



WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY



WSU LIVERPOOL CITY CAMPUS
CRÈCHE EVALUATION REPORT :

UNTOLD STORIES OF STUDENT PARENTS

2023

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the traditional custodians of the land. We acknowledge their continuing connection to country and pay respects to ancestors and Elders, past, present, and emerging.



We extend our sincere appreciation to the creche project leads, Dr Jenna Condie and Dr. Sharlotte Tusasiirwe, without your strong advocacy for on-campus childcare support, this project would not have been possible.

Our sincere appreciation goes to all Western Sydney University faculty and student-parents who participated in this evaluation. Your voices will make a difference in the lives of those colleagues and peers, respectively, who are experiencing childcare crisis.

We are thankful to the CEO- Liverpool Neighbourhood Connections, Pat Hall, and your team for providing free creche care to faculty and student-parents for 10 weeks at Western Sydney University Liverpool campus.

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ATOS

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THIS IS MY STORY:

"When everyone goes to sleep at night, I start studying and writing my thesis. I go to campus 7- 8 pm and until 1.00 am or 2.00am. Some days I don't return home from campus since I need uninterrupted study time. Sometimes, I do wish the almighty would take me away from this life."

(Student-Parent)



THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Australia, being a working and/or studying parent can be isolating, stressful and challenging, especially for those student parents with limited or no access to family and formal childcare support. The high costs of formal childcare make it expensive and unaffordable for most students and faculty who are parents particularly single and lone parents, parents with more than one child, and international students who have no access to government's childcare subsidy. The situation is exacerbated when one is a student parent with other caring responsibilities for older people. It is also worth noting that childcare is often hard to access in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in western Sydney. During the Spring semester of 2023, a pilot creche care model project was initiated and implemented at the Liverpool city campus, Western Sydney University (WSU) for ten weeks.

The project aimed at providing student parents and faculty with accessible and flexible childcare services. In the month of November 2023, an evaluation of the creche care project was initiated and conducted. Drawing on a realist evaluation approach, the evaluation used the logic model methodology and theory of change to assess the relevance and effectiveness of on-campus childcare services in providing an enabling environment for student-parents and faculty engagement in university study and work without childcare-related disruptions. Data on service user experiences was collected through in-depth interviews from participating student parents and faculty. This report, therefore, presents the findings of the evaluation which are imperative in informing future actions relevant to adapting the creche care model as an alternative form of childcare support for student parents and faculty at WSU. The report demonstrates that the creche care model does not only improve student parents' overall university experience and study outcomes, but it also has the potential of mitigating isolation through the creation of a community of student parents with similar lived experiences. Six recommendations including investing in a more permanent and regular on campus creche care facility at the Liverpool city campus have been provided.



CONTEXT OF THE CRECHE

Between Week 3 to Week 13 of the Autumn/Spring semester (18th August 2023-20th October 2023), a team of academics, partnering with Liverpool Neighbourhood Connections (LNC) - a community organisation, piloted the mobile creche care model at Western Sydney University (WSU) Liverpool City Campus. During this pilot project, a total of 10 children of WSU students who are parents were provided with childcare services.

The background for this pilot project of an informal childcare solution at WSU was informed by findings from existing research at the university which shows that being a working and/or studying parent can be isolating, stressful and challenging, especially for those student parents with limited or no access to family and formal childcare support (Tusasiirwe, 2022). The high costs of formal childcare make it expensive and unaffordable for most students who are parents particularly single parents, parents with more than one child, and international students who have no access to government's childcare subsidy. Furthermore, childcare is often hard to access in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the western Sydney region (Condie et al., 2023). Many places in the region are 'childcare deserts' (Mitchell Institute, 2022), which are defined as places where there are three or more children for every childcare place available. Research has found

that Liverpool, as a socio-economically disadvantaged location in the western Sydney region, needs more place-based childcare alternatives (Stout & Nagaddya, 2020). This is premised on the understanding that Liverpool is experiencing a growing population of lone migrants including student parents – a situation that exacerbates childcare precarity (Nagaddya & Stout, 2022). The intersecting educational and family caring responsibilities borne by student parents isolate them, impeding their consistent and deeper engagement in university culture, study and research, and career development activities (Smith et al, 2021; Tusasiirwe, 2022). Hence to support the educational pursuits of student parents, universities must provide childcare services. This pilot project acted on the specific recommendations of research funded by the Vice Chancellor’s Gender Equity Fund (Bowyer et al., 2020). Bowyer et al. (2020) produced a report on the need for new campus-based childcare options at Western Sydney University campuses, in particular offering drop-in creche care services, and becoming “child friendly” campus pilot project acted on the specific recommendations of research funded by the Vice Chancellor’s Gender Equity Fund (Bowyer et al., 2020). Bowyer et al. (2020) produced a report on the need for new campus-based childcare options at Western Sydney University campuses, in particular offering drop-in creche care services, and becoming “child friendly” campuses.s.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PIED PIPER MODEL OF CHILDCARE



