

FAMILY DAY CARE FLEXIBILITY TRIALS



Final Report

December 2014

CONTENTS

Overview

1. Stakeholders
2. Background
3. The Flexibility Trial
4. Project Structure
5. Family Engagement
6. Project Information Pack
7. Communication and Reporting Systems
8. Educator Recruitment
9. Education and Care Provision
10. State Reports
11. South Australia
12. Findings and Recommendations
13. Budget Report

Overview

The Australian Government funded the Child Care Flexibility Trials to test innovative approaches to providing families with access to more flexible care options that reflect the changing dynamics of the Australian workforce and modern families. The Family Day Care Flexibility Trials aimed to identify ways to better meet the child care needs of shift-working emergency services families, whose work is characterized by high levels of shift work and non-regular work hours, including frequent last-minute demands to extend work hours. The Flexibility Trials represented a partnership between Family Day Care Australia, the Police Federation of Australia, Queensland Nurses' Union and United Voice (Queensland) representing ambulance officers.

March 2013 saw the announcement of the Flexibility Trials by The Hon. Kate Ellis, former Minister for Early Childhood, Childcare and Youth, and the Trials commenced service provision from 1 July 2013 across 9 sites in NSW (police), Victoria (police) and Queensland (nurses and ambulance officers).

The preparatory phase or project set-up phase (March to July 2013) saw the development of the Implementation Plan and the Risk Management Plan, the commencement of the family engagement process and the confirmation of final trial sites. Reporting systems were also developed to aid in project monitoring and to ensure FDCA was able to collect sufficient information for project evaluation and recommendation purposes. The systems included a communications tree and reporting templates. Further information with regard to reporting can be found at Section 4.

The Expression of Interest (EOI) process aimed at connecting family day care services with shift-working police, nurses and ambulance officers across 9 sites spread over 3 states. Generating interest in the trials from eligible families was more difficult, time consuming and labour intensive for Family Day Care Australia (FDCA) than initially envisaged. It was initially understood that family recruitment would be undertaken by the participating trade unions, however

responsibility for the family engagement process ultimately rested with FDCA. The family engagement process is outlined at **Section 5**.

The preparatory phase also incorporated the development of Service Provider and Educator Information Packs, containing trial guidelines, contracts and agreements, parent information packs and associated reporting documents. An outline of the packs can be found at **Section 6**.

Stakeholder communication systems were developed, including the implementation of regular email communication systems, teleconferences and the inclusion of three Stakeholder Meetings into the project plan. Stakeholder meetings were held in July 2013, November 2013 and September 2014 in Sydney, with representatives of the (then) Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) now Department of Education (DoE), [hereafter "DoE"], FDCA and the project team, the Police Federation of Australia, Police Association Victoria, Police Association of NSW, Queensland Nurses' Union, United Voice (Queensland), NSW Family Day Care Association, the Family Day Care Association Queensland and the 9 service providers. A summary of outcomes and minutes of the three stakeholder meetings can be found at **Section 7**.

The trials allowed for 6 existing educators and 4 new educators per service to be recruited to the flexibility trials to be available to provide care for potential trial families. This arrangement had flexibility within participating states as long as it remained within the trial parameters and budget requirements. New educator recruitment was considered a priority given the lack of standard-hours care places currently available through existing educators (with their places already filled). FDCA developed a recruitment package for new educators, provided to services in August 2013. Recruitment of existing educators progressed, with different challenges found in different service types. Engaging and preparing prospective existing educators to the trials in areas where there were no trial families currently looking for care provided additional challenge in services finding the balance between preparing educators and anticipating family needs. The recruitment of both existing and new educators is discussed at **Section 8**.

Section 9 gives a general overview of some of the challenges found by services in placing families with disparate and changing needs once they have completed an application for care, and by educators in meeting the families' roster needs whilst running a viable business and finding balance with their own family needs. Full data tables regarding family utilisation are appended to the report.

A State by State, service by service progress overview is provided at **Section 10** which outlines the different approaches and circumstances of the trials in these jurisdictions, and a summary of issues and outcomes for each.

Section 11 outlines findings in relation to the South Australian Department for Child Development (DECD) experiences in relation to provision of flexible care.

A summary of findings and recommendations is outlined at **Section 12**.

Section 13 contains the final budget report.

NOTES:

For the purposes of this proposal, the notion of non-standard, overnight and weekend care will be referred to collectively as "flexible care".

FDCA has also taken a role in facilitating the Australian Institute of Families (AIFS) project evaluation, including production of contact lists and distribution of correspondence.

