Flexibility:** fosters flexibility of space, time and materials within the environment
- **Relationship:** the importance of the relationship of materials to other materials, of people and groups using the centre and the connections between children's experiences and theory
- **Reciprocity:** the environment is not static but responsive to the needs of children and their interests

**Each setting will be unique as it reflects the personalities of the children, educators and families who are part of the learning environment. All who use the space need to feel a sense of ownership and identity with their environment.**



## 1. GENERAL PLANNING

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Education and Care Brief and a Facilities Brief will inform the detailed site and building functions and physical requirements for each specific project as follows:

- An Education and Care Brief describes the activities and programs to be provided on site and any outreach programs from the early childhood facility
- A Facilities Brief describes the nature of the facilities required for the activities and programs to be delivered effectively and the numbers of children to be accommodated in-line with this document.

### 1.2 FACILITIES MODULES

Early Childhood Facilities may include the provision of care, education, health and family services for children from birth to age 8 and their families, through a range of programs.

These facilities are detailed in this document as a series of modules with the accommodation schedules and planning and design requirements for each one separately described. The accommodation schedules for each module are specifically listed as separate areas to provide an understanding of the particular needs of the module. Where several modules are to be included in the one facility then some sharing of spaces will be negotiated and described in the project Facilities Brief document.

Each Program's accommodation requirements are described under the following headings.

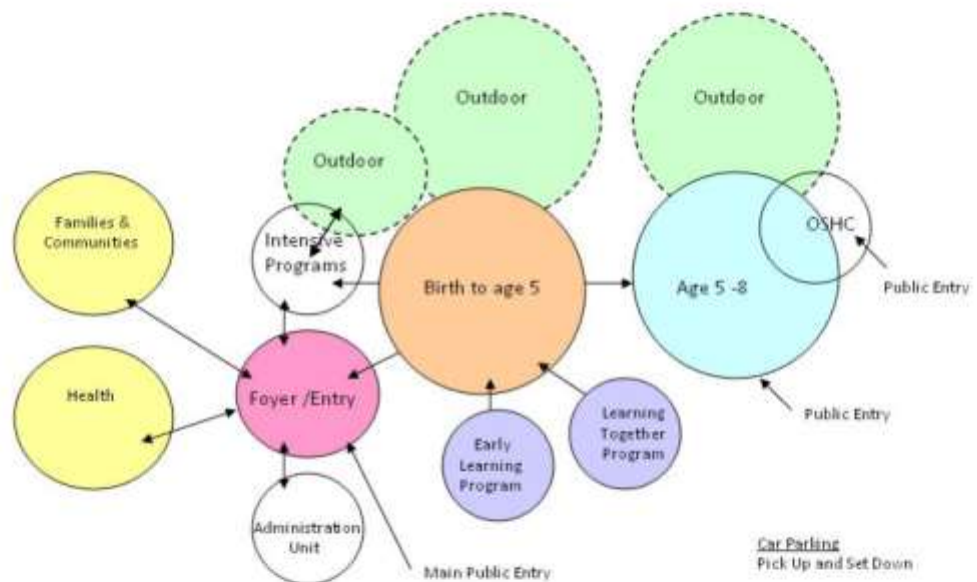
- **Children birth to age 5 Education and Care**  
Programs for children from birth to age 5 years include pre-school education for eligible children, and occasional care or long day care (the latter for up to 12 hours per day).
- **Intensive Programs for Children with Additional Needs**  
Specialised programs for eligible children who require a high level of support due to global developmental delay or disability.
- **Children age 5 to age 8 Education and Care**  
School education programs for children from 5 to 8 years of age. Care programs may include before and after school hours care and vacation care for primary school children.
- **Family and Community**  
Programs are provided for parents and families. This includes programs for parents with their children and also programs for parents.
- **Health**  
Programs are provided for children, families and expectant parents. These programs may include clinical services (assessment and therapy), parent support and education and community-based health promotion programs.

- **Administration Unit**

Facilities for general office and administration functions over and above the requirements for the administration of the site programs (eg administrative function of Family Day Care). The services mix and accommodation requirements may change over time and the facilities shall be designed considering how such changes may be able to be undertake.

### 1.3 FUNCTIONING RELATIONSHIPS

The following diagram and notes describe the functional relationships between the modules of accommodation:



The site planning and building design of each project should consider the ability to add future modules, considering possible future site access points, the relationships between modules and circulation through the planned facility.

### 1.3.1 Zones

Individual spaces may be able to be combined to form zones or groups of spaces with a similar purpose. The relationship of functional zones is considered important to ensure that the facilities operate efficiently and effectively while promoting an atmosphere of friendliness and community involvement.

A facility can be subdivided into key functional zones

- Main entry / reception area
- Community space
- Service provision and activity areas
- Staff and administration areas
- External activity areas.

While the list of accommodation for each program identifies separate facility requirements, some sharing of common facilities should occur where a range of programs are provided. For example a common foyer, shared toilets etc where this is appropriate. Requirements for shared areas need to be defined in the Facilities Brief for each project.

The preference is for access to all services to be through the main entry / reception area.

#### Relationships External

Where possible, facilities should be situated in a location with a pleasant outlook and maximum environmental benefits. They should engender community ownership and provide a recognisable community focus for child and parent activities.

#### 1.3.2.1 Location

Ideally, an Early Childhood Facility shall be located close to public transport, other community services and the general 'flow' of community.

#### 1.3.2.2 Car Parking

Provide short term parking for parents to take children into the centre for at least 25% of the enrolment capacity but this can vary depending on local council requirements. Generally these parking spaces will not be provided on a DECD site.

The following parking spaces shall be provided for staff:

One parking space to be provided for each FTE (full time equivalent) staff member

One Accessible parking space to be provided

An additional 10% of the total for visitor parking.

The above commitment only applies to new sites and may not apply to existing sites or redevelopments if site area restrictions exist. This means DECD does not buy additional land for car parking purposes.



Design consideration must ensure that children and parents do not have direct access from the building into the carpark.

### **1.3.2.3 Internal**

The internal plan of the Early Childhood Facility shall allow users to easily move between service and activity areas, have a strong sense of connectivity and enable efficient movement and supervision.

The layout of the physical space in the centre, 'Piazza', encourages interactions, communication and the building of relationships. The arrangement of structures, objects and activities encourages choices, problem solving and discoveries in the process of learning.

In reference to a 'Piazza' design, this space functions as largely open space that can be used by children at different times of the day. Everyone moving through the centre passes through the space, and therefore it is a hive of activity.

#### Optimum internal relationships include:

- Reception / administration areas shall have a clear view of the main entry / waiting areas and be visible from adjacent staff areas. There should be easy access to stationery and client records (if located on site). The reception area shall provide a controlling access between waiting and service areas.
- Conference and meeting rooms should be accessible from the main entry / waiting area as well as from the staff area.
- Learning and/or breakout spaces should be adjacent to the main entry / waiting area so they can be accessed after hours with the rest of the Facility safely secure.
- Staff areas shall be designed so they allow staff to move easily between the main entry / reception and service areas. Staff offices and amenities should be separate from service areas and community space for confidentiality and a quiet work area.
- Traffic corridors should provide for movement between the adult precinct and between child activity areas without having to pass through child activity areas for reasons of child safety and program quality.
- The main learning areas for child activities and learning programs should be centrally located and visually connected to incorporate a physical layout which encourages interaction, communication and whereby a strong sense of belonging is fostered.

- The design of the building shall link the inside and outside learning areas through visual connection, creating a studio or 'atelier' environment where 'osmosis' between enclosed and open spaces can occur. Children should be able to move freely between the indoor and outdoor learning areas and designed in such a way that supervision of both areas is maximised. Ensure the building design supports the cross age interaction and learning between the birth and preschool components of the centre is critical.
- In reference to ICT, the technology should allow learners to use it wherever and whenever learning occurs, including outdoors. This requires ICT to be dispersed and readily available rather than centralised in specialist rooms. The nature of spaces and equipment should facilitate collaborative and social learning.
- Learning areas (indoor and outdoor) shall be well separated from and not directly accessible by adults attending the facility for other programs.
- Toilets for children, staff and the public need to be available and accessible from each of the functional modules of accommodation used by those groups.
- The Building planning shall consider the potential to share toilets and other areas between compatible functional modules wherever possible, provided access is not through another program area. This reduces the provision of under-utilized special purpose rooms.

#### 1.4 PLANNING AND DESIGN

The planning and design of the Early Childhood Facility shall provide an aesthetically pleasing physical environment for children from birth to age 8 that supports learning, development and well being, their families and staff.

##### 1.4.1 Site

The positioning of facilities on new sites and within existing sites shall consider the following site planning issues

- The site must be physically and psychologically safe.
- Off-street access for vehicles shall be provided for safe drop off and pick up of children, including taxi access and wheelchair access spaces.
- Direct access to car parking areas shall be provided for children and families and for the safety of staff who work after hours.
- The ability for a future covered drop-off area to be provided if children with additional needs are enrolled.
- The relationship of new facilities with any existing facilities.
- Play and outdoor learning area locations and their relationships to each other and to existing site facilities.
- Access points for children, parents and community members considering safety and duty of care requirements.
- Additional accommodation modules for programs and facilities to meet future requirements.

#### **1.4.2 Buildings**

The planning and design of new Early Childhood Facilities buildings shall provide a family friendly environment, support for an integrated approach to program provisions and a high quality facility, considering the specific needs of infants, toddlers and young children, including the following:

- The facilities shall meet all requirements for access for those with disabilities (including the design of the outdoor learning area).
- A recognisable, community focus for child, parent and family activity.
- Separate, shared and flexible spaces for children, families and service providers including being able to meet the needs of changes to services for the community.
- A welcoming entrance, with clear signage and which provides a safe location and access for parents to deliver and collect children.
- Family friendly designs where children and their families can feel comfortable, safe and secure.
- An inviting natural environment that is culturally appropriate and will encourage the community to utilise available facilities for a variety of purposes.
- A physical environment which supports integration of health, education and care and family services.
- Birth to age 5 module and the age 5 to age 8 module located in close proximity to each other to facilitate continuity of learning.
- Facilities that meet the minimum requirements of all relevant legislation and standards.
- A physical environment that maximises acoustic properties to support early childhood learning (including children with hearing disabilities)
- Adult toilets that are accessible from an adult precinct without having to pass through child areas.
- Circulation spaces that are clearly distinct from functional spaces.
- Separate access to the adult precinct from access to child activity areas. (Access to adult areas should not require passage through child activity areas.)

#### **1.4.3 Swimming Pools**

Swimming pools are prohibited on any childhood premises.

## 2. CHILDREN'S BIRTH TO AGE 5 EDUCATION AND CARE MODULE

### 2.1 ACCOMMODATION

The tables below indicate the functional area allocations in square metres for birth to age 5 education and care programs for various enrolment capacities. They do not necessarily require separate rooms but need to be able to be configured flexibly to meet program needs. Refer to Planning and Design Requirements for information about functional relationships and refer to the Facilities Brief for information about specific project requirements.

The total Activity and Withdrawal areas shall be a minimum of 3.25m<sup>2</sup> per child of unencumbered space (usable floor area which is directly accessible for children's use. This area excludes circulation/passageways, fixed joinery toilets, kitchen, administration space etc.).

Activity areas shall contain physically and acoustically separate spaces within the facility for infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers.

Refer to Area Data Sheets for detailed requirements for each room and functional area.

- Sleep room size(s) will be advised for each project and will be determined by the number of children under 2 years of age.