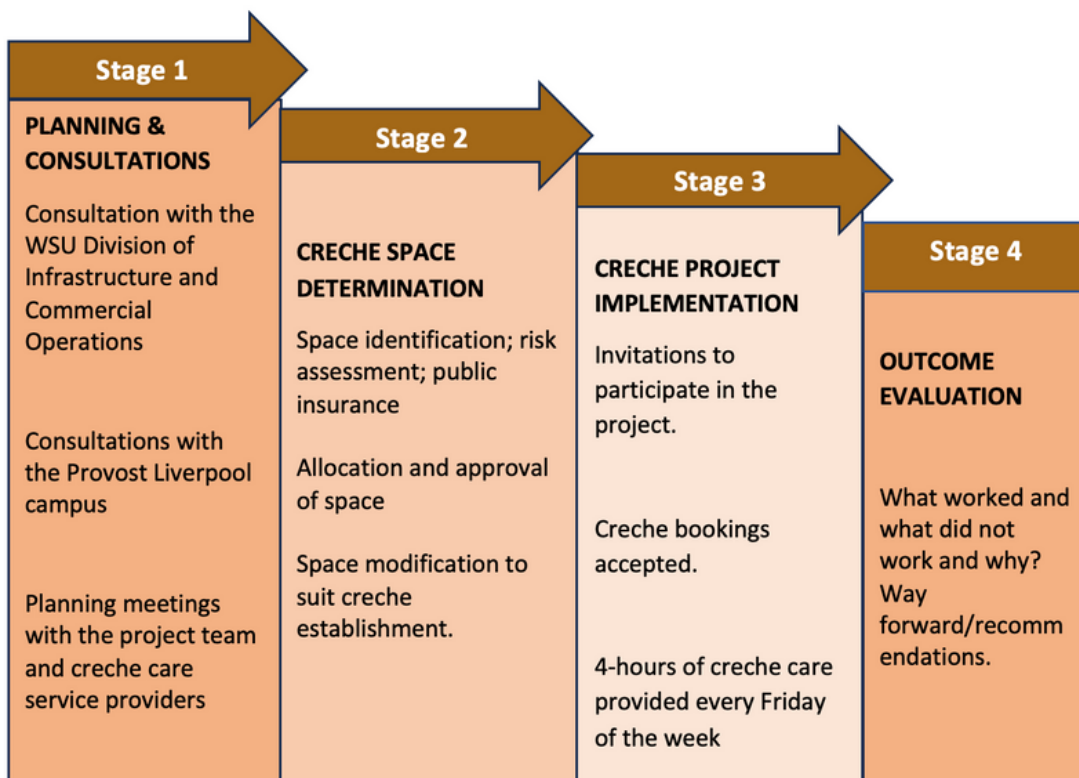
In partnership with the Liverpool Neighbourhood Connections - a place-based community organisation working with migrant families in crisis, creche project adopted the ‘Pied Pieper Mobile Childcare’ (PPMC) model. The model is designed to offer a non-conventional approach to childcare to families experiencing childcare crisis. PPMC targets children aged between 0-5 years and engages them in active and flexible learning, social interaction activities, and playtime.

DESIGN OF THE CRECHE SERVICE MODEL DELIVERED AT LIVERPOOL CITY CAMPUS.

The mobile creche care service at Liverpool campus comprised of 2 main services: creche service for children of student parents and a co-working with creche space for student parents. The running of the creche service relied on utilising in-kind support and resources. In this case, a collaborative teaching space identified and approved for the establishment of the creche which operated every Friday of the week for four hours. To adhere to the child educator to child ratio of 1 to 4, (ACECQA, 2022) only 10 children were enrolled in creche care with two attending alternate Fridays. The mobile creche care model was designed in a way that parents of children must stay on site, in the same building or nearby. With this condition in place, a co-working space (quite room set adjacent to the creche) was set up. Student-parents would drop off their children and go to study in the co-working space or use the library or any other spaces available in the Liverpool city campus building. Participating student-parents were also encouraged to always have their phones reachable as they would be contacted for nappy change or toilet visits needed by their children.

It is within this contextual lens that an outcome evaluation of the pilot project was conducted.

Figure 1: The four main stages undertaken in creche organising, piloting and evaluation.



OVERARCHING AIM OF THE EVALUATION

The overall aim of the creche project evaluation was to assess the relevance and effectiveness of on-campus childcare services in providing an enabling environment for student-parents and faculty to engage in university study and work without childcare-related disruptions. This was achieved through:

1. Exploring student-parents, service provider, and project implementers' experiences of engaging with and providing creche care services respectively, at Liverpool Campus.
2. Identifying creche project characteristics that have the potential of mitigating childcare stress among faculty and student parents and enhance their engagement with university studies and work (and overall work-life balance).
3. Providing recommendations to the leadership of Western Sydney University (WSU) about the continuity of creche care services at Liverpool and possible replication of the model at other campuses anchored in marginalised neighbourhoods.

AN IMPLEMENTER'S INSIGHT:

"Liverpool came out as one of the areas that is at risk of becoming a childcare desert, as documented in the white paper by Western Sydney University researchers. We also have the campus there".

(WSU Academic)



EVALUATION DESIGN AND APPROACH

The evaluation is framed within a realist theoretical framework. It draws on the logic model and Theory of Change methodologies to gain an understanding of the relevance and effectiveness of the creche initiative in providing an enabling environment for student-parents and faculty to engage in university study and work without childcare-related disruptions. Both methodologies and the realist approach have a fundamental objective, which is to clearly describe the processes and reasons behind how and why an intervention can lead to specific outcomes (Subrina et al., 2014).

REALIST EVALUATION APPROACH

Realist evaluation is founded on the philosophical perspective of realism, which considers the social world to be genuine and tangible. It is an evaluation approach that aims to uncover the underlying mechanisms that explain how and why programs work (or don't work) in specific contexts. It seeks to identify the contextual factors that trigger mechanisms, leading to specific outcomes (Pawson and Tilley, 2004). Realists regard programs/ interventions as "as rather sophisticated social interactions set amidst a complex social reality" (p.6). They highlight four key linked concepts for understanding programs: namely, 'mechanism', 'context', 'outcome pattern', and 'context-mechanism-outcome pattern configuration'.

