

FAMILY DAY CARE COORDINATORS' VIEWS ON DELIVERING MORE FLEXIBLE MODELS OF CARE

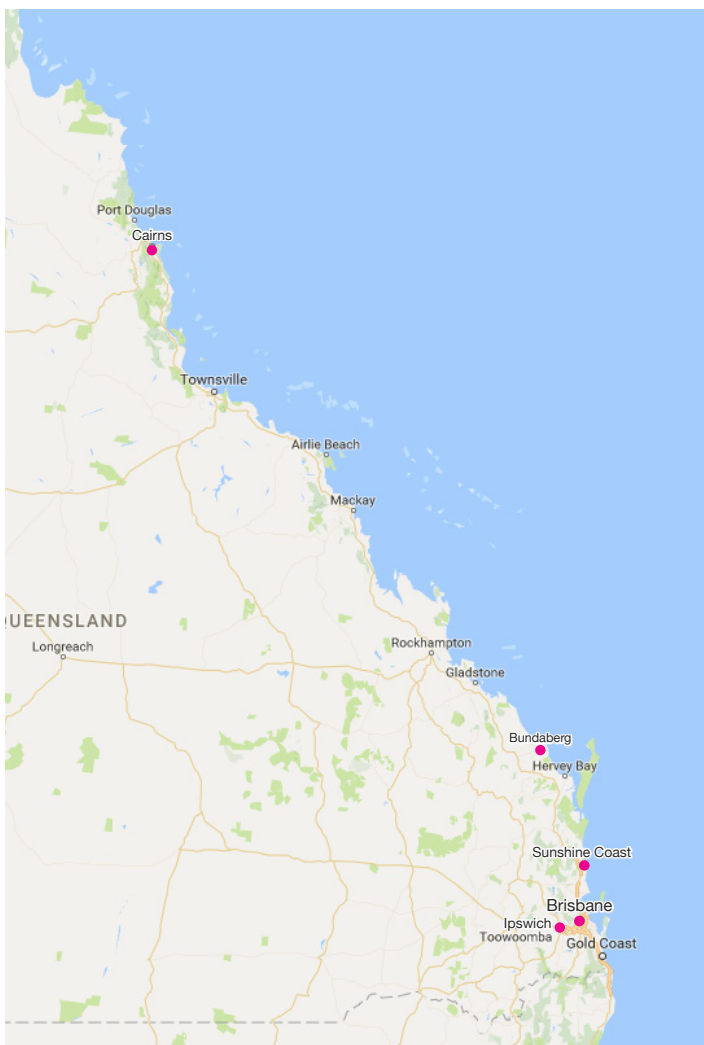
SUMMARY OF FULL FINDINGS



PROJECT AIMS AND BACKGROUND

The aim of this project was to understand Family Day Care (FDC) Coordinators' perspectives on delivering more flexible models of childcare in a context where the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Childcare and Early Childhood Learning had found that "The childcare and early learning system can be improved because families are struggling to find quality childcare and early learning that is flexible and affordable enough to meet their needs and to participate in the workforce" (Productivity Commission, 2014 p. iv-v).

This project developed from researchers at the School of Social Science, University of Queensland approaching Family Day Care Association (FDCQLD) about a shared interest in childcare flexibility. FDCQLD had recently been involved in the childcare flexibility pilots that aimed "to test a number of approaches to the delivery of flexible child care, with a focus on families whose needs did not fit with standard models of child care delivery" (Baxter and Hand 2016).



We conducted a scoping review of overseas models of flexible childcare and then sought FDC coordinators' perspectives on these models through focus groups. Details of the locations, number of FDC coordinators and dates are as follows:

- Brisbane (6) (4 June, 2015)
- Bundaberg (15) (6 August, 2015)
- Cairns (8) (2 July, 2015)
- Ipswich (4) (12 November, 2015)
- Sunshine Coast (12) (24 November, 2015).

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FINDINGS

Educators' willingness to provide more flexible care has decreased over time. Policy research suggests that families' demand for more flexible care has increased over time while FDC coordinators' reports suggest that educators' willingness to provide more flexible care has decreased over time, in part due to the increased legislative requirements placed on educators who offer 24-hour and overnight care.

Coordinators were asked for their views on a Combined Group Care and Nanny Package where services provided combined nanny and kindergarten/nursery/playgroup packages. Coordinators were concerned with the logistics of training and managing nannies in a context where they were time-poor but many also viewed some benefits.

Coordinators believe that government funded nanny care should be subject to the same conditions as the current In Home Care programme. Participants were asked about offering nanny services. Although participants were not explicitly asked about the recently announced Nanny Pilot they shared that they felt that the pilot was essentially the same as the In Home Care programme, yet they felt carers were subject to different qualification requirements.

Demand for emergency care appears to vary significantly across regions. Coordinators were asked about one-off emergency care where care coordinators are available to take calls 24/7 to link families to emergency care. Across the focus groups there was consensus that there was at least some demand for on-call care though the reported demand varied a lot across the regions. Many coordinators stated that at least one of their FDC educators offered this service. However, participants also raised a large number of concerns regarding the logistics of operating such a model including finding a sufficient supply of workers, and concerns regarding parents' motivations for using this kind of care (e.g. to go to the movies).

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I can definitely see the advantages in [the group care plus nanny] for the child, for the consistency for the child, and establishing a really strong relationship with that nanny

Paula

Practice mentor for a medium size service in a regional area

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Because really and truly the nanny [pilot] is no different to the In-home Care and the In-home Care is well regulated

Irene

Regional area

“

... it's really important with the nanny if you're going to have this introduced into Australia... I think you've really got to [have] the regulations and the standards because we've worked so very hard in childcare overall... that's been our foremost goal and principle of what we do

Brooke

FDC manager in a regional area



One coordinator for a medium size service in an urban area suggested that a FDC plus nanny model could address educators' burnout and families' need for evening and overnight care by providing "more flexibility, capacity for the family to be able to access multiple [carers] instead of just one"

Carrie

Coordinator for a medium size service in an urban area



... we've tried [relief care] and in our area it doesn't work because people want some sort of consistent income so it's so up and down as to what the work would be

Sharon

Provider and educational leader for a medium size service in a regional area

There is very significant variation across geographic locations in families' demand for more flexible care and educators' current willingness to provide it. These differences shaped coordinators' willingness to offer additional services. In areas where educators were already flexible or there was little demand coordinators were less interested in offering new services. In areas where educators were less willing to offer flexible services but there was significant family demand then coordinators were more interested in offering new services that would complement FDC.

Coordinators reported that a key constraint to moving towards embracing new models was the current childcare service delivery context, where budget cuts, increased time pressures, and uncertainty around existing government support generated a high degree of risk aversion.

Building on these findings FDC and UQ are currently commencing a new project that will examine whether services that currently deliver multiple forms of care might be able to better integrate these services to offer more flexible packages of care to families.

The full report **Family Day Care Coordinators' Views on Delivering More Flexible Models of Care** by Dr Michelle Brady and Emma Cooke, School of Social Science, University of QLD Prepared for Family Day Care Association QLD 2016 can be downloaded from: <https://social-science.uq.edu.au/childcare-flexibility-project>

References

- Baxter, J. A., and K. Hand. 2016. Flexible Child Care: Key findings from the AIFS evaluation of the child care flexibility trials. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.
- Productivity Commission. 2014. Childcare and early childhood learning: Overview, inquiry report number 73 Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 73.