<b>2.2 Functional Area Allocations for Birth to age 5 – PRESCHOOLS AND KINDERGARTENS (can include integrated Occasional Care)</b>																
Indicative M <sup>2</sup> Based on DECD Standards of 3.25M <sup>2</sup> per place																
NUMBER OF PLACES	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	100								
<b>INTERNAL SPACES</b> (activity and withdrawal spaces to be unencumbered)																
Main Activity Space	40	60	70	90	100	110	110	150								
Small Activity Space			35	38	55	65	80	105								
Withdrawal	25	38	25	35	40	53	35 x 2	35x 2								
Teacher Prep / Staff	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	25								
Foyer/Entry	10	18	24	27	30	32	35	35								
Office (Not included if shared space with Health/Families & Communities).	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	20								
Kitchen	12	12	14	16	18	20	20	20								
<b>PLUS 10% CIRCULATION TO THE FIGURES ABOVE</b>																
Storage	10	10	16	20	24	28	32	40								
Children's Toilets – Minimum of two pans with a ratio of 1 in 15 (See BCA). Fixed change bench with sink type bath and separate adult hand washing basin.	10	2WC	15	2WC	20	3WC	20	4WC	20	4WC	26	5WC	26	6WC	30	7WC
Access / Staff Toilet - To include shower with sluice drain and space to accommodate a hydraulic change bench with power.	14		14		14		14		14		14		14		14	
If not providing Long Day Care - laundry provision to consist of plumbing to wall for wash trough and washing machine and power for dryer in an area inaccessible to children e.g. behind larger sized cubicle																
Cleaner's Room (can be cupboard)	2		2		2		2		2		2		2		2	
<b>EXTERNAL SPACES</b>																
Verandah (space beneath forms part of outdoor learning space)	20		30		40		50		60		70		80		100	
Shed	20		20		30		35		40		45		50		60	
Sandpit - solid cover and support poles receded under roof to reduce the risk for climbing – In-line with DECD standards. Other: See <i>Vision and Values</i> document for further information on outdoor learning requirements. Local input is required																
OUTDOOR LEARNING SPACE - Maximum per place 9.3m <sup>2</sup> Minimum 7m <sup>2</sup> of unencumbered accessible space per place. DECD recommends the maximum space of 9.3M <sup>2</sup> is allocated. In extenuating circumstances ie land restrictions should the 7m <sup>2</sup> allocation apply. Additional outdoor space, in excess of the maximum allowance, can be provided however the additional landscaping / fencing etc will need to be funded by the site.																
Outdoor Learning Space – Maximum (9.3m <sup>2</sup> )	186		279		372		465		558		651		744		930	
Outdoor Learning Space - Minimum (7m <sup>2</sup> )	140		210		280		350		420		490		560		700	

### 2.3 Functional Area Allocations for Birth to age 5 – LONG DAY CARE

	Indicative M <sup>2</sup> Based on DECD Standards of 3.25M <sup>2</sup> per place															
NUMBER OF PLACES	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	100								
<b>INTERNAL SPACES</b> (activity and withdrawal spaces to be unencumbered)																
Main Activity Space	40	60	70	90	100	110	110	150								
Small Activity Space			35	38	55	65	80	105								
Withdrawal	25	38	25	35	40	53	35 x 2	35x 2								
Teacher Prep / Staff	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	25								
Foyer/Entry	10	18	24	27	30	32	35	35								
Office	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	20								
Kitchen	12	12	14	16	18	20	20	20								
Staff /Meeting Room	8	10	12	14	16	19	22	25								
Sleep Room (for children under 2)	14	20	24	26	28	30	32	36								
<b>PLUS 10% CIRCULATION TO THE FIGURES ABOVE</b>																
Storage	10	10	16	20	24	28	32	40								
Laundry – Wash trough, joinery. Space and power for washing machine and clothes dryer. (whitegoods not provided)	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8								
Children's Toilets – Minimum of two pans with a ratio of 1 in 15 (See BCA). Fixed change bench with sink type bath and separate adult hand washing basin.	10	2WC	15	2WC	20	3WC	20	4WC	20	4WC	26	5WC	26	6WC	30	7WC
Access / Staff Toilet - To include shower with sluice drain and space to accommodate a hydraulic change bench with power.	14		14		14		14		14		14		14		14	
Cleaner's Room (can be cupboard)	2		2		2		2		2		2		2		2	
<b>EXTERNAL SPACES</b>																
Verandah	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	100								
Shed	20	20	30	35	40	45	50	60								
Sandpit – Solid pitch cover and support poles recessed under roof to avoid climbing – In-line with DECD standards. Other: See <i>Vision and Values</i> document for further information on outdoor learning requirements. Local input is required.																
OUTDOOR LEARNING SPACE - Maximum per place 9.3m <sup>2</sup> Minimum 7m <sup>2</sup> of unencumbered accessible space per place. DECD recommends the maximum space of 9.3M <sup>2</sup> is allocated. In extenuating circumstances ie land restrictions should the 7m <sup>2</sup> allocation apply. Additional outdoor space, in excess of the maximum allowance, can be provided however the additional landscaping / fencing etc will need to be funded by the site.																
Outdoor Learning Space – Maximum (9.3m <sup>2</sup> )	186	279	372	465	558	651	744	930								
Outdoor Learning Space - Minimum (7m <sup>2</sup> )	140	210	280	350	420	490	560	700								

## **2.4 PLANNING AND DESIGN**

Refer to sections *1.3 Functional Relationships* and *1.4 Planning and Design* for general requirements.

All relevant early childhood facilities shall comply with the National Quality Standards.

### **2.4.1 Site**

- The site area shall be large enough to provide the briefed building areas, outdoor learning areas, a service yard and sufficient car parking for staff disabled parking. Consideration is to be given to allow for future expansion to include other modules of accommodation.
- The outdoor learning areas are preferably located on the northern side of the building to take advantage of available sunshine, but with appropriate shading to provide sun protection.
- Maximum per place 9.3m<sup>2</sup> Minimum 7m<sup>2</sup> of unencumbered accessible space per place. DECD recommends the maximum space of 9.3M2 is allocated. In extenuating circumstances ie land restrictions should the 7m2 allocation apply. Additional outdoor space, in excess of the maximum allowance, can be provided however the additional landscaping / fencing etc will need to be funded by the site. Where a range of programs are being delivered that require specific outdoor space, separate spaces for each program are required. A separate outdoor learning area shall be provided for children under 2 years of age. This area shall, whilst separate, will be designed to be integrated with adjoining areas through gates. The design of the area shall reflect the developmental, social and emotional needs of this age group. Refer to Data Sheets for detailed information about outdoor learning areas and equipment

### **2.4.2 Building**

- Functional indoor spaces shall be provided to cater for occasional or long day care and education programs as required by the Facilities Brief.
- The areas for each room listed in the following accommodation schedule are the benchmark sizes, with some flexibility to be considered in each Facilities Brief to combine and trade-off between rooms as appropriate to particular projects.

### **2.4.3 An environment that supports children's development and learning**

- Support for children's learning through play in both indoor and outdoor areas. The design of physical facilities shall allow for the free flow of children between the indoor and outdoor learning environments, providing stimulation, interest, variety, change and challenge. Learning environments that assist children to be curious, solve problems, observe, gain environmental understandings, be creative, develop their physical abilities and interact socially are desirable. The environment and materials in these areas is to reflect the natural environment.

- Areas for individual pursuits as well as interaction in larger social groups, reflecting children's needs for a sense of privacy.
- A dedicated room for children's sleep and rest which shall be physically and acoustically separated from activity areas, but with internal windows for effective supervision.
- The provision of natural light and ventilation shall be maximised.
- Windows are to be positioned in such a way to maximise adult supervision between all areas (indoor and outdoor) as well as maximising the view to all children's areas.
- Easy access to children's toilets from indoor and outdoor learning areas.

#### **2.4.4 Flexible child activity spaces**

- All learning spaces are to be designed to be multidisciplinary open spaces which can be configured a number of ways.
- Access to the outdoor learning area from the main activity area which shall be through fully opening double doors with extensive glazing for indoor / outdoor viewing and line-of-vision for supervision.
- Outdoor learning areas shall be designed to incorporate the principles outlined in the Early Childhood Learning Environments Vision and Values statement.

#### **2.4.5 Duty of Care**

- A welcoming entrance / waiting area / reception / foyer, which provides a safe location for parents to deliver and collect children.
- Effective visual supervision of all children's areas from any location. Supervision of all children at all times is essential and is to be achieved while still giving children the opportunity to "feel" secluded.
- Separation of child activity areas from the entry for security reasons and program integrity.
- Physical barriers to separate (and ensure the safety of) non-mobile children (generally up to 2 years of age) from mobile children in indoor and outdoor learning areas. Any barriers used shall be fixed in such a way that they are not moveable by children or able to fall over.
- Flexible spaces to cater for changing use patterns and needs during the day, week and year, changing age group numbers, program requirements and different local needs over time, including the capacity to subdivide areas for small group activities.
- Flexibility to create small activity areas or open up to a large activity area, as required. (Flexibility can be achieved by the shape and articulation of spaces, partitions, screens and furniture.)
- Smaller spaces that provide flexibility for withdrawal activities and sleep requirements.
- Free flow between activity areas, including the transition between indoors and outdoors. Minimise traffic corridors through child activity areas and ensure that pathways are clear and unobstructed.



#### 2.4.6 Staff work areas/adult areas that facilitate efficient centre operation

- The office located adjacent to the entry / foyer and administration support.
- Office windows that allow a view of the main entrance doors and the main activity area but also provide a degree of privacy through the use of areas of obscured glass or provision for blinds.
- Adult toilet adjacent to the office / entry in the adult precinct.
- Areas where staff and parents can hold confidential discussions away from children's activity areas.
- Location of the child program kitchen adjacent to the main child activity area with ready access from the adult precinct. The location and orientation is to facilitate supervision of the activity areas. The location shall provide a hub for the centre and is ideally located where the kitchen and cook can be part of the program, particularly for the over 3 year olds.



### 3. INCLUSIVE PRE-SCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS MODULE

Where a centre runs an approved IPP (Inclusive Preschool Program) the schedule of accommodation includes the following additional accommodation.

#### 3.1 ACCOMMODATION

▪ Withdrawal	45m <sup>2</sup>
▪ Staff Preparation / Store	10m <sup>2</sup>
▪ Toilet/change – Students	15m <sup>2</sup>

#### 3.2 PLANNING AND DESIGN

In addition to the general requirements for all children (Refer 2.3 *Planning and Design for Children Birth to age 5 Education and Care*), facilities for **children with additional needs** shall include:

- A covered drop-off area (for one vehicle) provided at the main entrance to the facility where children with additional needs are enrolled.
- Suspension hooks under external covered area fixed to structural members and away from the main traffic flows. Refer Area Data Sheet for Outdoor Learning Area for more information about requirements.
- External and internal storage for large items of equipment.
- Withdrawal room that is acoustically treated to reduce sound transmission in and out.
- Withdrawal room close to toilets and with direct access to a secure outdoor learning area.
- Cupboards with locks or child-proof catches
- Power outlets with covers at 1500mm or inside lockable cupboards.
- Toilet including a shower (with shower head on a hose) and adequate space for staff assistance with toileting and showering.
- Toilet will have room for a toilet chair, hydraulic change table (no fixed nappy change bench) and nappy/waste disposal facility.
- Lever taps on all hand basins.
- Walls painted in calming colours such as green or blue.
- Windows sills narrow enough to prevent children climbing them.
- Paper towel dispensers and not electric hand driers for hand drying.
- Lights with dimming capability.

## 4. EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM MODULE

Early Learning Programs are implemented by fieldworkers and are a home visiting service. The program's accommodation requirements are largely for resource storage, resource maintenance and administration space. The Early Learning Program Module will be provided where it is a briefed requirement. Learning Together Program and Early Learning Program can share office space and storeroom when both are co-located.

### 4.1 ACCOMMODATION

- Staff preparation & store 55m<sup>2</sup>
- Office space 12m<sup>2</sup>

### 4.2 PLANNING AND DESIGN

- Shelving and storage space for books, toys including some large equipment and art and craft materials.
- Access to facilities to wash toys and other resources.
- Bench space for drying of books and toys.
- Access to space and appropriate furniture for resource development and maintenance.
- Located near dedicated parking for loading/unloading resources.
- Ramp access for trolleys.



## 5. LEARNING TOGETHER PROGRAM MODULE

Learning Together Programs offer activity based family literacy and learning programs for parents and children. The Learning Together Program Module will be provided where it is a briefed requirement. Learning Together Program and Early Learning Program can share office space and storeroom when both are co-located.