Mechanisms refer to the underlying elements of programs and interventions that drive their effects. Realist evaluation commences with the researcher hypothesising the potential processes through which a program could function, laying the groundwork for subsequent testing and validation (Pawson and Tilley, 2004). Context describes those features of the conditions in which programmes are introduced that are relevant to the operation of the programme mechanisms. Scholars argue that contextual thinking is important to address the issues of 'for whom' and 'in what circumstances' a programme will work. However, it is important to differentiate context from locality. The 'context' is defined not only in relation to physical location, but also indicates "networks of interpersonal and social connections, as well as factors like biology, technology, economic conditions" (p.8). Highly successful programs align with the objectives and needs of their participants.

The outcome pattern encompasses both the anticipated and unforeseen results of programs, arising from the engagement of various mechanisms within diverse contexts. Context-mechanism-outcome pattern configurations (CMOCs) consist of frameworks that illustrate how programs trigger mechanisms, involving specific individuals or entities, within conditions, resulting in changes in behavioural, event, or state patterns (Pawson and Tilley, 2004).

Derived from program evaluation, logic models also stem from the necessity to investigate and elucidate the connections between inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes. Theory of change and program logic model are frequently used interchangeably. A Theory of Change is a process of thinking through and documenting how and why an initiative works, and conditions required for its success (Weiss, 1995). This method involves a methodical examination of the interconnections among the initiative's activities, outcomes, and contextual factors (Connell and Kubisch, 1998).

It plays a role in enhancing the precision of both planning and execution of an initiative. Furthermore, it simplifies the components of measurement and data collection within the evaluation process. Establishing a Theory of Change from the outset and obtaining consensus on it among all stakeholders diminishes, though does not entirely eradicate, challenges associated with casual attribution of impact (Connell and Kubisch, 1998). On the one hand, theory of change has the primary purpose of providing explanatory power using a graphic representation or a written account of strategies, conditions and resources that lead to desired outcomes (Reinholz and Andrews, 2020).

On the other hand, the program logic model does not elaborate on why and how a program anticipates achieving intended outcomes. Instead, it is a simple, linear and visual representation of the intended operations (AIFS, 2023). In this case, the evaluation process started with the development of a theory of change for the creche project

PHASED APPROACH TO THE EVALUATION

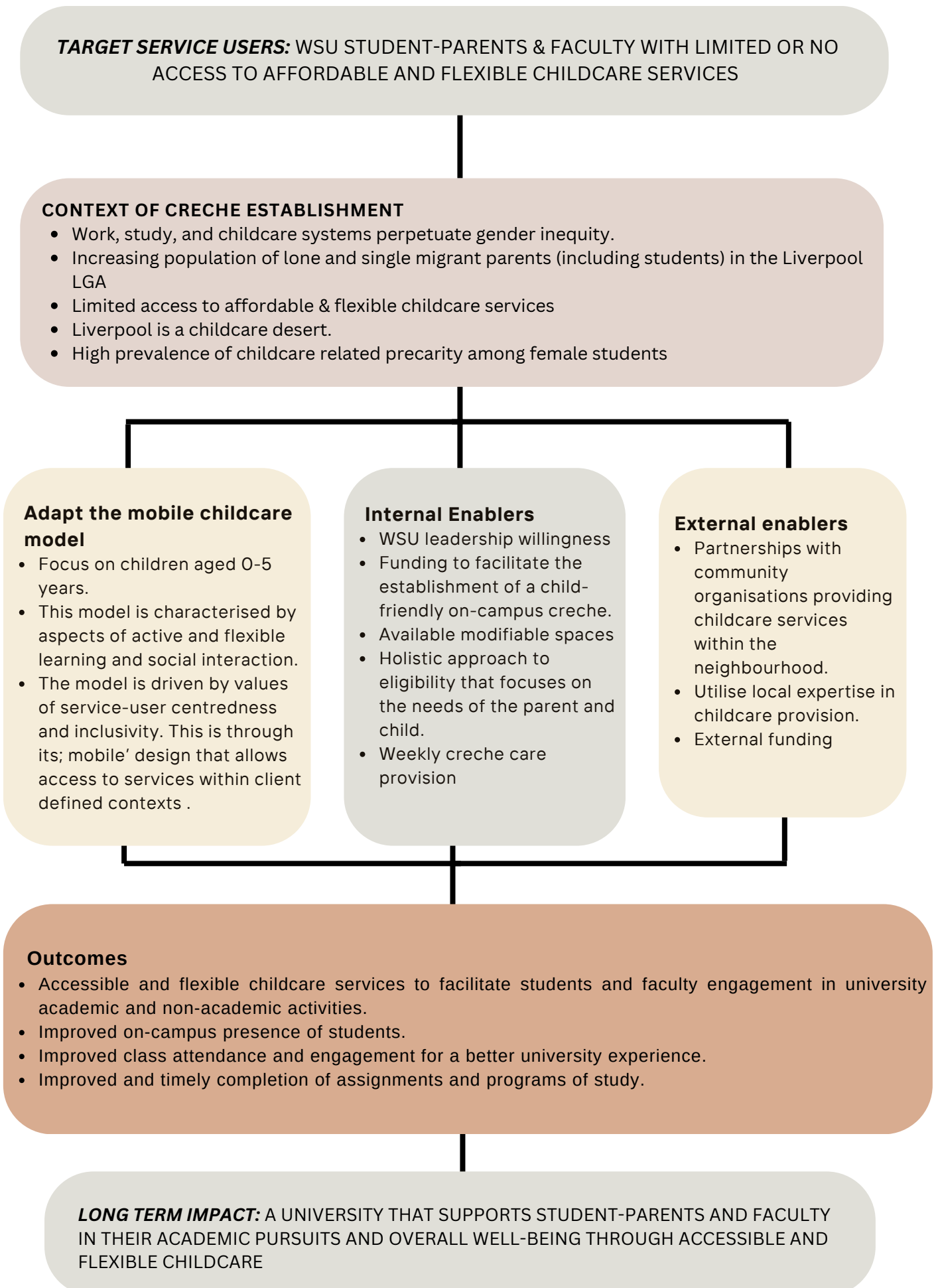
The process of conducting the evaluation was done in several phases which happened between the months of October to November 2023. The initial phase was to develop the Theory of Change. Given that the creche initiative had a well-developed logic model (see Appendix 1), this was used to inform the Theory of Change that underpins the creche model.