1. Stakeholders

Major Stakeholders

Family Day Care Australia

FDCA is the national peak body for family day care which supports, resources and advocates for family day care services. FDCA represents approximately 675 Coordination Units, who register, support, monitor and train approximately 14,500 educators across Australia caring for approximately 165,000 children and their families. Our role is to resource and promote family day care services in Australia to ensure the strength and continued growth of the sector in Australia. FDCA is a member-based not-for-profit organisation that works on behalf of our members. FDCA takes a rights based approach to all research, policy development and advocacy work it undertakes, underpinned by a strong commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Family day care educators provide regulated, flexible care for young children and school aged children up to the age of 12. Educators must hold or be working toward a Certificate III qualification in children's services and implement the approved learning frameworks in a small group, home-based setting. Fees are generally set by individual educators working as sole-traders operating their own business; hourly rates, hours of availability are set down in individual fee schedules and vary depending on the services they provide.

The Police Federation of Australia

The Police Federation of Australia is the "national voice of policing" in Australia, representing the professional and industrial interests of Australia's 56 000 police officers. The PFA is a Federally Registered organisation under the Fair Work Act and brings together members from all eight State, Territory and Federal police associations and unions across the country. Almost 99% of all police are members giving it the greatest level of membership density of any union or employee association in Australia.

Queensland Nurses' Union

The QNU is the principal health union in Queensland. Nurses are the largest occupational group in Queensland Health and one of the largest across the Queensland government. The QNU covers all categories of workers that make up the nursing workforce in Queensland including registered nurses, registered midwives, enrolled nurses and assistants in nursing who are employed in the public, private and not-for-profit health sectors including aged care.

The QNU has more than 50,000 members, who work across a variety of settings from single person operations to large health and non-health institutions, and in a full range of classifications from entry level trainees to senior management. The vast majority of nurses in Queensland are members of the QNU.

United Voice Queensland

United Voice Queensland represents over 30,000 members from different backgrounds and industries. Their members include ambulance officers, early childhood educators, cleaners, teacher aides, school cleaners, those working in aged care, hospitality, manufacturing, security and many more. Members set the agenda of the union at all levels and the union's prides itself on making sure its members are protected in the workplace.

The Stakeholder Roles and Responsibilities document prepared as part of the trial proposal is attached at Annexure A.

2. Background

The very nature of shift work means that there is increased difficulty in managing work and family commitments. For professions which cover a 24-hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week service, inclusive of public holidays, there is additional challenge in obtaining affordable and flexible child care.

For police officers, nurses and ambulance officers there is another dimension of difficulty in that shifts are often long (up to 12 hours), can be extended if circumstances arise where workers are unable to finish their shift at the appointed time, need to work a double shift or have last minute additions or shift changes. Rosters are available four to six weeks in advance of being worked, and rosters are often rotating, meaning that a worker may work a different shift on a different day and a different day each week. For example, a nurse may work an early shift on a Saturday but the next week work a night shift. Therefore, there is not often a "typical" working pattern for emergency services workers, unless they have been able to negotiate with their employer for a set or regular working pattern. This makes regular child care arrangements a challenge. Emergency services workers are at times required to work overtime to meet immediate community needs, often at short notice.

These issues add further challenges to provision of flexible care in that it is more complex than being able provide flexible care on regular days each week or each fortnight. This has implications for both the educators and Coordination Unit staff. If a high proportion of educators in a scheme are providing this form of care, there is an impact on Coordination Unit staff that may be unable or unwilling to do outside hours support without additional remuneration.

The unpredictability of care required also makes this form of care difficult, as educators are seeking to ensure a consistent income while parents are concerned with the costs of paying for care they may not use. In the consultation process, an example was provided by a FDC service provider in Victoria whereby an educator had tried to accommodate the needs of shift-

working police by having permanent block bookings, but families weren't willing to pay for care that may or may not be used, particularly given the number of hours required to cover long (and possibly extended) shifts.

Further, spontaneous shift extensions provide added challenges for educators in terms of the length of their own work shifts, and also where care may cross over with other booked care and therefore exceed allowable ratios, under the Education and Care Services National Regulations.

The Police Labour Force

Size and Demographics

<u>SWORN OFFICERS</u>	National	NSW	Victoria
Female	13,870	4,041	3,210
Male	41,609	11,283	9,982
TOTAL	55,479	15,324	13,192

Working Hours

In NSW and Victoria:

- 92% of police work 35 hours or more per week.
- 31% work 41 hours or more
- 14% work 49 hours or more

These figures are almost identical for police across Australia.

Proportion with children

A large proportion of police officers are also parents; the Police at Work Study indicates that 56% of police officers have dependent children¹, and this is confirmed by ABS Census Data, which indicates that 29,694 of the 49,545 police officers recorded in the 2011 Census have dependent children². The Police at Work Report also indicated that 43% of police officers are in families in which both parents are earners, supporting dependent children, meaning the need for child care may be more extensive.