### 5.1 ACCOMMODATION

▪ Flexible Activity /Withdrawal Space	50m <sup>2</sup>
▪ Storeroom	10m <sup>2</sup>
▪ Office space	12m <sup>2</sup>

### 5.2 PLANNING AND DESIGN

- Safe and convenient access to toilets for adults and children.
- Safe and convenient access to nappy changing facilities.
- Shelving and storage space for books and toys including some large equipment.
- Kitchenette in activity space for food preparation including sink, hand basin, refrigerator, stove and microwave, to current standards.
- Pram parking space.
- Confidential access to a telephone.
- Convenient access to a bank of computers for parent use.
- Access to confidential meeting space.
- Close and safe access to parking area.
- Flexible space with opportunity to expand activity/withdrawal space to a single large space.
- Direct access to safe fenced outdoor area with adequate storage.



## 6. CHILDREN'S AGE 5 TO 8 EDUCATION AND CARE MODULE

### 6.1 ACCOMMODATION

This table indicates the space areas in square metres for age 5 to age 8 education programs for various enrolment capacities and is based on the standards for junior primary school accommodation. The areas comply with the standard allocation of 3.14m<sup>2</sup> per student for the areas listed here and within the total building area allocation of 6.13m<sup>2</sup> per student.

Enrolments	120	150	180	210
Learning Commons (m <sup>2</sup> )	224	280	336	392
Withdrawal (m <sup>2</sup> )	28	35	42	49
Staff Preparation (m <sup>2</sup> )	20	25	30	35
Store (m <sup>2</sup> )	24	30	36	42
Practical Activity (m <sup>2</sup> )	56	70	84	98
Toilets – Students (m <sup>2</sup> )	24	30	36	42
<b>TOTAL (m<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>564</b>	<b>658</b>

### 6.2 PLANNING AND DESIGN

Refer also to DECD Facilities Design Standards and Guidelines document for schools.

External learning and play areas for children to be readily accessible from internal learning areas.

## 7. OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS CARE MODULE

### 7.1 ACCOMMODATION

- Facilities are designed or adapted to ensure access and participation by every child in the service and to allow flexible use, and free flow between indoor and outdoor environments, providing stimulation, interest, variety, change and challenge enabling them to be curious, solve problems, observe, gain environmental understandings, be creative, develop their physical abilities and interact socially. The environment and materials in these areas is to reflect the natural environment.
- Areas for individual pursuits as well as interaction in larger social groups, reflecting children's needs for a sense of privacy.
- Facilities are designed or adapted to ensure access and participation by every child in the service including adaptive equipment to support the inclusion of children with additional needs.
- A minimum of 3.25m<sup>2</sup> of unencumbered indoor floor space to be provided for each child.
- Safe shelving and storage areas from which children can access equipment independently.
- Convenient access to kitchen and food preparation areas and staff amenities which comply with food safety standards and the relevant South Australian and local government requirements.
- Convenient access to toilets, hand washing and drying facilities from the indoor and outdoor spaces.
- Space to be allocated for administrative functions, private conversations and parent consultation
- Physical spaces being made available for children to engage in rest and quiet experiences.
- A minimum of 12m<sup>2</sup> of outdoor usable play space per child.
- Effective visual supervision of all children's areas from any location. Supervision of all children at all times is essential and is to be achieved while still giving children the opportunity to "feel" secluded.

### 7.2 PLANNING AND DESIGN

- Close and safe access from parking area and with good external area lighting.
- Dedicated storage provisions that are inaccessible to children, including secure storage for hazardous substances, first aid equipment, medication and children's records.
- Convenient access to toilets, hand washing and drying facilities from the indoor and outdoor spaces.
- Convenient access to kitchen facilities for food preparation. The kitchen facilities shall include a sink, hand basin, refrigerator, stove (or microwave) to current food safety standards and relevant South Australian and local government requirements.
- Location of facilities on the site that support safe and convenient drop off/ pick up of children.
- Access to a telephone, power and data outlets.
- Access to an art sink (with trade waste) in the activity area.
- Heating, cooling and ventilation shall be provided in accordance with DECD Policy and Standards requirements.
- Bag hooks or pigeonhole units shall be provided in accordance with DECD Policy and Standards requirements.

**Out of School Hours Care Facility**



## 8. FAMILY AND COMMUNITY MODULE

### 8.1 ACCOMMODATION

OFFICE AREAS	Area m <sup>2</sup>	Comments
DFC workstations	12.6	Phone, computer terminals in shared area. Confidential storage
Interview rooms (2)	25.2	6 chairs, 2 desks, 2 doors per room
Multi-purpose room / crèche	25.2	6 chairs. Staff planning, training classes for parents
Supervised access room	25.2	With a/v facilities. Attached to external play area
Observation room	6.3	Linked to a/v facilities
Outdoor area	12.6	Attached to access room, for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander families
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>107.1</b>	Plus circulation allowance

### 8.2 PLANNING AND DESIGN

Shared facilities with other programs shall include:

- Public areas including counter and reception services, waiting space and a single point of contact for services.
- Staff facilities including toilets, staff/meeting room.
- Access to group rooms.
- Shared client facilities including toilets and kitchen.
- Stable nappy changing facilities for client usage (separate to children's care area)
- Kitchens/kitchenettes provided in community areas to be designed so that children do not have free access to appliances, hot water, utensils etc. Recommended layout is to provide a bench that creates an enclosed kitchen area, secured by a child proof gate.
- Parking facilities for FTE staff plus 1 disabled and 1 visitor.
- After hours access for a range of programs and services.
- Outdoor lighting

Specific family and community requirements shall include:

- A play area for children.
- Separate play areas for babies and children.
- Separate bench tops for bottle preparation.
- Storage area for prams.



## 9. HEALTH MODULE

### 9.1 ACCOMMODATION

To determine service accommodation needs it is intended to maximise the use of spaces by all staff and allows for changes in space usage as service delivery models change over time. For example some staff may provide a range of services in a group setting while others provide a one to one consultation. In addition spaces also need to be appropriate for community activity and parental participation.

Estimation of interview, consultation and other group room requirements (this could be applied to health specific requirements or for all services involved in the Centre):

- Determine the number and range of services to be delivered from the Centre.
- Determine the mix of services to be delivered by staff in the Centre and out of the Centre.
- Determine the projected number of in-Centre appointments including visiting services. Incorporate changes to service delivery patterns (eg increase in group approaches).
- Estimate scheduled length of in-Centre sessions.
- Indicate room utilisation by plotting weekly or monthly appointment numbers and times by accommodation type required, i.e. generic facilities such as interview, consult, group rooms, or spaces for specific functions such as physiotherapy.
- Aim for an 80% occupancy of specific spaces booked.
- Implement a booking system for rooms.
- Ensure that under-utilised spaces can be used by other groups.
- Large group rooms should be planned for to allow for their use after hours without impacting on the security of the rest of the facility staff would undertake client therapy and consultations in a booked client consultation room. Personal offices would not be used for this purpose.
- All other staff (regardless of role/status) are assigned a workstation as part of an open office arrangement. This may include work space for visiting staff.

#### Indicative Space Requirements

Room Type	Number of People	Approximate Size
Small interview room	6 adults	12m <sup>2</sup>
Meeting Room (small)	8 adults	12m <sup>2</sup>
Meeting Room (medium)	16 adults	20m <sup>2</sup>
Meeting Room (large)	20 adults	30m <sup>2</sup>
Office – shared space	4 staff	20m <sup>2</sup>
Consult room	3 adults	12m <sup>2</sup>
Hand-washing bay		1m <sup>2</sup>
Staff Room		12m <sup>2</sup>
Staff Toilet		6m <sup>2</sup>
Sub-waiting area	6	10m <sup>2</sup>
Waiting Area / circulation		15m <sup>2</sup>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>150m<sup>2</sup></b>

**Note:** Figures shown are approximations and examples only (taken from NSW Health Facility Guidelines).

Details of room requirements will vary according to specific circumstances and uses. For example a large meeting room may also need to be designed to be suitable for a therapeutic play group (2 allied health staff, 7 children and 7 parents involved in play activities), and thus need close access to hand-washing facilities and suitable finishes. Similarly a small meeting room may be used as a staff meeting space as well as a family counselling space and thus should be designed with dual purposes in mind. Consider providing flexibility to open up meeting rooms to one large space.

Specific guidelines for community based child and family health services are not available and thus a combination of existing adult guidelines and 'field knowledge' will be required in determining specific briefs. In addition depending in local service circumstances the number and type of rooms required will vary:

- Workstations shall be 5.5 square meters for staff that spend much of their time working at their desk, and 4.4 square meters for all other staff.
- Where possible, shared workstations shall be provided for part-time or job share staff.
- Shared work base facilities shall be provided for visiting staff and students.

## 9.2 PLANNING AND DESIGN

Shared facilities with other programs shall include:

- Public areas including counter and reception services, waiting space and a single point of contact for services.
- Staff facilities including toilets, staff/meeting room.
- Access to group rooms.
- Shared client facilities including toilets and kitchen.
- Parking facilities for FTE staff plus 1 disabled and 1 visitor.
- After hours access for a range of programs and services.

Specific family and community requirements shall include:

- Group spaces shall be appropriate for supported play, therapeutic activities, and community activity groups. This space should be appropriate for adults and children and group play (including gross motor activities) activities with parental and therapist involvement. This space may also be used for practical parental education sessions and activity based groups.
- Group spaces may also be used for counselling or meeting with families or small groups of parents, support group activities and parent education groups.
- Client privacy and confidentiality are important considerations to be addressed in relation to counselling and clinic rooms.
- A discrete duress alarm system may be required at reception points and client areas, where a staff member may be alone with a client.

**DECD Children's Centre – Consulting Room**



## 10. ADMINISTRATION UNIT MODULE

### 10.1 ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation is for general administrative support for system-wide programs which may be located on a number of sites:

- Office(s)
- Interview Room
- Store
- Toilets

### 10.2 PLANNING AND DESIGN

- Staff shall have access to toilets and other staff amenities either in this module or conveniently accessible in adjoining modules.
- Consider ability to share staff amenity areas with other site functions.



## 11. GENERAL BUILDING AND SITE PROVISIONS

### 11.1 BUILDING

The following describe the important general building, fixtures and services provisions to be considered in the design and detailing of the Early Childhood Facilities. Refer to the Area Data Sheets for more detailed specific requirements.

Materials shall be selected for their durability, ease of maintenance, safety and reduced environmental impact including the minimising of chemical emissions.

#### 11.1.1 Ceilings

Ceilings in all occupied areas shall have acoustic properties in accordance with Australian Standards.

#### 11.1.2 Walls

Wall surfaces shall be smooth finish, painted low sheen acrylic (and easily cleanable).

External wall surfaces shall be smooth, and if brickwork, to have flush mortar joints to restrict ability for special needs students to climb.

Wall colours shall generally be in neutral tones to provide a background to fixtures and furniture, and in calming colours to avoid problems for children with high sensory issues. Consider colours that reflect current best practice understanding of their effects on young children.

#### 11.1.3 Floor finishes

Specific requirements are indicated in the Area Data Sheets.

Floor materials shall be a balance between having some patterning and not too light in colour, (easy cleaning and will reduce marks being shown) and in calming colours and patterns for children with high sensory issues. The floor finishes shall enhance the acoustic properties of each area.

The site generally chooses the colour. Light colours are not recommended by DECD as this creates cleaning implications in the future.

#### 11.1.4 Doors

Doors must meet disability access standards.

Viewing panels shall be provided in doors where child access is required, from 800mm to 1800mm above floor level, for vision and supervision. Stable-type doors shall not be used.

Fully glazed doors shall only be used where there is a requirement for full height vision from inside to outside and shall have a mid-rail between 900 and 1000mm above floor level.

Children's toilet cubicle doors shall have free hinges (not spring loaded) and no indicator bolts or locks and be a maximum of 1200mm high above floor level for children 0-5 years of age.