PHASE 1: DEVELOPMENT OF THE CRECHE INITIATIVE THEORY OF CHANGE (TOC)

The key assumptions that underpin the creche initiative theory of change are:

- The work, study and childcare systems perpetuate gender inequity, structural class inequalities, maintaining social hierarchies that determine who can access opportunities and who cannot. This perspective is critical in articulating the risks, uncertainties and vulnerabilities associated with accessing childcare services among WSU students (domestic and international) and faculty studying and working respectively on campuses within marginalised neighbourhoods.
- The Liverpool local government area is experiencing an increasing population of international migrant student parents (some are lone parents). This demographic change provides an opportunity for universities anchored in this area to establish childcare services to directly support career goals of their students. Consequently, this will not only attract students to WSU but will contribute to better retention rates.
- Providing on-campus childcare services supports campus activation and a sense of community and belonging among parents.
- Establishing university partnerships with place-based community organisations anchored in marginalised neighbourhoods facilitates sustainable access to flexible and affordable childcare services.
- Providing on-campus childcare services is central to students' and faculty's engagement with the university's learning and teaching activities and to meet scholarly obligations.
- Provision of on-campus childcare services contributes to international students' settlement and integration into Australia's higher education system and the broader society. This assumption is premised on the understanding that migration disrupts international students' collective systems of childcare support which are critical to students' settlement in a new country.

Figure 2: Theory of Change



Based on the above ToC, the adaption of the mobile model of childcare has the potential of improving the teaching, learning and research outcomes and overall well-being, of faculty and student-parents experiencing childcare crisis.

PHASE 2: PARTICIPANTS AND DATA COLLECTION

A total sample of 12 participants (n=12) was invited to participate in this evaluation. Participants comprised of six (n=6) service users, four project implementers (n=4), and two service providers (n=2). In-depth audio recorded interview were conducted and these lasted between 35-45 minutes.

PHASE 3: DATA TRANSCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

All interviews were transcribed using Otter software. The evaluation team undertook a group coding process, and this was aimed at gaining consensus about the emerging themes. Finally, one team member did the final coding based on the agreed upon themes and included any other emerging ones. In this case, a thematic analysis was done.



AN IMPLEMENTER'S INSIGHT:

"We've had regular users of the service and we've had casual users of the service. So we've managed to learn a lot about what students need. It's been used by sessional staff, but not permanent staff. So that's also indicative of who needs this support".

(WSU Academic)

FINDINGS OF THE EVALUATION

This section presents the findings of the evaluation. The aim of the evaluation was to assess the relevance and effectiveness of on-campus childcare services in creating an enabling environment for student-parents and faculty to engage in university study and work without childcare-related disruptions. Highlighted in the first section are the demographic characteristics of participants. In the second section, participants' narratives of their experiences pre and post joining the creche are documented including the creche characteristics that have worked or did not work for them. Participants' experiences also demonstrate the creche characteristics that have worked or did not work for them.

The third section highlights the challenges experienced by service providers and creche implementers in establishing the creche in a new setting. The last section of the report presents the conclusion and recommendations.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS

Although the project was open to both faculty and students, only one faculty member who also doubled as an international PhD student participated in the evaluation. A total number of twelve participants (n=12) were involved in the evaluation. Among these, six participants were service users aged between 25-40 years.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of student-parents using the creche

Participant ID	Resident Status	Suburb of residence	Current study level	Gender	Marital Status	Participants' total number of children	Age of child (ren) attending creche (months)	Employment status (Y/N)	Income source
PT ID 01	Domestic	Leppington	Postgraduate	Female	Married	1	17 months	Yes (P/T)	Couple income
PT ID 02	Domestic	Liverpool	Undergraduate	Female	Single	4	40 months	Yes	Single-parent income
PT ID 03	Domestic	Liverpool	Undergraduate	Female	Not stated	3	24 months 36 months	No	Centrelink
PT ID 04	Domestic	Cabramatta	Undergraduate	Female	Single	4	60 months	No	Centrelink
PT ID 05	Domestic	Glenfield	Undergraduate	Female	Single	1	15 months	No	Centrelink
PT ID 06	International	Liverpool	Postgraduate	Female	Married	2	18 months	Yes (Casual)	Couple income

In addition to the six student parents, there were four (n=4) project implementers and two service providers (n=2) who participated in the evaluation.

PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCES BEFORE CRECHE ENGAGEMENT

Participants were asked to reflect about their childcare routine practices and student life before joining the creche project. This was important in understanding the contextual factors shaping participants' access to childcare. Five broad themes emerged from their narratives, and these included:

- Cost of childcare,
- Disruption and loss of autonomy in managing time, studies/research and assessments,
- Missed university experience,
- Experiences of student-parent-carer precarity and
- Selfcare-struggles.

COST OF CHILDCARE

While all participants acknowledged having engaged with some form of childcare before joining the creche project, which was either accessed through the 'gym' 'sports clubs' as revealed by some participants (01, 05), or formal established centres, some alluded to the high costs involved – 'it's a huge cost'. Yet, five (n=5) of the participants spoke of using childcare services for at least 2-3 days a week.