Working Arrangements

The nature of policing work and the difficulties it poses for parents is unique. Policing is an emergency-driven occupation. The vast majority of police officers work in operational positions providing 24/7 response (approximately 85%, differing across jurisdictions). Police working patterns are therefore determined not by what is organised, what is fair, what is practicable. They are determined by what is needed. Policing requires complete commitment 24hrs a day, 7 days a week, for 365 days of every year. The round the clock requirements are true of some other emergency services and shift work industries, but the level of unpredictability faced by police is not faced by any other type of worker in Australia.

The round-the-clock need demands of policing means that police need child care outside the normal 9-5 hours, and away from the normal bricks-and-mortar model of centre-based child care. The unpredictable nature of policing means that police also need flexible arrangements for the provision of child care.

Round-the-clock demands

Police shifts can run through the night and into the early hours of the morning. 91% of police officers work shifts that continue past 9pm either always or sometimes³. This means that child care needs to be available at all hours,

¹ Wave 1 p45

² 2011 Census

³ Police at Work Wave 1 Report p26.

enabling police to do their jobs, safe in the knowledge that their child's welfare is being looked after.

Further, shift start and finishing times can be during difficult hours. For instance, a shift may begin at 11pm. This means that their child may need to be in the care of an educator at around 7-8pm so the child can go to bed at a reasonable hour. If the provision of care is not tailored to this, the child may have to be woken late at night, when the changeover of care occurs. This would disrupt the sleeping pattern required for a healthy child. Similarly, a shift may begin at 6am, requiring the officer to get ready for work in the early hours of the morning. Without appropriate child care services, the officer may be forced to wake the child at 4-5am to take them to a care centre. Again, this adversely affects the welfare of the child.

Policing is a difficult and tiring job. At the end of a shift an officer will be exhausted. Imagine the difficulty of caring for a child or children at the end of a hard 12 hour night shift. Far better for the welfare of the child and the parent, is that parent is given the opportunity to rest and recover from the rigours of policing, and is then ready to face the rigour of parenting. This may mean that child needs to be in care for a large amount of the day, and perhaps in multiple forms of care.

Policing does not take a break on weekends or public holidays. They are required to continue to protect the community around the clock at times when most others are enjoying time off. 94% of officers work weekends, and 91% work on public holidays either always or sometimes⁴. They therefore need the same level of child care that they do during normal working days.

It also needs to be kept in mind that police who work late night or early morning shifts, or on weekends and public holidays, are not paid significant premium penalty rates like other industries may do. Therefore, their penalty rates for working these hours are unlikely to be commensurate with the increased cost of utilising child care services at those same hours. To police, their duty is the same no matter the hour or the day. Assistance with accessing appropriate child care needs to take this into account.

⁴ Police at Work Wave 1 Report p26.

Unpredictability

A police officer has little knowledge as to what hours they will be working and when. Rosters are rarely consistent over an extended period of time, meaning that the shifts an officer is working one fortnight may be completely different the next fortnight. In Victoria for example, 88% of officers have fortnightly rosters⁵, meaning they can only plan their childcare needs two weeks in advance, which for most childcare services, is not enough notice to get a place when competition for places is high. Even within a single roster, 58% of officers work rotating shifts (a mix of day, night, weekday and weekend shifts)⁶, meaning that finding an appropriate and consistent childcare provider is extremely difficult. Working patterns can also be changed at a moment's notice due to the unpredictable nature of policing. The shift an officer works within a single roster rotation, as well as across different roster periods, changes greatly.

These factors mean that appropriate childcare services for children of police are hard to find, and even if they are found, officers miss out on places due to the difficulties for an officer to plan their childcare arrangements with much certainty. This is a problem that not even other 24 hour shift workers face, as while they may work difficult hours, their shift patterns can be determined with more certainty and further in advance. It is this issue that poses the police with unique problems in childcare. Therefore, police need childcare arrangements to be flexible, and available on short notice.

As well as the lack consistency in the working patterns between an officer's rosters, they are also faced with the possibility that a shift time will be changed at a moment's notice. This can involve being called into work unexpectedly, having to continue work after the scheduled shift time, or having a shift cancelled. That is to say, an officer's shift is determined by when the community needs them, not by the organisational decisions of the employer, or by what is a fair roster pattern. For example, 53% of all officers, and 63% of female officers, either strongly disagreed or disagreed with this statement "I can refuse to work overtime and it won't cause any problems for

⁵ Police at Work Wave 1 Report p24.

⁶ Police at Work Wave 1 Report p26.

me"⁷. One of the major 'problems' referred to in this survey question was the short notice given before the requirement to work overtime. Police are therefore faced with the need to arrange childcare with very little notice, have their children remain in care beyond the scheduled pick up time, or the need to cancel childcare if they suddenly do not need it.