All areas that are accessible to children shall have a child height return lever handles installed at 750mm above floor level.

All doors in children's areas shall all have finger entrapment covers.

Child access doors to the outside must not have door closers but be installed so that they are securable in open position i.e. flush against adjacent wall. Restraining mechanisms shall be above child eye height to avoid injury.

Access to outside from kitchen areas shall have securable screen doors.

#### **11.1.5 Windows**

Windows shall be provided to all occupied areas to maximise natural light and minimise the need to use artificial lighting.

Fully glazed windows shall have a transom at a height between 900 and 1000mm. Full height windows shall only be provided where there is a desirable indoor-outdoor relationship such as Activity and Withdrawal rooms.

Window sills for adult observation shall be at 1200mm above floor level.

Windows shall have sliding or hinged opening sashes to provide natural ventilation to at least Building Code of Australia requirements for openable area to all occupied areas. Sashes that open on to accessible areas shall be above head height (1900mm). Sliding opening sashes can be provided at a lower height for ventilation.

Windows that are publicly accessible (outside the fenced play areas) shall have the ability to lock opening sashes in various opening positions, and shall not be glazed below 1000mm from the floor.

External windows to toilets shall have obscured glass. Windows shall be externally shaded from summer sun penetration including skylights and high level glazing. Ensure no source of glare in occupied spaces. Removable insect screens are required on all external opening window sashes. Windows shall be provided in internal and external walls to ensure maximum effective adult supervision of all child areas. One-way glass or film shall be used in particular areas where adult supervision is required and where the avoidance of distraction from specific programs is desirable. All window glazing shall be with safety glass. Windows in consulting rooms, group rooms and treatment areas shall be placed to preserve privacy for occupants. Curtains / blinds are not included in the building provision.

### 11.1.6 Natural light

Natural lighting contributes to a sense of wellbeing. It assists orientation of building users, is important to the development of children and improves service outcomes. The use of natural light shall be maximised throughout the Centre. (Access to natural light and preferably a pleasant outlook will minimise stress and discomfort for all occupants.)

Children's areas shall have a minimum window area of 10% of the room floor area as per BCA requirements.

- Schedule of Natural Light to be completed by architect.



## 11.2 FIXTURES, FITTINGS, FURNITURE

### 11.2.1 Joinery

The preference is to minimise the fixed joinery and to provide flexibility with loose furniture.

Fixed joinery shall have large radius rounded corners.

Refer to Area data Sheets for specific requirements.

### 11.2.2 Benches

Benches for child use shall be 600mm high for children 0-4 years of age and 720mm high for children 5-8 years of age. At least one bench shall be of a height to allow for wheelchair access.

Child height benches are not to be fixed to the kitchen area bench.

Bench tops shall be laminate with bull-nosed front edges.

Plumbing wastes shall be concealed in cupboards.

### **11.2.3 Sinks**

Art sinks shall be stainless steel 302 grade.

The tops of sinks for child use shall be at 600mm above floor level. They shall be full depth with tile skirt and front lip. Where taps are provided for child use at least one shall be with a lever handle.

Sinks for adult use for materials clean up may be inset type and shall not be in or adjoining food preparation areas. They shall be at 900mm above floor level and shall have storage cupboard adjacent.

Drinking provisions shall be from cups and taps. Bubbler drinking outlets may be provided in a suitable position under a verandah.

### **11.2.4 Cupboards**

Cupboards are to have hard wearing low maintenance laminate surfaces.

Lockable cupboards shall be provided in Laundry, Kitchen and all staff and administration areas. Locks preferred to be internal finger catches to ensure only adult access.

Cupboards in staff only areas shall have key locks.

### **11.2.5 Bag storage**

Bag storage shall preferably be provided by pigeon hole joinery units, 300mm wide x 300mm high and structure to be no more than 1000mm high or alternatively bag hooks with covering shelf, in or closely located to the activity area. Hooks are an alternative and shall have protective timber coverings. Bag hooks are not to be provided for under 3 year olds. The bag storage area is not to be located in the children's toilet area.

### **11.2.6 Display boards**

Display boards shall be provided in all Activity Areas, Entrance Foyer and Staff Room, at a variety of different heights. Avoid locating display boards above sinks and heaters. Display boards shall be covered in Velcro suitable material to avoid the use of pins.

## **11.3 SERVICES**

### **11.3.1 Acoustics**

All spaces shall have acoustic conditions that appropriately support the required teaching and learning activities, that comply with the requirements of Australian Standard AS/NZS 2107:2000 "Acoustics – Recommended design sound levels and reverberation times for building interiors", and that comply with the requirements of the DECD Acoustic Performance Standards for Learning Areas.

For Early Childhood Facilities (children from birth- age 5) the reverberant acoustic conditions should be optimal, as children are involved in listening and language skill development during this stage of their life and need the best acoustic conditions possible.



Planning layouts, materials, finishes and insulation shall be selected to ensure that the maximum design sound levels and recommended reverberation times are met for the various spaces.

Install backbone wiring to enable Sound Field systems to be installed in teaching and learning areas.

#### **11.3.2 Water supply**

Backflow prevention devices shall be provided on the water supply to the washing unit in the Nappy Change room.

#### **11.3.3 Hot Water**

Thermostats of storage hot water systems shall be set at a minimum of 60°C to inhibit the growth of Legionella bacteria.

Hot water set at 45°C (maximum) by a thermostatic mixing valve shall be provided to the kitchen sink, kitchen hand basin, staff and access toilet hand basin, nappy change hand basin and bath taps, shower rose, staff materials clean-up trough and bottle preparation sink (if provided).

A boiling water unit for tea/coffee shall be provided in the Staff Room.

Consideration should be given to the use of instantaneous gas hot water heating for nappy change facilities given the infrequent use in most preschool centres.

#### **11.3.4 Heating, cooling and ventilation**

Air conditioning (ventilation, heating and cooling) shall be in accordance with DECD Facilities Design Standards and Guidelines document; however the option to provide evaporative cooling and flued gas heating shall be considered in the Activity Areas, where it is desirable to leave outside doors open for indoor-outdoor relationships.

Any appliance which has exposed surfaces that exceed 45°C must be guarded/ encased / enclosed so as to prevent access by children.

Ceiling fans are not recommended unless as per DECD Standards for ceiling fans they are at 2.4 metres above floor level. Equipment controls must be inaccessible to children. Particular care needs to be taken to position any equipment controls in a sleep room so that the controls are not accessible to children in a cot.

Natural ventilation shall be provided through permanent openings, windows, doors or other devices, including opening sashes in the windows.

Exhaust ventilation shall be provided to toilet, nappy change and kitchen areas.

Reverse cycle air-conditioning is the preferred system to be provided in the Director's/Multi-use office.

#### **11.3.5 Waste drainage**

A "Trade Waste Arrester" is required where food is prepared. It is not required where art sinks are provided, and only water-based are to be used.

#### **11.3.6 Electrical power**

Provide double power outlets at a number of locations throughout the areas; the number and location to be decided in consultation with DECD and the user representative.

All power outlets shall be safety shuttered and RCD protected. Power outlets accessible to children shall be mounted 1200mm above floor level, except for those in the sleep room where they shall be mounted at skirting level.

Surge protection shall be provided on blue outlets for computer and facsimile machines throughout the building.

External power outlets shall be in lockable weatherproof enclosures at a height of 1500mm.

Install backbone wiring for a sound field system to be installed in teaching and learning areas.

Refer to project Facilities Brief for any requirements for sub-metering for different agencies or building functions.

#### **11.3.7 Lighting**

Light switches to be mounted at between 900mm and 1100mm AFL under disability code. (light switches are not an electrical hazard as they have isolators).

- Current generation tubular fluorescent lamps shall be the standard provision.
- Particular attention is drawn to the requirements for accessibility and ease of replacement of lamps.
- Security lighting to current standards including lighting to car park areas and access to them.

#### **11.3.8 Security**

Door and window design shall consider the need for adequate security against unlawful entry.

If the project Facilities Brief requires, provide a silent monitored security alarm system combining smoke and movement detectors. Security system shall be zoned to enable separate functional areas to be alarmed as necessary. Where this is not required, the use of Securitel® telephone service is not warranted and the security dialler should be connected to the fax line.

If the facility is co-located with a school which has a current generation alarm system then the new facility shall be connected into it.

Secure storage is required for movable electrical equipment.

Contact DECD Corporate Senior Advisor, Security (8226 1948) for further detail.

#### **11.3.9 Television antenna and MATV system**

A fixed antenna and distribution system is not required.

#### **11.3.10 Communications**

Provide a minimum of two exchange lines to cater for telephone and data requirements. Refer to project Facilities Brief for specific requirements to cater for range of agencies and functions to be accommodated in the building.

If the Centre is co-located with a DECD school, consider opportunities for sharing a telephone extension and any data network.

Computer points shall be provided in activity, learning and office areas in locations as described in the project Facilities Brief.

#### **11.3.11 Fire Services**

All fire equipment shall be positioned in accordance with the requirements of the Building Code of Australia.

Generally provisions include fire extinguishers and a fire blanket in the kitchen, external fire hydrant as necessary and fire detection integrated with the security detection system.

### **11.4 OTHER PROVISIONS**

#### **11.4.1 Access and Mobility**

All entrance, exit and internal doors for adult entry shall be accessible for persons with disabilities. Ensure ramps, door widths and furniture (including reception counter) caters for wheelchair users. Consider the needs of children with impaired vision, hearing and movement and severe sensory issues. Provide one accessible toilet, for use also as staff / adult toilet.

One cubicle in the children's toilet shall be large enough for assisted access with space for helpers on both sides of the pan. Ensure access to door bells, security control panels, switches and controls. All external areas including the car park shall be accessible for persons with disabilities. Refer also to Planning and Design sections for specific Facilities Modules and Area Data Sheets for additional information.

#### **11.4.2 Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare**

Shelves to be no higher than 1800mm. Area above to be filled or sloped to prevent inappropriate use and cleaning issues. Where electrical appliances are to be used, shelves shall include an electrical cabling slot so that electrical cords can be fed through to power points thereby preventing any electrical appliances being dislodged from the shelf by pulling a cord.

### 11.4.3 Signage

Provide appropriate site signage, directional signs to entrances and door signs as required by the project brief.

Actual entrance/frontage sign for the site must be approved by the appropriate DECD authority.





## 12. AREA DATA SHEETS

Area data sheets provide detailed information for specific areas in addition to the general information provided in the planning and design requirements, and they are to be read in conjunction with each other.

### 12.1 ACTIVITY AREA

#### 12.1.1 Function

To cater for wet and dry education and play activities in groups of varying sizes.

#### 12.1.2 Planning

- This provides the major part of the indoor activity space. The other children's activity area is the withdrawal room.
- The design should enable flexible use of activity areas ie learning areas that can be changed frequently.
- The Activity Area size will be scheduled in the project Facilities Brief.
- The Activity Area is to open to the veranda and outdoor learning area.
- Line of site is paramount in any area of child activity and shall be available from any location.



#### 12.1.3 Buildings

##### 12.1.3.1 Ceilings

Acoustic ceiling.

#### **12.1.3.2 Walls**

Wall surfaces shall be smooth finish, painted low sheen (washable) acrylic. Wall colours shall generally be in neutral tones to provide a background to fixtures and furniture, and in calming colours to avoid problems for children with high sensory issues. Consider colours that reflect current best practice understanding of their effects on young children.

Ensure that sufficient wall space is available for display purposes.

#### **12.1.3.3 Floor**

Floor to all rooms shall be resilient sheet floor covering material with cushioned backing. Provide carpet square(s) to a total size of one-third of the Activity Area, loose laid on the floor. Carpet square shall be non-static, level loop pile, soil resistant, easily cleanable, and complying with the current BCA requirements for fire resistance and fire hazard properties. Edges shall be bound or overcast to prevent fraying. Medium strength colours with patterns (fleck or graphic) are preferred. (Light colours show marks and stains, and dark colours show dust). A non-slip backing is required to avoid the carpet square moving.