Perspectives about the cost of childcare were largely shaped by one's marital status, resident status, and source of income. For, instance, this single, first-time mother recounted:

"...pretty expensive to enrol upfront. It was like \$650 because that covered you know, administration fees and then they wanted like a \$500 bond and four weeks up front or something like that. So, it's expensive". (Participant 05, Single mother)



Similarly, being an international student-parent increased the risk of not accessing affordable childcare because one had to 'pay out of pocket' (Student-parent in casual employment). On the contrary, some participants who depended on Centrelink as their main source of income and had a privilege of childcare subsidy, had a more pleasant cost experience.

*“I'm okay with that childcare subsidy because I have two kids and a five-year-old. for the two-year-olds, I'm only paying \$11 a day, which is not a big cost. It's very lucky”
(Participant 04, Single mother)*

While childcare subsidy relieves parents from a heavy childcare financial burden, the everyday high cost of living takes away from this relief. And for some participants, in the absence of formal childcare, informal support networks in form of family members such as brothers, grandmothers, sisters play a fundamental role. For instance, a mother of four children shared that, 'if my brother is at home, then I will leave my youngest with him. If not, then I usually ask my sister' (Participant 02).

DISRUPTION AND LOSS OF AUTONOMY IN STUDIES AND ASSESSMENT MANAGEMENT

Apart from the cost of childcare, the four other broad themes that emerged from participants' responses, demonstrated their uniqueness but interconnected everyday life experiences. The most spoken about theme was the disruption and loss of autonomy in managing study and assessment schedules, research work and time. For instance, one mother who felt extremely powerless shared her experience:

“I have been having to only pick Tuesday classes. If I don't have childcare, I basically can't do a unit if it doesn't fall on Tuesday.”
(Participant 05)

Another participant revealed that:

“I feel like I am in jail with my kids and with my thesis. I've cried a lot and felt guilty. I'm in between two, being a mum and being a student.”
(Participant 06)

The complexities of aligning childcare with academic activities are not only an issue of loss of autonomy but also pose a risk of one not completing their degree of study in time. In other cases, a shift in daytime activities to nighttime were reported. Recollecting her routine practices, participant 03 mentioned, 'I just wouldn't be studying during the day or working on assessments or anything else'. This shift in time does not only create selfcare struggles but also likely to cause mental health challenges.



With a similar lived experience, a single mother with a one-year-old and three months child reflected on her routine practices:

“So as a routine..... it’s zero study, because I must get back to her [child]. So there’s no chance to study like when she goes for one, two hours [for daycare]. I usually do have household chores.... there’s no study, I just look after my daughter.”
(Participant 05)

Foregoing studying was not the only challenge induced by childcare inadequacies but also not being able to attend university was another, as mentioned by participant (04), ‘...my routine would be, I wouldn’t be coming to university, I would be doing other things around the house with her [daughter]’.

In essence, participants were reporting what has been thematically framed as missed university experience along with the loss of student identity – all of which posed a threat to one completing their degree program.

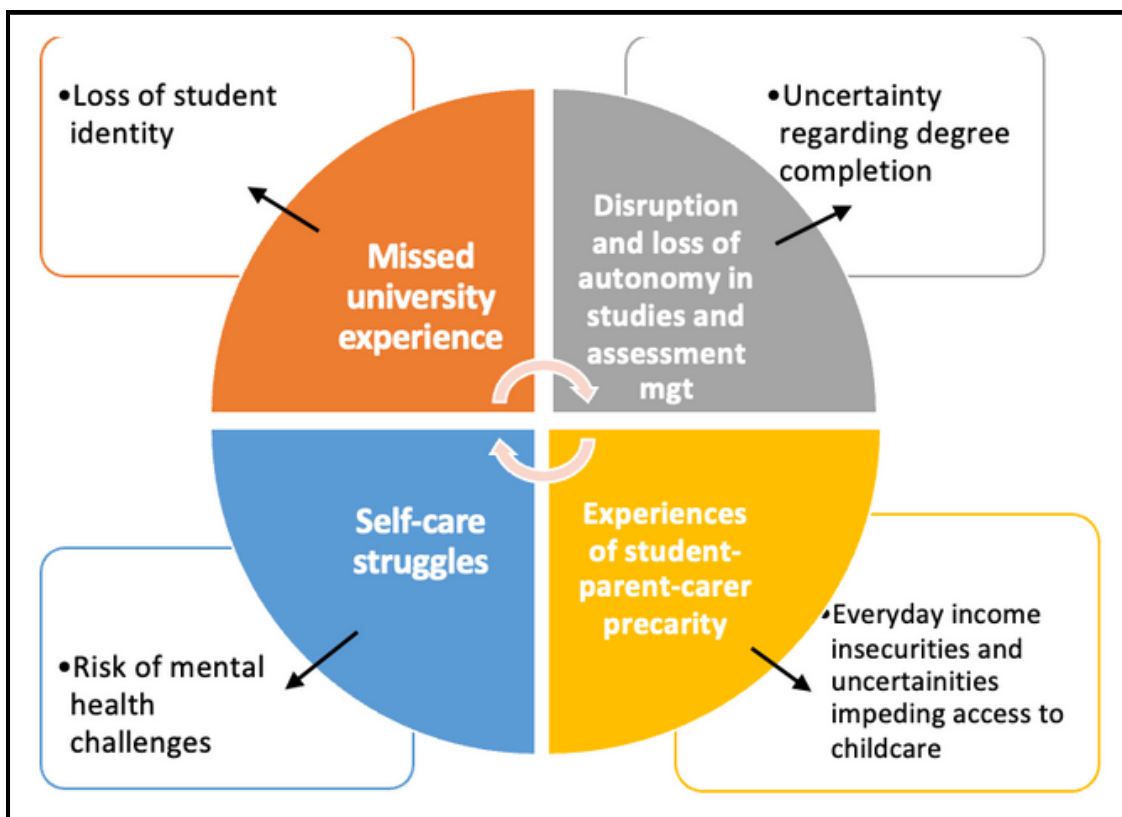


Figure 3: The four interconnected themes of participants’ experiences before joining the creche project.

