EARLY LEARNING FOR THREE-YEAR-OLDS

CO-DESIGN PLANNING GROUP

COMMUNIQUE 2 – FEBRUARY 2023

In February the Co-Design Planning Group met twice to plan the co-design and engagement approach with families, communities and service providers. This planning involved developing and refining the objective and principles for the initiative. The current objective and principles are provided below but the Group notes these may change throughout the co-design phase.

Objective

Over time that every 3-year-old will have access to quality and affordable early learning that supports their lifelong learning, wellbeing and growth as confident and capable people.

Principles

1. Children and their wellbeing are central to decision making.
2. Affordability will not be a barrier to participation.
3. Implementation will occur through co-design with families, communities and service providers.
4. Provision of early learning for all 3-year-olds will not adversely impact other age groups.
5. Early learning will be:
    a. quality, age-appropriate and play-based
    b. delivered by a qualified workforce
    c. accessible to all 3-year-olds for up to 15 hours distributed over a week
    d. place-based, flexible, innovative and meet local needs
    e. informed by evidence and research.

ECEC Information Sessions

As part of keeping the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector updated with progress two online Information Session were held on 9th and 10th of February 2023. Around 50 people attended the two sessions. A presentation was provided (see attached) in the first half of each session with questions and answers in the second half of the session. Questions from attendees were summarised in seven themes.

1. Workforce – staff shortages, limited access to training and need for quality training
2. There is some confusion if 3-year-old children will be prioritised over other children with regards to places at ECECs
3. General support was provided for a place-based approach
4. There are existing community buildings and assets available for expansion
5. Some families will need support
6. What supports will there be for ECEC services to expand?
7. What costs will there be for families?

Communication was supported as a vital element of the next co-design phase particularly with ECEC services, local communities and families. Workshops in local communities were generally supported.

More detail on the questions and responses from the information sessions are provided below.

Upcoming workshops

The information sessions provided some detail on planned workshops to occur across Tasmania in a range of local communities. The workshops will seek to engage with families, local communities and service providers. They will occur in March through to early April 2023 and will be an opportunity to have a say on quality and affordable early learning for 3-year-olds. We want to hear ideas about how to improve access to early learning and to achieve the aspiration of providing access for all 3-year-olds in the future.

Detail of individual workshops are being distributed direct to the ECEC sector along with information to families, local communities and other service providers.

Details of the workshops are available at Early Learning for 3-year-olds workshops

If you have any queries, please contact spp.admin@decyp.tas.gov.au

Questions and Responses – ECEC information sessions

9th and 10th February 2023

	Question	Response
1	Workforce – there is a lack off staff and how do we fix this?	It's acknowledged having a quality and available workforce is essential to provide access for all 3-year-olds. There is a range of work at national and state level, for example, Tas Early Years and School Aged Care (EYSAC) and the Tasmanian Workforce Plan 2017-2020 had a focus on capacity building and a skilled workforce. At a broader level there is the National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy. These initiatives will not be a quick fix for all workforce issues but will provide long-term solutions to work towards resolving ECEC challenges. Providing access for 3-year-olds through a co-design process will provide an opportunity to explore these issues and work together to identify possible solutions.

2	Need access to quality training/qualifications?	As outlined to previous question, there are state and national workforce strategies to aim to support delivery of a quality workforce. Provision of access to quality training and qualifications for ECEC workforce is vital and developing access for 3-year-olds will provide the opportunity to work with training providers and educators such as UTAS and TasTAFE.
3	Can a service opt out and opt in?	ECEC services can choose to be involved. Universal access is about providing access for every 3-year-old child and is different to programs like Working Together which is a targeted program for limited numbers of children and their families. Universal access for 3-year-olds co-design process will provide an opportunity to work with families, ECEC services and local communities to achieve the goal of access to early learning for every 3-year-old child.
4	How do we prioritise places for 3-year-olds but still service other children and make sure all children have access, especially for working parents?	We will work with ECEC providers and other services to maximise access for 3-year-olds whilst avoiding the unintended consequence of negatively impacting access for other aged children. We are proposing to have trials, resulting from the co-design process, of different models and approaches for local communities, to avoid any negative impacts on other children and/or their families.

5	Will universal access be place-based e.g. address travel and transport issues for children and families?	Yes. Through the co-design process there will be workshops in local communities to engage with families, children, ECEC services, CFLCs and other relevant services and key stakeholders to understand local challenges, barriers and strengths. This will inform and guide selection of trial sites and broader expansion of early learning for 3-year-olds.
6	What physical buildings will be used? Can this be community halls particularly where previously used for other services to the community?	The co-design workshops across the state will gather information on local challenges and barriers as well as strengths including existing buildings and infrastructure. This will help identify opportunities which can help support expansion in local communities. It should be noted that quality infrastructure and facilities are a critical element of any expansion and will be vital to success.
7	Could occasional care be provided through other services e.g. neighbourhood houses?	The co-design workshops will provide the opportunity to hear from communities to understand their challenges, barriers and strengths. Where there is a need for more space for additional services then all options will be considered.
8	Will there be supports available for families e.g. migrant families need	Support for many families is essential for them to access early learning. The co -design process will identify needs and barriers for families in accessing

	more supports? Similar to working together.	early learning for 3-year-olds and together we can identify if additional supports are needed.
9	Will there be support available to expand existing ECEC services? Will this include workforce and additional supports for families?	The co design workshops will seek input on the needs of local communities, families and ECEC services including what supports may assist. This input will inform how to best to increase access for 3-year-olds and consider issues and opportunities for possible expansion of current services, workforce capacity and supports for families.
10	We have a range of venues in the local communities but not the staff.	The Co design workshops will be engaging with local communities to understand their challenges, barriers and strengths. Where there is a need for more space for additional services then all options will be considered. There is a range of work at national and state level, for example, Tas Early Years and School Aged Care (EYSAC) and the Tasmanian Workforce Plan 2017-2020 had a focus on capacity building and a skilled workforce. At a broader level there is the National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy. These initiatives will not be a quick fix for all workforce issues but will provide long-term solutions to work towards resolving ECEC challenges. Providing access for 3-year-olds through a co-design process will provide an

		opportunity to explore these issues and work together to identify possible solutions.
11	Need to engage with families through local services such as schools and maternal health nurse programs e.g. northern early years group.	Thank you for suggestions of local services where we can provide information to families and engage them in the co-design process. We will work with these local services and others wherever possible.
12	What will be the cost for families particularly for occasional care programs?	Cost for families is unknown at this stage. A principle of government and the Co-Design Planning Group is that cost must not be a barrier to access. We will work through the issue of cost with local communities and providers of services.
13	Need to engage with education and training providers for workforce e.g. engagement with utas for training of staff.	As outlined above, there are national and state initiatives and strategies regarding workforce including training and education. We can utilise these existing strategies and connections with training and education providers to identify barriers and solutions to provision of quality training for ECEC and other services.