This problem is widespread, and affects whole groups of officers at once, not just individual shifts. Minor changes to rosters have an effect on many police officers, as a single change can flow on to affect the whole roster. Police rosters are designed to have the amount of officers needed to meet anticipated workload. Therefore if even a minor change occurs, such as an officer being called into court, or an officers being deployed to an incident, then the flow on affect is that multiple officers may have their rosters changed. So minor and common occurrences will drastically change the roster for a large number of officers, or even mean the entire roster is scrapped and a new one drafted. All these changes are influenced by the fact that policing is emergency-driven; the shifts and times that officers are required to work are influenced by need. That is to say, it is calls from the public that affect when an officer works, not the police force.

Examples of change of shift on short notice

- A large scale incident or operation may require police to be called to work. For example, in Sydney CBD alone, around 350 protests occur every year. This means that 350 times a year from protests alone, many officers will be called to work with very little notice to respond to large scale incidents. The duties of those officers will in turn have to be filled by other changes to the roster to ensure that regular duties are still performed at the same time as large scale incidents are responded to.
- An officer can be called into court as an informant at very little notice. This is a task that cannot be performed interchangeably by different officers, so there is no flexibility for the officer.

⁷ Police at Work Wave 4 Report p31

- An incident or operation could unexpectedly require an officer to continue to work beyond the end of a shift, so childcare needs to be flexible enough to continue to care for the child beyond the scheduled pick up time

Police Case Studies

CASE STUDY 1

On 17th June 2012 a female Detective Senior Constable (Officer "A") is off duty on rostered rest day at home and gets phone call from a lone on-duty colleague requesting she attend work to assist in interview and processing of three suspects arrested for Aggravated Burglary. Officer "A" attends work 10.30am and assists re same and finishes work 6.30 pm. Officer "A" returns home and is preparing to go to bed that evening when she receives phone call from the Communications Centre that a particular suspect has been arrested and is currently in custody at a police station on the other side of the city. Police Officer "A" is second-nominated member to be contacted in the event that this suspect is arrested, the suspect being wanted for Manslaughter and Aggravated Burglary, and the primary investigator is interstate on Leave. Officer "A" then contacts another off-duty police officer to assist as well. Officer "A" resumes duty and is joined by the second officer and they then travel approximately eighty kilometres to interview the suspect. This is done and the suspect is charged and remanded to the Magistrates' Court. The police officers return to their workplace, arriving at 7.30am. Officer "A" is able to organise for another officer to attend Court on her behalf in the particular circumstances of the case where an application for Bail is extremely unlikely, but ordinarily would have to then go to Court to oppose Bail, possibly being at Court until 4.30pm and then returning to workplace. However officer "A" is originally rostered to give a lecture to other officers in relation to Arson investigation for that day as a once-per-year event which cannot be cancelled or postponed. She attends and gives the lecture and ceases duty 12pm. Officer A returns home extremely tired, having not slept for 29 hours.

CASE STUDY 2

On Monday 26/11/2012 a detective with three young children is rostered to work 3pm start. The Detective is phoned the night before to advise him that he was required to start work at 7am on the 26th in order to assist with an operation to arrest a high risk offender. The detective normally worked 3pm shift on Mondays because his wife worked started work 7am on Mondays. As a result he had to ring around grandparents to organise child care and transport at short notice. On the 26th the detective started at 7am and finished work at 8.00 pm.

CASE STUDY 3

A female part time senior constable in General Duties at a police station, married to a Senior Sergeant in charge of a Major Collision Investigation Unit, who has two young children (three and five years old), has on numerous occasions been phoned by her husband whilst she is at work and he is caring for the children, saying that she has to come home to care for them because he has been called in to work to take charge of a major collision. There are numerous occasions where this Senior Constable has had to leave work and use carer's leave to allow her husband to attend work in response to fatal motor vehicle accidents to take charge of the investigation.

CASE STUDY 4:

On 14th December 2012 Detective Senior Constable married to another police who were both at work. Both officers had to work extended hours to arrest a recidivist sex offender. This resulted in grandparents having to pick up two young children from school at short notice and caring for them for the evening.

CASE STUDY 5:

In March 2012 a Detective Senior Constable was working night shift and his police officer wife working day shift when he had to work extended hours to go to Court for an unexpected Remand hearing for an arrested offender. Arrangements had to be made for grandparents to pick up the children and take them to school to allow both husband and wife to be at work.

These case studies are all factual and are not uncommon. They demonstrate that in a single day, an officer can be faced with:

- Being called into work on a rostered rest day
- Change of shift times at a moment's notice
- Working consecutive shifts, and extremely long hours
- Late night shifts
- Long travel times
- The change to one officer's shift affecting another's
- The inflexibility of police duties such as questioning suspects, court attendance and other duties.