EXPERIENCES OF STUDENT-PARENT-CARER PRECARITY

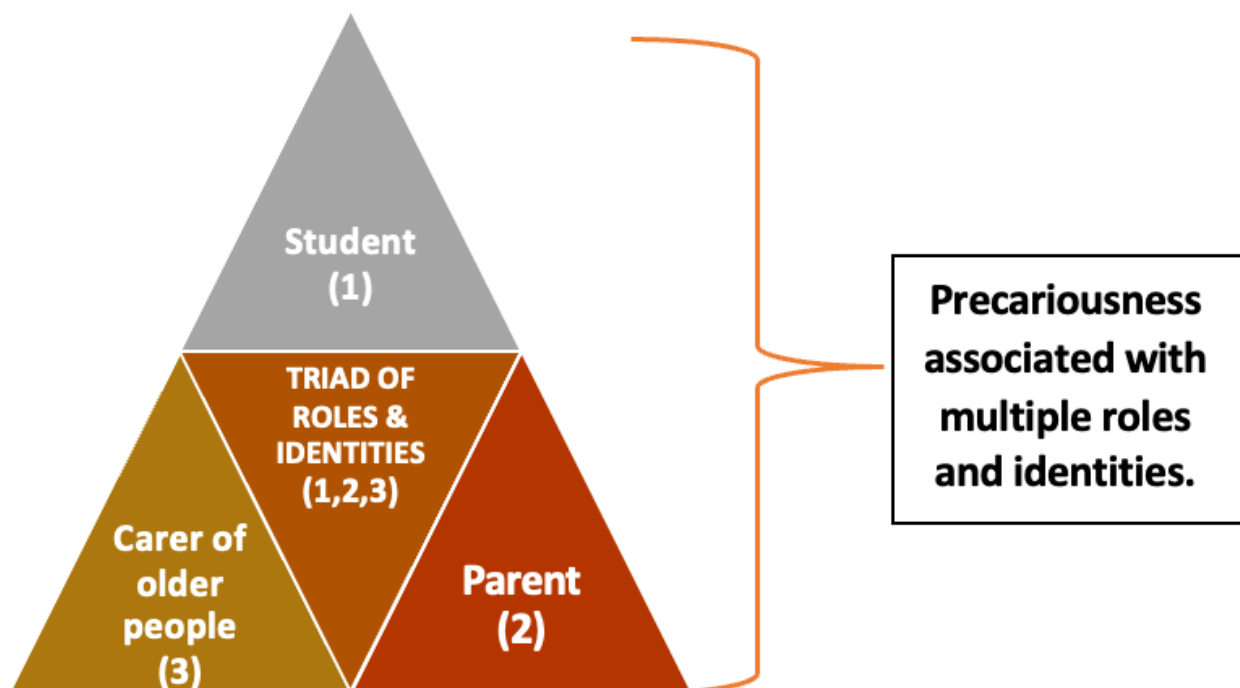


Figure 4: Triad of identities and roles shaping participants' precariousness

Being a student, parent, carer of an ageing parent (triad of roles) and living in a multigenerational household on a single income was an impediment to accessing childcare as expressed here:

*“I have four children, we’re a single income family while I’m studying. I have my mom who’s in her mid-70s living with me at the moment, so there’s just no extra money for any more childcare”
(Participant 02)*

While a multigenerational household is likely to be a source of informal childcare support, the social relations formed within that space are a precursor to experiences of income and childcare care vulnerabilities (precariousness).

SELF-CARE STRUGGLES

Amidst the different levels of vulnerability, one theme that cut across all participants narratives was 'self-care' struggles. All participants expressed challenges of self-care self-care struggles that were mainly associated with a shift of daytime study and assessment activities to late nighttime, after childcare responsibilities. A working single mom mother (Participant O2) recounted 'I usually study from say 10.30 or 11pm through 2 to 3 am' - which was clear evidence of sleep deprivation due to complexities in balancing childcare work with university life, leading to limited hours of sleep at night.

Another participant highlighted that:

When everyone goes to sleep at night, I start studying and writing my thesis. I go to campus 7- 8 pm and until 1.00 am or 2.00am. Some days I don't return home from campus since I need uninterrupted study time. Sometimes, I do wish the almighty would take me away from this life."

This physical and mental exhaustion has the potential of exacerbating student-parents' mental health challenges.

PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCES *AFTER* CRECHE ENGAGEMENT

This section provides information about participants' experiences after utilising creche services. Here participants shared the key characteristics of the creche initiative that have worked for them but also those that could have been improved upon.

Although multiple themes emerged as shown in Table 3 below, broadly speaking, participants showed how the creche initiative restored their sense of student identity with a certain degree of autonomy to manage their time, studies, and assignments. Being able to draw boundaries between the parent and student domains brought a sense of freedom. Evidently, the themes demonstrate student-parent visibility through the creche initiative and improved reported student short term outcomes.



Table 3: Summary of participants' perspectives of what worked and areas that needed improvement.