#### **12.1.3.4 Doors**

Provide fully glazed double doors to the veranda and outdoor learning area. Doors are to be capable of being held in the fully open position flush against the adjacent wall.

#### **12.1.3.5 Windows**

Windowsills can be at 100mm above floor level where overlooking veranda and outdoor area.

### **12.1.4 Fixtures, Fittings, Furniture**

#### **12.1.4.1 Benches**

One bench containing a single minimum 40 litre laundry trough with integral drainer for adult use for cleaning water soluble art materials. Cupboards underneath. Bench top at 900mm above floor level.

#### **12.1.4.2 Sinks**

Stainless steel sink as above. Taps to wash trough to be mounted at a height to allow a bucket to be inserted into the trough.

#### **12.1.4.3 Cupboards**

One lockable cupboard 800mm wide by 2000mm high.

#### **12.1.4.4 Display boards**

Provide maximum area of display boards on available wall space, from 300mm to 2100mm above floor level.

## **12.1.5 Services**

### **12.1.5.1 Heating, Cooling, Ventilation**

Refer 11.3.4 under General Building and Site Provisions. If gas heating provided then effective guarding for gas heaters shall be fitted to prevent children's access to very hot surfaces (> 45°C) and controls. All equipment controls to be positioned to prevent free access by children ie a minimum 1500mm above floor level.

Note: Modern gas heating may already have child safety mechanisms in place that address the above issue. This should be checked with the manufacturers.

### **12.1.5.2 Water Supply**

Hot and cold water shall be provided to the sink, with one tap a lever arm and one cold tap to be mounted at a height to allow a bucket to be inserted in the sink.

### **12.1.5.3 Electrical power**

Provide double power outlets at a number of locations throughout each area. The number and locations to be decided by consultation with DECD and the user representative.

Note special mounting height requirements.

Provide data points.

## **12.2 WITHDRAWAL ROOM**

### **12.2.1 Function**

To cater for the quiet withdrawal of a small number of children and for use by visiting specialists working with individual children.

### **12.2.2 Planning**

Withdrawal Room area will be as scheduled in the project Facilities Brief.

Planning should allow it to be used as a sleeping room for older children if required, but not for babies or toddlers.

Single door access from the Activity Area.

Convenient access to the children's toilet is required but not necessarily direct access.

### **12.2.3 Building**

#### **12.2.3.1 Ceilings**

Acoustic ceiling.

**12.2.3.2 Walls**

Wall surfaces shall be smooth finish, painted low sheen (washable) acrylic. Wall colours shall generally be in neutral tones to provide a background to fixtures and furniture, and in calming colours to avoid problems for children with high sensory issues. Consider colours that reflect current best practice understanding of their effects on young children.

**12.2.3.3 Floor**

Resilient sheeting with cushioned backing. Can also be carpet depending on site requirement.

**12.2.3.4 Doors**

Single door with viewing panel (with one-way glass or film).

**12.2.3.5 Windows**

Windows to provide adult line of vision to Activity Space.

External windows to have a light transmitting area exclusive of framing, glazing bars or other obstructions of not less than 10% of the floor area of the room (as per BCA requirements).

**12.2.4 Fixtures, Fittings, Furniture**

**12.2.4.1 Benches**

No fixed joinery is required.

**12.2.4.2 Display boards**

Provide maximum area of display board on available wall space, from 300mm to 2100mm above floor level.

**12.2.4.3 Communications**

None required in this area.

**12.2.5 Services**

**12.2.5.1 Heating, Cooling, Ventilation**

Refer 11.3.4 under General Building and Site Provisions.

**12.2.5.2 Electrical power**

Provide double power outlets at a number of locations throughout the areas. The number and locations to be decided by consultation with DECD and the user representative.

**12.3 SLEEP ROOM**

**12.3.1 Function**

To provide sleeping accommodation for children who require a sleep during the day, generally those up to 2 years of age.

**12.3.2 Planning**

Refer to the DECD Children's Services Licensing and Standards Fact Sheet *Cot Room*.



Sleep Room area will be as scheduled in the project Facilities Brief. One piece of bedding shall be provided for each child under 2 years of age (with 2/3 being cots and the remaining mattresses/stretcher beds i.e. 15 under 2 places = 10 cots and 5 mattresses/stretcher beds). Rooms shall be designed to accommodate a maximum of six cots each.

The layout shall maximise the efficiency of provision of cots with a minimum of 700mm clear access between each. Cords from all blinds shall be inaccessible to children in cots.

Adequate supervision of children in the sleep room shall be facilitated by positioning of the cots and viewing provided into the room. Staff shall be able to directly observe all children from the viewing windows.

Single door access from the Main Activity Area and a viewing window in the wall between two adjoining sleep rooms is recommended for additional visual supervision by staff.

Convenient access to the children's toilet is required but not necessarily direct access.

### **12.3.3 Building**

#### **12.3.3.1 Ceilings**

Acoustic ceiling.

#### **12.3.3.2 Walls**

Wall surfaces shall be smooth finish, painted low sheen (washable) acrylic. Wall colours shall generally be in neutral tones to provide a background to fixtures and furniture, and in calming colours to avoid problems for children with high sensory issues. Consider colours that reflect current best practice understanding of their effects on young children.

#### **12.3.3.3 Floor**

Resilient sheet with cushioned backing.

#### **12.3.3.4 Doors**

Half-glazed single door for adult supervision with ventilation panel.

#### **12.3.3.5 Windows**

External window to provide natural light and ventilation. Opening windows shall be securable against entry. Window sills shall be no lower than 1500mm. Internal window to provide observation from the Activity Area or other adjoining area. If there are adjoining sleep rooms, provide a window in common wall.

### **12.3.4 Fixtures, Fittings, Furniture**

No fixtures.

### **12.3.5 Services**

#### **12.3.5.1 Heating, Cooling, Ventilation**

Refer 11.3.4 under General Building and Site Provisions.

**12.3.5.2 Electrical power**

Provide double power outlets at a number of locations throughout the area. The number and locations to be decided by consultation with DECD and the user representative. Power outlets to be mounted at skirting level.

**12.4 OFFICE**

**12.4.1 Function**

For use as the Director's office.

**12.4.2 Planning**

To be located near the entrance for easy adult access. Consider an appropriate shape to enable it to be also used for small meetings.

**12.4.3 Building**

**12.4.3.1 Ceilings**

Acoustic ceiling.

**12.4.3.2 Floor**

Carpet.

**12.4.3.3 Doors**

Half-glazed single door, lockable.

**12.4.3.4 Windows**

External window and windows to provide visual access to Activity Area and other areas if possible, with one-way glass or film.

**12.4.4 Fixtures, Fittings, Furniture**

**12.4.4.1 Benches/Cupboards**

No fixed joinery; allow for loose office furniture.

**12.4.4.2 Display boards**

Provide one display board.

**12.4.5 Services**

**12.4.5.1 Heating, Cooling, Ventilation**

Refer 11.3.4 under General Building and Site Provisions.

**12.4.5.2 Electrical power**

Provide double power outlets at a number of locations throughout the area. The number and locations to be decided by consultation with DECD and the user representative.

Provide for administrative computer, printer, modem, facsimile machine, photocopier plus spare outlets.

**12.4.5.3 Communications**

Office telephone, facsimile and modem telephone lines.

## 12.5 FOYER / ENTRY / RECEPTION

### 12.5.1 Function

To provide a point of entry for parents and visitors including a reception counter and work station.

### 12.5.2 Planning

Area will be as scheduled in the project Facilities Brief.

A safe place where parents can collect notices, pay fees and where visitors can wait and be seen.

It is required that visitors to the Centre have restricted access to children in the Activity Areas and no direct vision of children. Conversely children are not to have unsupervised access directly to outside of the building.

The foyer is not to be used as a place to leave and collect children – this shall occur from the activity areas.



### 12.5.3 Building

#### 12.5.3.1 Ceilings

Acoustic ceiling.

#### 12.5.3.2 Floor

Resilient sheet.

#### 12.5.3.3 Doors

External door to have adult access only to facilitate safe passage to and from the centre for adults and children. Wheelchair accessibility to be provided though the provision of an intercom. Note, children's safety is paramount.

#### 12.5.3.4 Windows

Windows to adjoining spaces.

### 12.5.4 Fixtures, Fittings, Furniture

#### 12.5.4.1 Reception desk

Reception desk with work station. Include space for visitor work book / sheets. Where child care function provided, include an allowance for fee paying and a secure letter box.

#### 12.5.4.2 Display boards

Provide a display board for parent notices

### 12.5.5 Services

#### 12.5.5.1 Heating, Cooling, Ventilation

To be provided indirectly.

#### 12.5.5.2 Electrical power

Provide double power outlets at a number of locations throughout the area. The number and locations to be decided by consultation with DECD and the user representative.

#### 12.5.5.3 Communications

Telephone and data connections may be required if a reception desk is requested in the brief.

## 12.6 KITCHEN

### 12.6.1 Function

The kitchen is used for food preparation and distribution as well as a curriculum resource for children. Kitchens shall be designed to prevent unsupervised access by children (ie child proof gate/s).

Ideally, kitchens shall be designed so as to overlook the children's activity area.





## 12.6.2 Planning

Area shall be as scheduled in the project Facilities Brief.

Include a walk-in pantry unit for storage of food and ingredients.

## 12.6.3 Building

### 12.6.3.1 Ceilings

Acoustic tile ceiling. Flush ceiling to pantry.

### 12.6.3.2 Walls

Wall surfaces shall be smooth finish, painted low sheen (washable) acrylic.

Splashback behind kitchen sink, bench and hand basin.

### 12.6.3.3 Floor

Resilient sheet.

### 12.6.3.4 Doors

Low level door (900mm to 1200mm high) required preventing child access, including a child-proof latch on the kitchen side.

Single flush panel door to pantry or joinery doors.

## 12.6.4 Fixtures, fittings, Furniture

### 12.6.4.1 Benches / Cupboards

Cupboards and workbench, 900mm above floor level. Maximise usable bench top area.

Overhead cupboards with infill panel from 2000mm up to ceiling level.

Bench tops to have low maintenance laminated surfaces.

Splashbacks shall be smooth, easily cleanable and a minimum of 500mm high.

### 12.6.4.2 Shelving

Melamine shelving in pantry.

### 12.6.4.3 Other Equipment

Provide space and power for refrigerator and microwave oven.

Provide space, power and plumbing for a dishwasher.

Size and nature of equipment shall be commensurate with the size and functions of the facility. Refer to the project Facilities Brief for details.

### 12.6.4.4 Stoves

For **Long Day Care** provide a five burner free standing 900mm stove.

For **Preschool** provide a free standing 600mm stove.

Can be gas or electric depending on availability of gas to site.

#### **12.6.4.4 Sinks**

Double bowl, double drain-board sink.

Separate hand basin for hand washing.

Note that a sink for washing of art materials is not permitted in the kitchen.

### **12.6.5 Services**

#### **12.6.5.1 Heating, Cooling, Ventilation**

Part of Activity Area provision, unless a separate enclosed space in which separate provisions shall apply. Provide range hood exhaust above stove / cook-top.

#### **12.6.5.2 Water supply**

Cold water and hot water set at 45<sup>0</sup>C with a thermostatic mixing valve.

#### **12.6.5.3 Electrical power**

Provide double power outlets at a number of locations throughout the area. The number and locations to be decided by consultation with DECD and the user representative.

Provide a ceiling mounted heat detector.

#### **12.6.5.4 Communications**

Wall mounted telephone handset.

### **12.7 Bottle Preparation Area**

#### **12.7.1 Function**

To provide facilities for the safe and hygienic preparation of bottles and food for young children in care.

#### **12.7.2 Planning**

Provided a Bottle Preparation Area in any activity area where children require bottle feeding. This shall be a separate area or a separate part of the Kitchen or in the activity area to enable visual supervision during preparation.

#### **12.7.3 Building**

##### **12.7.3.1 Ceilings**

Acoustic ceiling.

##### **12.7.3.2 Walls**

Wall surfaces shall be smooth finish, painted low sheen (washable) acrylic.

