



Healthier Kids. Healthier Future.

## Outline

- The context of working with services in Victoria – International, Federal and State Government policy
- Working with services in Victoria – process and enablers
- Working with services in Victoria – learnings about the guiding principles for establishment and operation of integrated services

The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne  
Centre for Community Child Health

Murdoch Childrens Research Institute  
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***Th(e) convergence of advancing knowledge and changing circumstances calls for a fundamental reexamination of the ... responses to the needs of young children and their families, many of which were formulated several decades ago and revised only incrementally since then.***

From Neurons to Neighborhoods, Shonkoff and Phillips

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## How are systems responding?

- Sure Start and Every Child Matters (UK)
- Toronto First Duty (Canada)
- Head Start and Early Head Start, Schools of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, First 5 California (US)
- National Early Childhood Development Strategy, Families First, Best Start, Every Chance for Every Child (Australia)

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## Federal policy response - COAG

- National Early Childhood Development Strategy  
*all children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the nation.*
- A road map for action and for engaging effective partnerships across and between governments, with the non-government sector, and with families around the needs of young children.

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## Federal policy response

- Child and Family Centres (260)
  - Objective to increase supply of integrated early childhood education and care in areas of unmet demand for child care.
  - Emphasis on connecting with schools to ensure all Australian children are fully prepared for learning and life.

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## DEECD Policy Directions

- Emphasis on integrated child and family services
- Co-location with schools where possible
- Investment in not-for-profit sector
- Enhance capacity of local government to plan, develop, integrate and co-ordinate early years
- Work with developers & local government in growing communities
- Partner with State, Commonwealth & local government to create new opportunities to integrate & co-locate.

## DEECD Expected Outcomes

- Integrated, inclusive and collaborative services
- High quality programs to meet the health care and educational needs of young children
- Improved transitions - early years and schools
- Improved access to Kindergarten in same place as long day care and children's and family services
- Strengthened capacity of professionals to identify & provide timely support to vulnerable children & families
- Creation of child friendly communities

## DEECD Current situation (March 09)

- State Government commitment to 95 children's centres
- 70 funded, mostly on council land, with council as the main funder (\$0.5m of >\$3.0m)
- 48 are open and operating
- 22 in planning and construction stage
- 21 are on or adjoining school sites

## Evolution of the Children Centre Model

### 2003-04

- Kindergarten and some childcare (either Long Day Care, Occasional Care or Family Day Care)
- Maternal and Child Health
- Other child and family services

## Evolution of the Children Centre Model

### 2007-08

- Kindergarten integrated with long day care
- Maternal and Child Health
- Early childhood intervention services
- Family services and a range of programs supporting children, parents, families and the community, including supported playgroups and parenting services

## Children Centre Model 2008-09

### Must include:

- integrated early childhood education and care;
- maternal and child health;
- early childhood intervention services; and family services.

### May also be co-located or integrated with:

- neighbourhood houses;
- municipal libraries; or
- other community facilities.

## Working with services in Victoria Process and enablers

- Springvale Integrated Services Hub
- Cowes Children's Centre
- Lulla's Early Learning Centre
- Wallaroo Community Centre
- Karingal Community Centre

Co-existence	Co-operation	Co-ordination	Collaboration	Integration
Services operate independently and have no formal or informal links, but are co-located	Services operate independently, but are co-located and meet to network and share information	Services operate independently, but are co-located and coordinate to provide multi-agency services to families with multiple needs	Services operate independently, but are co-located and pool resources to provide a multi-disciplinary / multi-agency service	Services combine to form a single entity operating from a single location and providing integrated interdisciplinary centre-based services

## Supporting Integrated Service Delivery

- Step 1: Developing a shared vision
- Step 2: Identifying desired outcomes and objectives
- Step 3: Identifying services to be delivered
- Step 4: Determining the form of integration
- Step 5: Finalizing governance arrangements
- Step 6: Drafting an action plan