DIRECTION OF ATTRIBUTE	EMERGING THEMES	DIMENSIONS REPORTED BY PARTICIPANTS	SELECTED QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS
<p>Positive experience (What has worked?)</p>	<p>Improved time management and an enhanced student identity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More time to study and do assignments during day (and not in the night) • Timely completion of assignments • Utilising university resources such as the library • Reduced extension requests • More motivated and organised to do assignments. • **Separation of home from university (stated as reported) • **Enhanced student identity ('feeling more of a student than a mom' – stated as reported) 	<p>"Having the option for crèche gives me an opportunity to study during day, and get assignments done during day. And it just gives me that little bit of time".</p> <p>"Oh, yes, it's changed. You know, time is more organised now. The only four hours that you guys are looking after the kids have changed for me to look after more resources that I need for the assignment". (Participant O3)</p> <p>"I don't think without this project I would have thought of completing my assignments this term. It really allowed me on the Fridays to sit down for a good four hours and get assignments done, whereas if we were at home I wouldn't have finished. I would have to get an extension for sure." (Participant O1)</p> <p>"...on a Friday that I don't have tutorials, I just go sit in the library or somewhere in the university and start doing my assignments. It's working for me." (Participant O4)</p>

DIRECTION OF ATTRIBUTE	EMERGING THEMES	DIMENSIONS REPORTED BY PARTICIPANTS	SELECTED QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS
	Co-working space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Space of motivation to study • Opportunity to 'keep an eye' on the child and provide support when needed 	<p>"There's a little room directly across, the first week I just jumped in there. And I spent my four hours in there. And there's some tables, like some little kind of study space around the corner. So, I just stay very close. I don't wander off (Participant 02)</p> <p>"...it works for me well, because it's, again, like it kind of encouraged me to do my study". (Participant 03)</p>
	Reduced separation anxiety and parental peace of mind.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proximity to creche enables continuity in parent-child bonding. • Reduced anxiety associated with finding an informal carer during class days. • Convenience since one does not have to ask anyone to pick their child from daycare. • Reduced costs of travel given that the services are on-campus 	<p>"...My priority is obviously his [son] well-being, his needs, I'm a single mom and someone who's been with their child every day of their life. It's very hard sometimes to let go and kind of leave him with people that you're not really comfortable or familiar with. Just knowing that he's (child) a level below where I'm studying, it gives me that, I guess peace of mind a little bit that if something was to happen or if you needed anything, I can just go down and see what's going on with him or what he needs." (Participant 04)</p>

DIRECTION OF ATTRIBUTE	EMERGING THEMES	DIMENSIONS REPORTED BY PARTICIPANTS	SELECTED QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS
	Parents' perspectives of children's experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reported enhanced emotional well-being (happy and comfortable) • Early role modelling of the value of university study • Mitigation of child isolation • Opportunity for the children to socialise and make new friends and play. • Proven child adaptability to diverse environments 	<p>"She tells me she likes coming to her new school. So, she's really happy. And I like the fact too that when she comes here, she says that she's going to uni." (Participant 02)</p> <p>"I think that it's been good for him because he sits at home with me, so he hasn't had much like socialization teaching him to be independent. And make friends and learn new skills and dance".</p> <p>"I'm a single mom. It's very good in the sense of like, everyone around him is kind of working and studying and having their own life so I don't have to worry about who's going to help me looking after my son when I need to study. Just because he's in preschool right now. So, it's the convenience, but it's also helpful as well. I can be in a different environment, but also, I guess it's beneficial in a sense like him having the confidence and comfortability to be in different environments".(Participant 05)</p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm and friendly care providers/educators • Comprehensive information provided (as reported by most participants) • Easy booking process • Flexibility in terms of drop-off time 	

DIRECTION OF ATTRIBUTE	EMERGING THEMES	DIMENSIONS REPORTED BY PARTICIPANTS	SELECTED QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS
Negative experiences (What has not worked?)	Time, space, and structural concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creche being offered once a week for 4 hours is not enough. • Having multiple 'big screens' in the creche is not child friendly. 	<p>"...the restriction of the day.... I'd like to see it[creche care] available at least a few more times during the week, only because I don't generally come here on a Friday, I don't have a class, it would be great if I could utilise a service when I have a class," (Participant O2)</p> <p>"I think you guys need to go, you know, longer than one o'clock. If it's like three o'clock, yes, like within school time, then that will work really good. At least maybe for the next semester, I can put, you know, book more units. And yeah, stay there longer, I think four hours, kind of like a rush. By the time I prepare the resources to do my assignments it's 11 o'clock or 12 o'clock. I need more days." (Participant O1)</p> <p>"I believe as a childcare or creche facility, there shouldn't be any screen times around because that distracts the kids and the whole idea is not distracting the kid but to be more educative and more interactive with other kids" (Participant O1)</p>
	Creche organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of age-specific activities and programs. • The limited number of children impedes meaningful playtime and socialisation. 	<p>"if there were more children, it would be a lot better for her[daughter], because the children there are quite younger than her..... she could have some few more children to play with, I think it would even be better for her from a learning perspective(Participant O2)</p> <p>"If there was an opportunity to have more educators and more children, separated in their age groups" (Participant O5)</p>

3. CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED IN ESTABLISHING AND IMPLEMENTING THE CRECHE.

In this section, a summary of the challenges experienced by the creche implementers and service providers during the establishment and implementation of the creche project are presented.

Table 4: Compartmentalised challenges reported.