Implications of current arrangements

The nature of policing, as described in previous section, makes it very difficult for police with children to balance work and family commitments, with resultant impact on stress levels, attrition rates and promotional opportunities for women. The fact that approximately 8% of police across Australia work part time⁸, compared with the 56% that have children also highlights that the demands of policing does not bend to the demands of parenting. The emergency driven nature of policing will often not permit a working pattern compatible with family commitments.

Negative impact on work-family balance

The feedback from consultations with police officers during the development of this proposal overwhelmingly showed the difficulties faced by parents seeking to manage their roles as police officers and parents. These concerns are supported by numerous surveys with police members. For example, 85% of respondents in the *NSW Police child care survey* stated a desire for a child care service more compatible with their work schedule⁹. 52% of police officers with dependent children, surveyed in Wave 4 of the *Police at Work Survey*, stated that they agreed or strongly agreed that work interfered with their responsibilities outside of work, compared with only 41% of officers without dependent children¹⁰.

Higher attrition rates for police officers with children, particularly mothers

In the *Police at Work Report*, 13% of those officers that resigned from the police directly stated that family commitments or an inability to fit working hours around caring responsibilities was the reason they resigned, and a further 36% stated that 'unsatisfactory working arrangements' was the reason¹¹.

⁸ 2011 Census Data

⁹ NSW Police Child care survey

¹⁰ Wave 4 p32

¹¹ Wave 4, p41.

The impacts on attrition are particularly felt by female police officers, many of whom are forced to leave the police force if they want a family. The result is a high attrition rate of female officers: the average period of service for male officers is approximately 14 years, for women it is 7 years.

There is also a much larger proportion of men who are both police officers and parents (73% of male officers have dependent children, as opposed to 48% of female officers¹²). This shows that women who have children have to leave the police force because they cannot balance their childcare responsibilities with the demands of policing. Women are having to sacrifice their career in policing, and the police forces are losing valuable officers, because childcare is so difficult to balance with policing.

Negative impact on career progression of female officers

The other impact is the hindering of career advancement for female police. The Police at Work Report found that a large proportion of female officers did not seek promotion in the police force because the conflict with domestic commitments would make performing those higher duties impracticable¹³. For those few officers who are able to work part time in order to care for children, 75% said working part time had reduced their training and promotional opportunities¹⁴. This also creates significant barriers for female police officers to achieve the same pay progressions as their male peers.

Underrepresentation of women in key positions

A healthy police force is one that is representative of the community it serves. Women bring a great deal of skills, experience and knowledge to the police that should be valued in all aspects of policing. As well as this universal value of female police officers, they are also greatly needed by the women and girls in the community. One of the most common call-outs for police is to domestic situations. It is important for female victims in these situations that both first responder and decision-making positions in the police force have

¹² Wave 3 page 6.

¹³ Wave 4 p31

¹⁴ Part Time Survey

adequate amounts of female officers, who can offer understanding and a feeling of safety and trust to female victims. By assisting police in finding adequate childcare arrangements, women are able to stay in these first-responder positions, and continue on career progression to decision making positions. The health of the police force is negatively affected when women are underrepresented in visible, frontline positions, or key decision making positions.

Cost to policing

There are significant costs to policing as a result of the issues identified above. These extend from the short term impact on carers and other forms of leave, to the longer-term loss of experience and skills.

For example, the cost to government to train a police recruit to replace a resigning mother is approximately \$200 000 per recruit per year (varying between each jurisdiction). This cost is avoidable. By assisting mothers to stay in the police force through provision of adequate childcare services, there is money to be saved in the medium and long term.

The Nursing Labour Force

Nurses are an essential and unique health workforce in Australia with some important work characteristics. Nursing is a sex segregated and aging workforce; more than 90% of nurses are women and the average age of female registered nurse is 44.5 years and male is 43 years (AIWH 2011; ABS 2011). Almost half of the nursing workforce works part-time (ABS 2011). On average, female nurses work approximately 7 hours less than male nurses (AIHW 2011).

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2011) the Australian nursing workforce has the following features:

Size of nursing and midwifery workforce

- In 2011, the total number of nurses and midwives registered in Australia was 326,669, a 6.8% increase since 2007 (305,834).

- Between 2007 and 2011, the number of nurses and midwives employed in nursing or midwifery increased by 7.7% from 263,331 (86.1% of registrations) to 283,577 (86.8% of registrations).
- Of these people employed in nursing and midwifery, 36,074 were midwives (including 1,517 people registered as midwives but not nurses), though only 15,523 reported working in midwifery as the principal area of their main job.
- Nursing and midwifery supply across regions ranged from 1,101.6 full-time equivalent nurses and midwives per 100,000 in major cities to 994.7 in outer regional areas to 1,335.5 in very remote areas, based on a 38-hour week.
- According to the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia, in September 2012 there were 64,335 nurses employed in Queensland 30,695 employed in South Australia.