##### **12.7.3.3 Floor**

Resilient sheet.

	<b>12.7.3.4</b>	<b>Doors</b>	Single door if a separate room.
	<b>12.7.3.5</b>	<b>Windows</b>	As necessary to allow supervision of the Activity Area from the work bench.
<b>12.7.4</b>	<b>Fixtures, Fittings, Furniture</b>		
	<b>12.7.4.1</b>	<b>Benches</b>	Fixed joinery bench with sink. Adequate length to accommodate microwave oven.  Cupboards underneath with child-proof locks.  Space and electrical power for under bench refrigerator.
	<b>12.7.4.2</b>	<b>Sink</b>	Single sink with drainboard.
<b>12.7.5</b>	<b>Services</b>		
	<b>12.7.5.1</b>	<b>Heating, Cooling, Ventilation</b>	Part of Activity Area. If a separate room consideration must be made for adequate ventilation and exhausting of boiling products.
	<b>12.7.5.2</b>	<b>Water supply</b>	Cold and hot water set at 45 <sup>o</sup> C with a thermostatic mixing valve.
	<b>12.7.5.3</b>	<b>Display boards</b>	None
	<b>12.7.5.4</b>	<b>Electrical power</b>	Double power outlet adjacent to the work bench. Power for microwave oven. Power for under bench refrigerator to be above bench to prevent child access. Provide through-bench access for cable.
	<b>12.7.5.5</b>	<b>Communications</b>	One single door for adult supervision with ventilation panel.
	<b>12.7.5.6</b>	<b>Windows</b>	External window to provide natural light and ventilation. Opening windows shall be securable against entry. Window sills shall be no lower than 1500mm. Internal window to provide observation from the Activity Area or other adjoining area. If there are adjoining sleep rooms, provide a window in common wall.
<b>12.7.6</b>	<b>Fixtures, Fittings, Furniture</b>		
			No fixtures.

**12.7.7 Services**

**12.7.7.1 Heating, Cooling, Ventilation**

Refer 11.3.4 under General Building and Site Provisions.

**12.7.7.2 Electrical power**

Provide double power outlets at a number of locations throughout the area. The number and locations to be decided by consultation with DECD and the user representative. Power outlets to be mounted at skirting level.

**12.8 STAFF PREPARATION AREA**

**12.8.1 Function**

For use by staff for preparation of educational and resource materials.

**12.8.2 Planning**

To be located away from entrance and activity areas.

**12.8.3 Buildings**

**12.8.3.1 Ceilings**

Acoustic ceiling.

**12.8.3.2 Floor**

Carpet.

**12.8.3.3 Doors**

Half-glazed single door.

Door hardware shall be at 1500mm above floor level with self closing self latching mechanism.

**12.8.3.4 Windows**

External window.

**12.8.4 Fixtures, Fittings, Furniture**

**12.8.4.1 Benches/Cupboards**

No fixed joinery; allow for loose office furniture.

**12.8.4.2 Display boards**

Provide one display board.

**12.8.5 Services**

**12.8.5.1 Heating, Cooling, Ventilation**

Refer 11.3.4 under General Building and Site Provisions.

**12.8.5.2 Electrical power**

Provide double power outlets at a number of locations throughout the area.

The number and locations to be decided by consultation with DECD and the user representative.



**12.8.5.3 Communications**

Provide data points for administrative computer, printer, modem, facsimile machine, photocopier plus spare outlets.

**12.9 STAFF ROOM / MEETING ROOM**

**12.9.1 Function**

For use by staff for recreation and for meetings.

**12.9.2 Planning**

To be located away from entrance.

**12.9.3 Building**

**12.9.3.1 Ceilings**

Acoustic ceiling.

**12.9.3.2 Floor**

Carpet.

**12.9.3.3 Doors**

Half-glazed single door, lockable. Door hardware shall be at 1500mm with self closing self latching mechanism.

**12.9.3.4 Windows**

External window and internal window.

**12.9.4 Fixtures, Fittings, Furniture**

**12.9.4.1 Benches/Cupboards**

Fixed joinery bench with sink. Adequate length to accommodate a microwave oven.

Space for refrigerator (can be under bench model where less than 10 staff or full size where 10 or more staff.

**12.9.4.2 Sink**

Single sink with drain board.

**12.9.4.3 Display boards**

Provide one display board.

**12.9.5 Services**

**12.9.5.1 Heating, Cooling, Ventilation**

Refer 11.3.4 under General Building and Site Provisions.

**12.9.5.2 Water supply**

Cold and hot water set at 45°C with a thermostatic mixing valve.

**12.9.5.3 Electrical power**

Provide double power outlets at a number of locations throughout the area. The number and locations to be decided by consultation with DECD and the user representative.

Provide for administrative computer, printer, modem, facsimile machine, photocopier plus spare outlets.

#### 12.9.5.4 Communications

Provision for telephone, facsimile and modem telephone lines.

### 12.10 TOILETS - CHILDREN

#### 12.10.1 Function

Children's toilets.

#### 12.10.2 Planning

Junior sized toilet pans to be provided as per BCA requirements. Minimum of 2 pans and basins with a ratio of 1 in 15 (see BCA requirements). Toilet provisions will be scheduled in the project Facilities Brief.

A wheelchair access/staff toilet will be provided in each centre for use by children in wheelchairs as described in 12.11 Toilets – Staff.

Toilets shall be directly accessible from the Activity Area and the outdoor learning areas and be easily accessible for free access by children.

Cubicles are to be fitted with privacy doors, including the ambulant children's toilet.

One ambulant cubicle to be included in each bathroom space. See BCA for specification.

Provision of a fixed change bench with sink type bath and separate adult hand washing basin to Preschools and Long Day Care centres. The nappy change facilities shall be located in the children's toilet area and are designed and maintained in a way that prevents unsupervised access by children. Refer to DECD specifications and standard joinery drawing for details



### **12.10.3 Building**

#### **12.10.3.1 Floor**

Ceramic floor tiles, non-slip and easily cleaned. PVC skirtings shall be provided to all walls.

#### **12.10.3.2 Walls**

Toilet walls must be impervious and easily cleanable. High gloss paint, two pack epoxy, ceramic tiles etc. should be considered for areas at risk up to 1200mm high.

Ceramic tiles around hand basins, hand driers, nappy change bath, laundry trough if installed.

#### **12.10.3.3 Doors**

Doors to the outside to be capable of being held in the fully open position flush against the wall. Door hardware height 750mm. Internal doors not to present a hazard when opened.

#### **12.10.3.4 Partitions**

Toilet partitions and doors shall not exceed 1200mm high with a minimum gap of 100mm underneath. Partition doors (privacy doors) shall be free swinging, inward opening (with buffer stop) and securable inside with reachable adult access.

#### **12.10.3.4 Windows**

High level windows to outside with one-way glass or film to prevent vision into room and which are openable for natural ventilation.

Low level windows to internal rooms to enable direct supervision particularly from Main Activity Area, with sills at 1200mm.

### **12.10.4 Fixtures, Fittings, Furniture**

#### **12.10.4.1 Fixtures**

Toilet pans to be Fowler "Kinder" pan or equivalent with dual flush cistern and full flap seat.

Nappy change benches shall include access steps with securable gate, stainless steel sink-type bath with hand-held shower, and hand basin, as per standard drawing (DPTI G-39). Grab rails to be fitted adjacent to access steps to assist children to bench top. Shower to have back-flow prevention.

#### **12.10.4.2 Heating, Cooling, Ventilation**

Fume extraction, generally in excess of Building Code requirements as doors are constantly open to Activity Areas.

#### **12.10.4.3 Hand basins**

To be provided as per Building Code requirements ie ratio of 1 hand basin per 15 children or part thereof. The maximum basin rim height shall be 600mm above floor level, except in toilet areas for children under 2 years where the maximum basin rim height shall be 550mm. One hand basin to be provided with a lever tap to cater for children with low muscle tone. Cold water.

#### **12.10.4.4 Hand Driers**

Provide electric hand driers or paper towel dispensers as required by the project Facilities Brief. Hand drier to have fixed nozzle, one per two hand basins. Ensure the quietest operating units are selected. Mounting height of the outlet nozzle shall be 650mm above floor level.

#### **12.10.4.5 Mirrors**

Toilets shall have individual mirrors contained in a frame fixed to the wall above each hand basin. Mirrors 450mm x 450mm mounted with the lowest edge 750mm from floor level.

### **12.11 TOILETS - STAFF**

#### **12.11.1 Function**

Staff and disability access toilet located separately from children's toilet area.

#### **12.11.2 Planning**

Minimum requirements are one combined staff and accessible toilet with shower and sluice drain and space to accommodate a hydraulic change bench with power.

In larger centres one additional staff toilet shall be provided as scheduled in the project Facilities Brief.

This is part of the adult precinct with no access by unaccompanied children. Ensure toilet is not in close proximity to the kitchen.

#### **12.11.3 Building**

##### **12.11.3.1 Floor**

Ceramic floor tiles.

##### **12.11.3.2 Walls**

Toilet walls must be impervious and easily cleanable. High gloss paint, two pack epoxy, ceramic tiles etc. should be considered for areas at risk up to 1200mm high.

##### **12.11.3.3 Doors**

Single door.

Door furniture height to comply with Access requirements (even though this conflicts with the desire to restrict children's access).



#### **12.11.3.4 Windows**

High level windows when on an outside wall.

#### **12.11.4 Fixtures, Fittings, Furniture**

##### **12.11.4.1 Joinery**

Shelf at 1500mm height for storage.

##### **12.11.4.2 Heating, Cooling, Ventilation**

Fume extraction as per Building Code.

##### **12.11.4.3 Hand Drier**

Provide one electric hand drier with fixed nozzle. Ensure the quietest operating unit is selected.

Mounting height of the outlet nozzle shall be 1200mm above floor level.

Paper towel dispenser may be provided in addition if required and funded by the end users.

##### **12.11.4.4 Mirrors**

Toilets shall have individual mirrors contained in a frame fixed to the wall above each hand basin. Mirrors 600mm high by 450mm wide are an appropriate size.

#### **12.12 STORE**

##### **12.12.1 Function**

The storage of cots, mattresses, trolley, games, play equipment, rolls of paper, flat paper, plastic bins for materials for the operation of the Centre.

##### **12.12.2 Planning**

Actual area and numbers to be advised in the Project Brief.

Several smaller storerooms directly accessible to each activity area shall be provided rather than one larger one as the wall space for shelving is more efficiently utilised.

Adjustable shelving, to be suitable for storing flat paper sheets, and plastic boxes/tubs for ease of handling smaller items.

Space to be allocated for storage of bulky equipment such as mattresses, beanbags, hammocks and prams/pushers, particularly for children under 2 years.

Child Care Centres could request space for storage of cots in a store room adjacent to the Sleep Room.

Mattresses shall be stored in a separate bay for hygiene reasons.

##### **12.12.3 Building**

###### **12.12.3.1 Ceilings**

Flush panel ceiling.

**12.12.3.2 Walls**

Wall surfaces shall be smooth finish, painted low sheen (washable) acrylic.

**12.12.3.3 Floor**

Resilient sheet.

**12.12.3.4 Doors**

Single lockable door. Door hardware shall be at 1500mm with self closing self latching mechanism.

**12.12.3.5 Windows**

None required.

**12.12.4 Fixtures, Fittings, Furniture**

**12.12.4.1 Shelving**

Metal Dexion type shelving is suitable as a minimum but not to exceed 1800mm high without provision for safe access.

Fixed melamine shelving with sloping top is ideal.

Adjustable spacing is preferred but 400mm fixed spacing would be satisfactory.

Additional fixed compactus shelving could be provided.

**12.12.4.2 Display boards**

None required.

**12.12.4.3 Heating, Cooling, Ventilation**

None required.

**12.12.4.4 Electrical power**

Provide double outlet GPO's at a location to be decided by consultation with DECD and the user representative.

**12.12.4.5 Communications**

None required.

**12.13 LAUNDRY**

**12.13.1 Function**

Laundry function is for regular washing of selected items (not nappies).