Costs (monetary and non-monetary)	Infrastructural issues	Administrative issues	Individual challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of financial resources to establish creche facility • Burden of salaries paid to care providers over 10 weeks (\$3800) – paid by partner organisation • Time loss due to long hours invested in [re]moving furniture to create space for creche 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original architectural design of the campus has no provision for childcare/creche facilities • Complexities of using a cross functional space. (teaching space vs creche) • Identifying a suitable dedicated room in terms of size and availability after commencement of semester was difficult. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short time frame to identify a suitable space for creche • Prolonged bureaucratic processes of space clearance and approval • Lack of a furniture removalist • Aligning creche days with teaching timetabling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steep learning curve for implementers since there was no precedent of establishing a creche facility from within. • Unpaid/uncounted workload for all staff involved • Physical and mental exhaustion due to manual labour invested in moving and removing furniture by staff

The challenges documented in Table 4 above reflected the multi-level inadequacies impeding the provision of on-campus childcare to vulnerable student-parents. Evidently, addressing these challenges will necessitate multistakeholder engagement.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation report has demonstrated that the on-campus creche care model is a successful initiative in addressing childcare needs of student-parents at the Liverpool city campus, Western Sydney University. It is a model that not only delivers flexible and accessible childcare services but also creates an environment that promotes the duo identities of being a parent and student.

Evidence from the evaluation shows that student parents are facing a challenge in accessing affordable and flexible childcare services. This situation is exacerbated when one is a carer of an older person, a parent, student and living in a multi-generational home that is dependent on one income. As shown from their experiences, some student-parents' everyday learning, study practices, work and overall well-being are negatively impacted upon by the lack of childcare support.

However, the full implementation and operation of the on-campus creche care model will necessitate stakeholder engagement that will allow a co-design creche dialogue with an aim of identifying the opportunities, strengths but also challenges that may impede the realisation of this initiative. Most importantly, the leadership will of WSU to invest in a more permanent and regular creche facility will be vitally important.

The findings of the evaluation demonstrate that the provision of a mobile model of on-campus creche care, will not only enhance the identity of student parents and faculty and their sense of belonging but it will also improve their academic outcomes and overall well-being. It is therefore important for Western Sydney University leadership to prioritise the establishment of permanent on-campus creche care services and consider the implementation of the recommendations of this evaluation report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation 1 	<p>Invest resources in the establishment of permanent and regular on- campus creche care services at Liverpool campus. With this in place, the university will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Build a strong sense of student identity and belonging among student-parents. b) Create a safe and healthy community where student-parents can share their seemingly individualised yet similar lived experiences. This will be an opportunity to mitigate student-parent isolation associated with lack of childcare. c) Attract and retain a significant population of student-parents. This is vitally important in creating an inclusive university that values parenthood. d) Improve time management of assessment, class attendance and engagement and degree completion rates. e) Improve student-parents' mental well-being. f) Enhance campus activation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with all Western Sydney University stakeholders in a co-design creche dialogue to brainstorm about the possibilities, challenges, and solutions to establishing permanent creche services at Liverpool city campus.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a funding model that will enable the provision and sustainability of creche care services at Liverpool campus.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation 4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish partnerships with potential funders and community agencies offering childcare services for purposes of facilitating a sustainable on-campus creche care model.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation 5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is recommended that the university extends hours and days of creche operation (to at least five days a week and seven hours of service). In the process of operational changes, the following aspects should also be considered: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Create age-specific activities or programs for children. b) Increase on the number of children using creche services to allow meaningful socialisation. c) Increase on the number of care providers/educators.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake deliberate measures to identify a designated space for creche establishment.

LIVERPOOL CITY CAMPUS CRECHE LOGIC MODEL

Program inputs	Program Activities	Program outputs	Program short-term outcomes	Impact (Long-term outcomes)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human resources • LNC creche care educators (n=2) • WSU faculty organising the service (n=2) • WSU decision makers (n=2) • External (n=1) and internal (n=1) evaluators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project planning meetings with WSU Liverpool Pro-Vost (also Dean SoSS) and SoSS School Manager • Identification and organisation of appropriate space to establish creche care services. • Organising an additional space near creche for parents/carers to work/study from (co-working space). • Establishing partnerships with place-based organisations to provide creche care services. • Inviting potential service users of the creche to engage with the project (WSU staff and students). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of flexible and free on-campus childcare. • Number of parents/carers using creche services • Number of children attending the creche. • Children experiencing creche care socialising with others and engaging in playtime activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of faculty and students accessing free and flexible on-campus childcare services. • Increased proximity to child while on campus enabling easier check-ins, nurture and play time. • Enhanced engagement with university study and work. • Enhanced engagement with the university campus. Supporting campus activation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced University-community partnerships for robust on-campus childcare services • Improved student enrolments, class attendance and completion rates. • Reduced gendered inequity associated with carer responsibilities and access to childcare services. • Gender-based policy reforms to support the development of in-built child-friendly infrastructure within WSU campuses located in marginalised neighbourhoods.

Program inputs	Program Activities	Program outputs	Program short-term outcomes	Impact (Long-term outcomes)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and providing essential information about how creche works and what parents/carers and their children should expect. • Managing booking cancellations and the waiting list for spaces. • Building relationships with parents and children. • Developing semester schedule for the weekly creche operations • Providing free childcare services to students and faculty parents for 4 hours/1day a week. • Organising storage space for creche care items with campus security. • Engaging children in early childhood education, socialisation and playtime activities 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in reported childcare-related absences from university activities by students and faculty • Evaluation data to inform process and overall service improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced University-community partnerships for robust on-campus childcare services • Improved student enrolments, class attendance and completion rates. • Reduced gendered inequity associated with carer responsibilities and access to childcare services. • Gender-based policy reforms to support the development of in-built child-friendly infrastructure within WSU campuses located in marginalised neighbourhoods.

Program inputs	Program Activities	Program outputs	Program short-term outcomes	Impact (Long-term outcomes)
<p>Materials and supplies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Furniture – children’s table and chairs. • Children’s play toys and resources that promote socialisation and learning • Toilet/nappy facilities – change mat, potty • Printing signing in sheets • Plug socket protectors 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established network of parents and carers to share lived experiences for purposes of building social support, identity, and a sense of belonging
<p>Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation assistants (2) • 1 external evaluation advisor 				

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