Working arrangements

- The average weekly hours worked by employed nurses and midwives decreased from 33.3 hours in 2007 to 32.8 hours in 2011.
- Of all employed clinical nurses and midwives, almost two-thirds (65.2%) worked in hospitals.
- Almost two-thirds of all nurses and midwives work in the public sector (59.3%), and these nurses and midwives worked an average of 2.4 hours more per week than their private sector counterparts.
- The clinical area of nursing and midwifery with the largest number of workers in 2011 was aged care (40,443), which also had the highest proportion of enrolled nurses (41.5%).
- These statistics are reflective of the Queensland nursing and midwifery workforce.
- Research conducted by Monash University explored how the nursing families managed working and caring for their families and one of the key recommendations was that there was a greater need for flexibility in formal child care to support the complexity of the work-family schedule for nurses. The research also showed that nurses were often forced to change to casual work conditions when they had children.

Round-the-clock demands

Nurses and other health workers are expected to provide a 24-hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week service, inclusive of public holidays. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of the nursing workforce works shift work. Shift work occurs in a work schedule that utilizes 24 hours a day and occasionally, 7 days a week, to keep an organization operating. Shift work occurs whenever 24 hour coverage is necessary.

Nursing rosters are available six weeks in advance of being worked. The rosters are often rotating, meaning that a nurse can work a different shift on a different day and a different day each week. For example, a nurse may work an early shift on a Saturday but the next week work a night shift. Therefore, there is not often a 'typical' working pattern for nurses, unless they have been able to negotiate with their employer for a 'set' or regular working pattern. This makes regular child care arrangements a challenge. Nurses at times are required to work overtime to meet immediate patient care needs until a nursing resource can be provided. Also, nurses working part-time can work additional shifts to provide leave coverage, often with less than a week's notice.

Nursing Case Studies

Case Study 1:

Enrolled Nurse A, a single parent, working on a part-time basis (7 shifts per fortnight) and on a rotating roster (early, late and night shifts) over a seven day period on a Medical Ward had no option but to resign her position due to not being able to access suitable or affordable child care arrangements for overnight care (night shift) for her child. Enrolled Nurse A worked three nights shifts (commencing at 9 pm and finishing at 7.30am) approximately every six weeks. Enrolled Nurse A had to change jobs to work a set roster pattern, Monday to Friday, to enable her to access affordable child care that had operating hours that enabled her to pick up and drop off her child. For Enrolled Nurse A this resulted in a significant reduction in her income due to not being able to work shifts with penalties and loss of job satisfaction.

Case Study 2 :

Registered Nurse A was working full-time in the operating theatre at a major hospital. Registered Nurse A has three children, two under school age and one school age. Registered Nurse A had to change her child care arrangements when there was a new shift start time implemented for the early shift. The early shift now commenced at 7 am (previously the shift started at 8 am). This meant that her current child care provider could not accommodate the three children who needed to be dropped off by 6.15 am. The outcome was that Registered Nurse A had to change child care arrangements resulting in two child care providers. Although she had a 'flexible working agreement' in place with her employer that guaranteed her a consistent "set" work pattern, the pattern of work did allow for a change in shift start time due to hospital and patient need. The new child care arrangements require her to drop the children off at two different places with the school age child now going to a before/after school care provider and the two other children going to a different child care facility. Registered Nurse A is required to travel an additional 60 minutes per day, pay increased travel costs, as well as separate child care arrangements.

Case Study 3:

Registered Nurse B, with twins under 12 months and a pre-schooler, had been working 2x12 hour shifts per week. The recent abolition of 12 hour shifts at that facility means she is now on a rotating 8 hour shift roster. She now has to work 3x8 hour shifts to retain her income and is not guaranteed of a set pattern of work, which impacts significantly on care arrangements and the cost of care.

Case Study 4:

Registered Midwife A was working an early shift in the labour and delivery suite at a country hospital and had to work overtime due to a higher than expected number of women giving birth that day. Registered Midwife A had two children both in before and after school care programs which usually ran to 6 pm. However, Registered Midwife A was not able to pick her children up until 7 pm. This meant that she had additional and significantly higher rate of child care costs.

Case Study 5:

Personal Care Assistant A working in an Aged Care Facility with a young infant son (11 months) was working on a part-time basis and had to reduce her shifts from 7 to 5 shifts per fortnight, and change from working all early shifts to late shifts, due to a change in the child care centre operating hours. Personal Care Assistant A commenced work at 6.45 am but the child care centre did not now open until 7am.