## Step 1: Developing a shared vision

- Agreement on the prime target of the service
- Engagement of community/parents in the process
- A shared understanding of why services need to be integrated
- Overcoming differences in professional ideologies, language, agency cultures, and organizational aims
- Adequate time for ongoing dialogue between groups of staff, parents and community

## Step 2: Identifying outcomes & objectives

- An understanding of the community's views/needs
- Determining results rather than counting inputs
- Development of understanding and knowledge about outcome based accountability
- Clear and realistic aims and objectives which are understood and accepted by all stakeholders

## Step 3: Identifying services to be delivered

- A focus on quality aspects of service provision
- Focus on the services required not the building
- Involvement of the community
- Focus on integration not co-location
- Redevelopment of job descriptions and working conditions to allow fully integrated services and trans-disciplinary teamwork

#### Step 4: Determining the form of integration

- Managing funding 'buckets' from a wide range of departments
- Allowing enough time for preplanning & joint working
- Effective leadership in managing change and maintaining staff morale
- Overcoming difficulties in attracting and retaining staff due to poor pay and conditions of employment

#### Step 5: Finalising governance arrangements

- The vision provides a clear governance structure for new integrated children's services
- A focus on building and maintaining community participation
- Recruitment of a community based management committees that have the skill and time to commit to developing policies, employing staff etc.

#### Step 5: Finalising governance arrangements

- There is strong backing for the initiative from key decision makers at senior levels.
- Common use and understanding of language
- Clear governance structure and accountability mechanisms are in place

#### Step 6: Drafting an action plan

- Development of knowledge about what constitutes evidence based practice
- Effective communication and information sharing between all agencies and staff and a supportive interagency network
- The community feel welcomed and able to participate in all levels of action planning
- Regular monitoring, review and evaluation

#### Working with services in Victoria - Guiding principles for integrated services

1. Governance and planning is informed and inclusive
2. Service philosophy and provision is driven by the needs of children and their families
3. Child, family and community participation is actively promoted and supported
4. Professional practice is based on respectful relationships
5. Practice and programs are evaluated and reviewed

#### 1. Governance

- A **local leader and change agent**
- Develop and maintain a **common philosophy, vision and mission**
- Be clear on **what the community want** and how it will be achieved, establish MoUs between services
- Focus on the development of a **service plan or model** to inform the actual service delivery model
- Include **Maternal and Child Health**

## 2. Planning and Design

- A **local champion or leader**
- **The importance of Local Government:** engage senior management and local councillors
- **Centre Design:** stay true to the key principles, start early, involve all stakeholders
- **License** all of the spaces

## 3. Child, Family and Community Participation

- **The best interests of the child/community** are central to all activities related to the centre development
- **Vision and mission** have been formulated through an extensive consultation and development process with key stakeholders
- **Develop and maintain partnerships** with parents, families and the broader community
- **Reflect and review** on philosophy and adapt to the changing needs of the community
- **Provide social and learning opportunities** for community, parents and children alike

## 4. Professional Practice

- **Support and mentoring for staff** is essential, centre design and planning can include shared staff and planning rooms. The creation of these spaces supports staff to meet, network and mentor on a regular basis
- **Clarity about staff roles** in the new service model
- **Cross disciplinary training** program for kindergarten, child care and early intervention practitioners
- **Minimum qualification** requirements

## 4. Professional Practice (cont)

- **Wage equity:** with cluster management enables relief staff to be employed across all centres
- **Locating council clerical staff** in facilities
- **Recruit Practitioners** who are child and family focused, knowledgeable about early childhood development, could speak a second language, were prepared to learn and who represented a mixture of age groups and skill levels

## 5. Evaluation and Review

- **Service Evaluation:** invest time in and closely monitor the progress of the centre in terms of staff development and training, customer/family evaluation of services and financial management.
- **Document** and learn from the journey

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