**12.13.2 Planning**

Direct access to service yard and clothes line.

Location of laundry to be considered where it is shared with a number of users. (ie for sites providing Long Day Care).

For sites not providing Long Day Care, laundry provision to consist of plumbing to wall, power and an appliance space in an area that is inaccessible to children ie laundry room not required but cubicle or securable space to accommodate a washing machine & dryer with external venting required.

**12.13.2 Building**

**12.13.2.1 Ceilings**

Flush panel ceiling.

**12.13.2.2 Walls**

Wall surfaces shall be smooth finish, painted low sheen (washable) acrylic with ceramic wall tiles adjacent to wash trough and washing machine.

**12.13.2.3 Floor**

Resilient sheet, or ceramic tiles if part of a toilet area.

**12.13.2.4 Doors**

Glazed single doors for internal adult access.

Door to Service Yard.

Door hardware shall be at 1500mm with self closing self latching mechanism.

Doors to be key lockable.

**12.13.3 Fixtures, Fittings, Furniture**

**12.13.3.1 Sinks**

Provide single wash trough.

**12.13.3.2 Cupboards**

Cupboard doors to be lockable for storage of detergents and all hazardous materials.

**12.13.4 Services**

**12.13.4.1 Heating, Cooling, Ventilation**

Exhaust fan to remove condensation.

**12.13.4.2 Electrical power**

Provide double power outlet at a number of locations throughout the area at 1500mm above floor level. The number and locations to be decided by consultation with DECD and the user representative.

**12.13.4.3 Communications**

None required in this area

**12.14 OUTDOOR LEARNING AREA**

**12.14.1 Function**

To cater for outdoor learning in groups of varying sizes.

## 12.14.2 Planning

### 12.14.2.1 Outdoor Learning Environment

The outdoor learning areas shall provide a maximum 9.3m<sup>2</sup> (unless otherwise negotiated) of unencumbered accessible space per child. Where a range of programs are being delivered that require specific outdoor space, separate spaces for each program are required. A separate outdoor learning area shall be provided for children under 2 years of age. This area, while separate, will be designed to be able to provide integration between adjoining areas through double gate access. Internal fencing/double gates between outdoor learning areas to be no greater than 1 metre high (900mm recommended). The design of outdoor learning environments shall reflect the developmental, social and emotional needs of the user age group.

1. In new or relocated facilities the minimum provision will be:

A Master Plan developed by an early childhood landscape design professional for the outdoor learning area in line with:

The vision and core values stated in the departments "Early Childhood Outdoor Learning Environments – Vision and Values", refer :

[http://www.earlyyears.sa.edu.au/files/links/a4\\_value\\_vision\\_pamphlet\\_s.pdf](http://www.earlyyears.sa.edu.au/files/links/a4_value_vision_pamphlet_s.pdf)

Section 1 of the Playground Manual – Office for Recreation and Sport, refer:<http://www.recSPORT.sa.gov.au/pdf/Revised%20Playgrounds%20Manual%20v2%2015%20November%20ORS%20version.pdf>

1.1 <http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/earlychildhood/licensed/pn5natenvironment.pdf>

1.2 Outdoor play guide for Victorian Children's Services (archived due to new legislation but contains sound planning principles)  
[http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/107921/20100120-1116/www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/earlychildhood/chilcare/dg/ecs\\_design\\_guide\\_april\\_2005v1.pdf](http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/107921/20100120-1116/www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/earlychildhood/chilcare/dg/ecs_design_guide_april_2005v1.pdf)

The master plan is to consider that every site and location is unique with different strengths and limitations. The following points shall be addressed in the master plan:

- Access in the environment – emergency vehicles, wheelchairs and maintenance
- Shade requirements – immediate and future planning
- Water hazards – well designed drainage to avoid any pooling of water
- Environmental hazards – no poisonous plants, need to plan for any toxic exposure
- Slope and gradient – how to incorporate into the design to enhance the area



- Flow of play – How might children travel through the area
- Supervision – Design in adult friendly seating and shade whilst maintaining line of sight for discreet supervision of children.
- Gross motor experiences
- Designing in natural elements – eg Wet/dry creek beds, plantings to create semi hidden spaces with a variety of textures, scents, colours that match the soil and climate and are robust, trees to climb or swing from.

Refer to Attachment 2 for more detailed information on design aspects.



2 The following aspects of the master plan will be constructed as part of the design brief/construction:

- Sand play area built to DECD standards with an adequate shade protection structure as detailed in the master plan and suitably located to avoid sand on the verandah and indoor area.
- All paths and paving
- Sub surface watering for the lawn and planting areas
- Mound or any gradient requirements detailed in master plan
- Roll out instant lawn (not synthetic)
- Planting of a suitable mixture of deciduous and evergreen (eg Mulberry and fruit trees) tree species which will provide shade over the outdoor environment in the later years
- Provision of water supply and drainage for water play area
- Appropriate drainage in the area to preclude any pooling of water
- Rainwater tank

- Provision of an adequately sized impact absorbing area for the delivery of gross motor activities.

Note :- consideration needs to be given to the type/height of equipment to be used and subsequent minimum fall zone areas required under the current Australian Standard.







#### **12.14.2.2 Paving**

Provide solid paths to entrance doorways, around perimeter of building, between shed, verandah and selected areas in Outdoor Learning Area (sanded area, water play area, grassed area) including a continuous path of travel and adequate clearance from obstructions for persons with disabilities. Paving is not to intrude on or go through the impact absorbing area.

Pavers with minimum bevel are preferred over flat or large bevel pavers as easier access is provided for small wheels and wheelchairs. Paths of varying textures in natural tones are preferred.

#### **12.14.2.3 Veranda**

Minimum area of 1m<sup>2</sup> per child with a minimum width of 2.4 metres, and opening directly to a usable paved or grassed area with no step. Preferably facing north to provide shelter from the weather.

An additional open/covered pergola is generally considered a Centre responsibility but can be included within any building scope of works if additional funds are provided by the Centre.

#### **12.14.2.4 Suspension points**

3 to 4 suspension points for Inclusive Preschool Program (IPP) shall be provided under the veranda to allow use by a range of swinging apparatus in all weather situations. To be located in an area that is not a thoroughfare. Points to be adequately spaced and located away from fixed elements for safety. An impact absorbing surface shall be provided under and around suspension points, such as a certified rubber impact absorbent material or certified impact absorbing mats.

#### **12.14.2.5 Shade structure**

Apart from a solid covered veranda other shade shall be provided over the sanded area.

The roof to provide adequate shade protection and be of a solid structure along with gutters and stormwater disposal. Preference for pitched roof. Support poles for the structure to be recessed under the roof structure to assist in minimising climbing, if possible commercial carport type structures are acceptable but attention must be taken to the placement of the upright supports to limit hazards for children entering or leaving the sanded area.

Note if a solid structure is to be designed and constructed it must be certified to meet the requirements of the Building Code of Australia.

Natural shade from mature deciduous trees is preferred but other shade structures may be required while trees grow. (Deciduous trees give the desired shade in summer and let the light and warmth through during the winter months.)



Structures using shade cloth are not recommended due to the high long-term maintenance costs, susceptibility to vandalism, and other risks.

Ensure the shade structure design allows for the shade to fall over most of the sanded area during operating hours. Computer generated sun plots at design stage are advisable. This should be conducted by the landscape design professional engaged to develop the master plan.

#### **12.14.2.6 Water**

Water is essential for play, learning and grounds maintenance.

Provide a minimum of two external taps for hoses in convenient positions around the site. One to be located for ease of washing down the undercover paving, and the other for use in garden maintenance. Ensure hoses are not required to be run over children's access pathways.

Additional taps should also be provided close to the sand pit to enable staff to create a creek flowing through a variety of shallow surfaces to drain into the sanded area. Such surfaces can consist of pebbles, stones, concrete etc. with some material fixed into the concrete base.

All external taps to have Consolidated Brass 20mm key-locked screw-nosed bib-taps fitted to 20mm copper standpipe. Alternatively provide a removable handle or place taps in a recessed enclosure.

Provision of a rain water tank plumbed to provide for flushing toilets or garden watering use. DECD rainwater policy excludes the use of rainwater for drinking.

#### **12.14.2.7 Fencing**

All perimeter fences and gates to outdoor learning areas shall prevent the egress of children. Fences are to be non-scalable and a standard height of 1200mm. Higher fences may be required if a site specific risk assessment has indicated high risk circumstances (ie. river, swimming pool or main road). Equipment, plantings or structures are not to be installed within 1m of the perimeter fence as this can reduce the effective height. The decision as to the type of fence to install should be based on the view provided from the perimeter fence area, the natural surroundings, the functionality of the fence surface and local considerations. Perimeter fences need not be limited to pool type fencing, provided they are non-scalable and a minimum 1200mm high e.g. fences next to car parks could be of solid type where viewing is not required eg colorbond etc. Perimeter fence types could vary for a particular site and be more aesthetically pleasing by using for displaying children's art work etc.

All single gates on perimeter fencing shall be fitted with a self-closing and child proof self-locking mechanisms.

Double gates shall be provided on perimeter fencing (with padlocks) to allow for the efficient delivery and access to sand and soft-fall areas.

Dividing internal fencing shall not exceed 1 metre high (900mm recommended) and include openable double gates to enable integration between adjoining play areas. (not required to be self closing self locking).

Any fencing type with spikes is not recommended on the perimeter or internal fencing.

Gaps under fences and gates, or to adjacent structures, shall be no greater than 100mm. Any filling used under a fence must be secured and unable to be removed. Any gaps between the vertical bars in fences/gates are to be no more than 100mm, in line with current Australian Standards.

Fences shall be protected from damage by vehicles.

## **12.15 CAR PARK**

### **12.15.1 Function**

Provide short term parking for parents to take children into the centre for at least 25% of the enrolment capacity but this can vary depending on local council requirements. Generally these parking spaces will not be provided on a DECD site.

Design consideration must ensure that children and parents do not have direct access from the building into the carpark,

### **12.15.2 Planning**

The following parking spaces shall be provided for staff:

One parking space to be provided for each FTE (full time equivalent) staff member

one Accessible parking space to be provided

An additional 10% of the total for visitor parking.

The above commitment only applies to new sites and may not apply to existing sites or redevelopments if site area restrictions exist. This means DECD does not buy additional land for car parking purposes.

Provide short term parking for parents to take children into the Centre for at least 25% of enrolment capacity but this can vary depending on local requirements. Generally these parking spaces will not be provided on the DECD site.

Consider options for shared parking with other providers and negotiate street parking arrangements with the local government authority.

Footpaths shall be provided for safe passage from car park to building and outdoor area entrances.

## **12.16 SERVICE YARD**

### **12.16.1 Function**

To provide for the secure location of rubbish bins, recycling bins, clothes drying.

### **12.16.2 Planning**

An area secure from child access with ready access from laundry and/or kitchen.

Gates and path access to the site frontage for easy bin collection.

Position 240 litre "Wheellie Bins" away from building walls and eaves to minimise risk of fire. Consider plates/chains/locks etc to fix bins to prevent inappropriate use.

Access for pick-up vehicles shall be allowed for.

### **12.16.3 Building**

Outdoor space. No covering required.

#### **12.16.3.1 Floor**

Non slip paving.

### **12.16.4 Fixtures, Fittings, Furniture**

#### **12.16.4.1 Clothes Line**

Minimum provision of retractable clothesline.

Larger clothesline may be required for child care functions managing their own laundry. Refer to the Project Brief.

## **12.17 SHED**

### **12.17.1 Function**

To provide for the storage of trestles, sand play equipment, carpentry equipment, easels, water play equipment, climbing ladders, bicycles, paddle pools, hoses, reels, walking boards, balance beams etc.

Secure location for irrigation timers.

### 12.17.2 Planning

For floor area see 'Space Entitlement Table' that forms part of this document. If applicable the facilities Brief will include allowances for equipment for children with additional needs.

Solid pathways from shed door to sanded area, water play area, grassed play and Main Activity Area to enable easy movement of equipment on trolleys.