Difficulty Obtaining Childcare

The availability of affordable, quality child care services is a major determinant of workforce participation for all women. For many years, the QNU has been highlighting the particular need of nurses for affordable, quality extended-hours child care. Given that 91 per cent of nurses are women and a majority of nurses (67%) are required to work shift work, this is a particularly important employment equity issue for the health industry and one that employers have not adequately considered to date.

It is the strong view of QNU that the lack of appropriate child care services is a significant structural barrier to the recruitment and retention of nurses as it is a major barrier to nurses returning to the workforce after having children (exacerbated by the high demand for care for under 2 year olds). With the proliferation of non-standard working hours in other areas of employment this difficulty is beginning to become a “mainstream” problem for many working families.

Recent studies and research shows that retention of nurses and midwives is affected by child rearing responsibilities. A lack of child care was identified by the Senate Select Committee on Nursing as one of the five key reasons for nurses leaving the workforce in Australia.

Although child care is not an issue for all nurses at all times during their working lives, it does impact on nursing workforce planning for discrete groups of nurses. Specific skills-mix difficulties are created by the failure to address the child care needs of this part of the nursing workforce.

Future Workforce Pressures

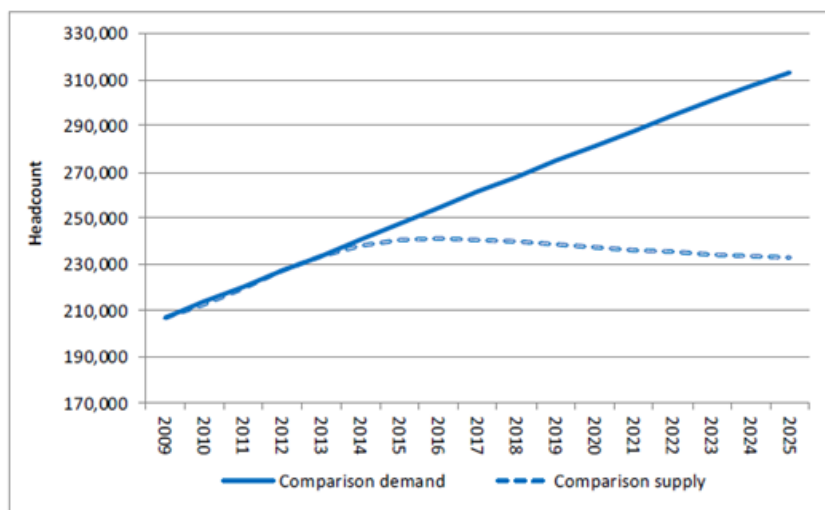
Health Workforce Australia (HWA)¹⁵ predicts that by 2025 there will be a *highly significant workforce shortage of around 109,000 nurses*¹⁶. Without a nationally co-ordinated reform, Australia is likely to experience limitations in

¹⁵ Health Workforce Australia is a Commonwealth statutory authority established by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to address the challenges of providing a skilled, flexible and innovative health workforce that meets the needs of the Australian community.

¹⁶ At a state level, QH's Workforce Analysis and Research Unit predicts a state-wide deficit of around 6000 Registered Nurses in Queensland by 2017 when a number of new facilities will have come on line.

the delivery of high quality health services as a consequence of this shortfall (including a shortage of around 2,700 doctors).

The following graph indicates the supply and demand projections for registered and enrolled nurses for 2009-2025.



Source: Health Workforce Australia (2012)

These projections highlight the critical importance of addressing the issue of child care for nurses, both as a means of increasing the work hours of current workforce, as well as alleviating retention problems.

Recruitment and retention strategies for safe, quality patient care

The case for investing in adequate numbers of nurses through effective recruitment and retention strategies such as extended hours child care becomes even more important in light of the following data around safe, quality patient care.

This table provides an overview of some of the research on the financial costs associated with inadequate nurse staffing, inadequate skill mix, and an inadequate work environment for nurses.