Secure from child access.

### 12.17.3 Building

Commercially available 'Colour bond' steel shed is adequate.

Some clear polycarbonate roof sheet can be used to provide natural daylight. Mesh shall be provided under sheeting for security.

#### 12.17.3.1 Floor

Concrete floor.

#### 12.17.3.2 Doors

Double door access to Outdoor Learning Area. (Lift-up doors are not acceptable, but hinged and sliding doors are acceptable). Closing mechanisms shall be above child head height.

#### 12.17.3.3 Windows

None required.

### 12.17.4 Fixtures, Fittings, Furniture

#### 12.17.4.1 Shelves

Fixed shelving on two sides of the shed. Metal Dexion shelving or equivalent is acceptable.

Allow space for climbing ladders, walking boards to be placed on one wall.

### 12.17.5 Services

Electrical power and light.

Possible location for irrigation controller.





**Attachment 1**

**DESIGN CHECKLIST**

The following legislative requirements, standards, guidelines and items are mandatory requirements in the design of a DECD Early Childhood Facility	Compliance Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BCA Legislative Requirements for an Early Childhood Educational Setting (Class 9b)</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant Australian Standards</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Quality Standards for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Aged Care</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children's Services (Child Care Centre )Regulations 1998 (or super seeded legislation)</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Early Childhood Outdoor Learning Environments Vision and Values</i></li> </ul>	
<b>Stakeholder Consultation</b> - Early Childhood Services are to be consulted during the concept design stage and final site plans prior to any building works being undertaken	
<b>Items</b>	
<b>Door Hardware Height:</b> Ensure that door hardware is fitted at 1500mm high on doors leading to areas that are not to be freely accessed by children ie staff toilets, staff rooms, offices, consultation rooms, cleaner's rooms and store rooms. If these doors lead from a children's care area then they shall be fitted with a self closing self latching mechanism.	
<b>Door hardware</b> into and out of children's toilets to be fitted at 750mm	
<b>Door hardware</b> leading from inside areas to outdoor learning space to be fitted at 750 mm high	
<b>Door Safety Covers</b> fitted to door jambs in areas used by children to prevent children's finger entrapment	
<b>Doors</b> – on cleaner's cupboards hardware at 1500mm with self closing, self latching mechanism	
<b>Doors</b> leading to outdoor learning space to be securable in their open position ie flush against the adjacent walls	
<b>Doors</b> leading to and from indoor/outdoor must be flush at ground level for disabled access and trip hazard free	
<b>Entry / Exit doors</b> to children's care areas from foyer / reception areas to have door hardware fitted at 1500mm high and be fitted with self-closing self-latching mechanisms	
<b>Fencing/gates</b> - Gaps between vertical bars of pool type fences/gates to be consistent along the entire length and no greater than 100mm.	
<b>Fencing/gates</b> - Gaps underneath or to adjacent structures not to exceed 100mm. Ensure filling underneath fencing is not easily removed so as to ensure a maximum 100mm gap is not exceeded. If necessary cement border or similar to be provided.	
<b>Fencing/gates</b> - Where required internal fencing/gates that separate children's play space must not exceed 1 metre in height – 900mm recommended.	
<b>Fridges</b> located in children's space to be fitted with safety straps to prevent free access by children and to be large enough to accommodate appropriate storage for the capacity of a facility	
<b>Gates</b> securing kitchens to have childproof mechanisms- no sprung hinges and no finger entrapments	
<b>Glazing</b> under 1 metre must be safety glass standard in all areas used by children	
<b>Grab rails</b> for children's use when climbing stairs to nappy change bench	

<b>Hand Basins</b> - Children's hand washing basins to meet BCA requirements ie rim height no greater than 600mm above floor level	
<b>Hot Water:</b> outlets to be tempered to a maximum 45°C where freely accessible to children - Recommended to be set at 40-42°C	
<b>Kitchens / kitchenettes</b> are designed in such a way that children do not have free access to stoves/ovens, appliances, hot water, dishwashers, utensils etc. An island bench with side gates is recommended.	
<b>Natural Light Schedule</b> to be provided by the architect verifying BCA requirements are met in relation to natural light	
<b>Power points</b> if not in use to be covered with safety plugs	
<b>Privacy doors</b> to be provided to cubicles in children's toilets, including ambulant toilet.	
<b>Retainer walls</b> - If retainer walls are required ensure they are not able to be climbed by children	
<b>Shade</b> - Provision of adequate shade in outdoor learning space either by effective plantings or suitable shade structure shall be provided in at least one other area as well as the sand area cover and positioned in such a way that maximises the shade provided in the afternoon.	
<b>Shade / Sand Area</b> - Shade cover to be of solid construction with support poles receded under roof structure to prevent climbing. To extend over the whole sand area	
<b>Storage</b> - Storage space required for children's personal belongings in the form of pigeon holes	
<b>Stormwater Grates/Drains</b> in outdoor learning environments – ensure diameter of grate holes are not in the 5 -25 mm range (finger entrapments)	
<b>Trip Hazards</b> - ensure varying indoor floor surfaces don't provide trip hazards	
<b>Washing machines / dryers</b> not to be located in children's toilet space or any space accessible to children	
<b>Windows</b> - Do all windows in children's space enable ventilation throughout the day or is suitable mechanical ventilation installed	
<b>Windows</b> – Observation windows to be provided to children's toilet area, sleep rooms / spaces and withdrawal space to allow effective supervision by staff.	
<b>Zip Hydra taps</b> not to be fitted in areas where children have access	

## **DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS FOR LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS**

### **Outdoor**

Including natural elements into an outdoor play space does not have to look a particular way, there is no formula that has to be followed. The design will take into account the size and configuration of the space, the way in which the space is used at the children's service and the ages of the children who play in the space.

A "good playground" is not necessarily an expensive one, but one which is imaginative in its layout and where possible, one that has items which can be regularly changed (eg. loose parts, unstructured and natural play spaces).

### **Indoor**

Natural environments do not have to be limited to outdoors. There are many ways in which the natural environment can enhance the children's indoor program. Pot plants and small tubs in which to grow plants are visually appealing in children's rooms. Parts of branches and small logs with the bark attached can be used in imaginative play in conjunction with other materials. Pine cones, seed pods, leaves, gumnuts and small stones can be used in different ways including opportunities for children to explore simple science and maths concepts such as classifying, counting and weighing. Sand and water trays inside provide additional interesting experiences for children's play.

### **Why natural play spaces?**

'Children are connected to and contribute to their world'. This outcome requires educators to help children to develop an awareness of the impact of human activity on the environment and the interdependence of living things. Natural environments within children's services are the arena in which children learn these things.

Belonging, Being and Becoming, the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (2009) examines the practice of early childhood pedagogy and the role that good learning environments play in teaching. 'Play spaces in natural environments include plants, trees edible gardens, sand, rocks, mud, water and other elements from nature. These spaces invite open ended interactions, spontaneity, risk taking, exploration, discovery and connection with nature. They foster an appreciation of the natural environment, develop environmental awareness and provide a platform for ongoing environmental education'.



### **General design elements for consideration**

#### **Rocks**

Creative placement of rocks and boulders around a play space can provide children and adults with easy to challenging "routes". Rocks and boulders can be great for learning climbing skills or just good old fashioned fun. Children almost always gravitate toward rocks and boulders, they become the immediate favourite place for children of all ages to explore and interact.

In addition to defining areas such as a sand area or dry creek bed, rocks and boulders provide opportunities for challenging and fun play, and add to the natural materials used in play spaces. Children's balancing skills are tested when they make their way along a boulder border or use the boulders as stepping stones. The boulders can also be a good place to sit and rest, talk or watch. Cleverly arranged rocks and boulders are safe. Children have a healthy respect for the solidity and hardness of rocks and boulders and develop their own sense of care, concern, and safety when they climb on them. Boulder sizes vary with the age of the children using them, however, ensure that the boulder measures less than 500mm from playing surface level for ease of access and to avoid tested surfacing requirements. When positioning boulders, take care to prevent entrapment hazards such as gaps or tunnels where children can injure their legs/feet/ankles. Rocks and boulders are buried into the ground with at least 1/3 of the boulder mass being below ground surface. Make sure boulders are stabilised (this may be assisted with the use of cement / mortar) so that no movement occurs as children and adults travel over them. Ensure that any sharp corners/edges are removed from rocks and boulders to provide smooth well rounded surfaces.



## **Mounds**

Mounds give a three dimensional aspect to an area that may be otherwise flat and a child may experience a feeling of being the king or queen of the castle and view the world from a different level. Mounds can be crawled over safely by babies, can be used to "hide" behind, for sitting or lying on, and can have a wide variety of play items added to them.

Mounds should be constructed with a maximum of 1 in 3 gradient for mowing and allow children access without slipping (or if a tractor-mounted mower is used then this gradient should be a maximum of 1 in 4). This means that for every 1 metre in height, the mound will need to be three (or four) metres in length. An extra one metre width should also be allowed on top of the mound for a flat area to allow the addition of a landing or low level platform. Therefore a one metre high mound (sufficient for the smaller child) should be seven metres in diameter.

Mounds can also be used for a variety of other items to be inserted on or through the mound. This can include slides which are installed onto the mound giving added safety as a fall by a child would be from a reduced height. This can reduce costs as the slide is less than 500mm above ground level therefore certified impact absorbing surfacing is not required either side of the slide, however, a 1000mm free space is required from the centre of the slide to each side. A 2000mm run out section (fall zone) filled with certified impact absorbing surfacing is required from the end of the slide. At the top and bottom of the slide *Kidsafe NSW* recommends the addition of a synthetic product such as wet pour rubber or synthetic grass to eliminate erosion. Timber decks may be used at the top of the slide for this purpose but may get slippery when damp or wet. A steadying post (with optional handle grips) is also recommended at the slide entrance to assist children upon entering.

Mounds can be landscaped with plants suitable to your area including small trees for shade, shrubs and native grasses.

Other items for mounds include timber stages, shopfronts, pergolas, telephones, dry creek beds, boulders, rock climbing activities and fragrant gardens using aromatic plants. Bridges can be installed between a series of mounds and if kept below 500mm above ground level these do not need certified impact absorbing surfacing. Amphitheatres are perfect for mounds using sleepers set into the mound with the step height approximately 375mm high and the landing width approximately 600mm deep to allow for seating.

## RESOURCES TO BE CONSULTED

Early Childhood Outdoor Learning Environments – Vision and Values  
Department for Education and Child Development – South Australia  
[www.earlyyears.sa.edu.au/files/links/A4\\_Value\\_Vision\\_pamphlet\\_s.pdf](http://www.earlyyears.sa.edu.au/files/links/A4_Value_Vision_pamphlet_s.pdf)

Playground Manual 2007  
Department of Recreation and Sport – South Australia  
[www.recsport.sa.gov.au/pdf/Revised%20Playgrounds%20Manual%20v2%2015%20November%20ORS%20version.pdf](http://www.recsport.sa.gov.au/pdf/Revised%20Playgrounds%20Manual%20v2%2015%20November%20ORS%20version.pdf)

Site Profiles 1-4 - Early Childhood Outdoor Learning Environments  
Department for Education and Child Development – South Australia  
[www.earlyyears.sa.edu.au/pages/Resources](http://www.earlyyears.sa.edu.au/pages/Resources)

Outdoor Play Guide for Victorian Children's Services  
Department of Education of Education and Early Childhood Development - Victoria  
[http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/107921/20100120-1116/www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/earlychildhood/childcare/dg/ecs\\_design\\_guide\\_april\\_2005v1.pdf](http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/107921/20100120-1116/www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/earlychildhood/childcare/dg/ecs_design_guide_april_2005v1.pdf)  
Note: This publication has been archived due to outdated links through legislative changes; however design principles and concepts are relevant.

Natural environments photographs, Practice Note 5(a)  
Department of Education of Education and Early Childhood Development - Victoria  
[www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/earlychildhood/licensed/pn5a-natenvironments.pdf](http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/earlychildhood/licensed/pn5a-natenvironments.pdf)



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