Nurse staffing	A decrease in nurse staffing is associated with increased health care costs of 40% (McCloskey et al., 2005) and inadequate nurse staffing is associated with adverse events, which were estimated to cost AUD\$4 billion in 2007 (based on data cited in Wilson et al., 1995). Short staffed units have higher costs and patients with a longer length of stay (McCue, Mark & Harless, 2003). It is estimated 26.7% of all infections could be avoided by appropriate nurse-to-patient ratios (Hugonnet, 2007).
Nursing workload	Reducing nursing workload by one patient per nurse (from five to four patients per nurse) is associated with one life saved per 1,000 admissions, at a cost of US\$136,000 per life saved. Compared to the cost of other health care interventions, such as routine cervical screening (which costs \$432,000 per life saved) implementing nurse to patient ratios of 1:4 is cost-effective (Rothberg, 2005). Increasing nurse staffing by one RN hour per patient day (HPPD) may cost US\$659 per case, but when compared with the cost per case of adverse events (US\$2,384 per case), investing in nurse staffing can lead to a saving (Pappas, 2008).
Nursing skill-mix	Registered nursing care is positively associated with reducing adverse events like pneumonia, a complication which adds five days to a patient's average length of stay and is estimated to cost US\$4,000 - \$5,000 per additional day (Cho et al., 2003). Pneumonia is responsible for increasing length of stay by 75%, as well as a 220% increase in the probability of death, and an 84% increase in costs (Cho et al., 2003).
Work environment	Poor work environments contribute substantially to nursing turnover, with turnover estimated to cost AUD\$150,000 per nurse (Chan et al., 2004).

Source: Data cited in Armstrong (2009).

Why Family Day Care?

The Family Day Care Flexibility Trials were proposed as family day care was considered uniquely positioned to provide flexible care to police in a quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) setting, regulated under the Education and Care Services National Regulations and meeting the requirements defined in the National Quality Standards.

FDC educators already provide 'flexible care'

Outside the trial parameters, the provision of flexible care is an option offered by those family day care educators who are willing to provide it and who are attached to Coordination Units which support it. However, often rather than being offered up front, it is often something that evolves with the family's needs. The decision to offer this type of flexible care rests solely with the educator, within the parameters of its Coordination Unit's policies and procedures.

The exact amount of provision of flexible care by FDC throughout Australia is not easily quantified. A survey conducted by FDCA in 2011 showed that 14% of educators were at that time providing weekend care and 12% overnight care. The survey did not indicate the frequency of care nor the amount of families who were supported. In addition, FDCA was unable to obtain information from the Department of Education (via the Child Care Management System) as to the degree to which non-standard hours care is being provided across Australia.

What were considered the barriers to expanding supply of flexible care?

Sector consultation undertaken as part of developing the initial flexibility trials submission suggested that FDC services providers were not aware of any unmet need for flexible care, so expansion or promotion of this type of care on a wider scale had not been considered either necessary or a priority. This suggested that there was an awareness issue amongst parents in terms of the care available through family day care. In addition, service providers

advised that recruiting educators willing to undertake flexible care regularly is often difficult given impacts on their own families.

Pre-trial Stakeholder Consultation

Family Day Care Sector Consultation

FDCA facilitated the formation of a working group which utilised the knowledge and expertise of family day care state association representatives including; Family Day Care Association Queensland, New South Wales Family Day Care Association and the Victorian Family Day Care Association.

The working group held two face-to-face meetings on 9 August and 6 September 2012, where the issues of flexible care and the barriers currently preventing expansion were discussed. Further, feedback from sector consultations regarding interest in trial involvement was discussed together with a framework for a possible trial model which would facilitate immediate expansion of such care in the areas of need identified.

Stakeholder Engagement and Consultations

Prior to the commencement of the Flexibility Trials, FDCA, together with NSW, Queensland and Victorian State Family Day Care Association Representatives liaised with the relevant trade unions to ascertain areas of geographic need for flexible care and then consulted within their jurisdictions to gather information to inform the selection of locations for the Trial, assess capacity and willingness of schemes to participate in any Trial and ascertain what support would be required to make such a commitment.

FDCA provided state family day care association representatives with a discussion guide which gathered the following information from service providers:

- History of non-standard care
- Current level of non-standard care hours and the management procedures for these hours of care
- Current strategies to manage shift workers with rotating/changing shifts

- Existing capacity to increase the provision of non-standard hours care
- Current barriers to increasing the amount of non-standard hours care
- Extra support required to make non-standard hours care services work
- Likelihood of participation in a trial

Concurrently, DoE representatives, FDCA and state representatives also undertook a series of consultations with the Police Federation of Australia, the New South Wales Police Association, Police Association Victoria, Queensland Nurses Union and United Voice (Queensland).

Determination of Trial Geographic Locations

Victoria

The trial sites selected were in the south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne. The Police Association of Victoria and the Police Federation of Australia used a number of sources and criteria to identify sites with the most demand to be trial sites. These methods included:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics Census Data (2011) identifying the local area governments with the highest number of police with dependent children. The south-east suburbs of Melbourne had the most.
- A Child Care Needs Survey identified greatest demand in Springvale/Dandenong, Narre Warren/Cranbourne, Pakenham, Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula
- The Associations had regard to the number of members who have sought assistance in negotiating part time work arrangements. Again, the majority of these matters arose in the south-east suburbs of Melbourne.
- Preliminary discussions with FDCA indicated that existing providers in south-east suburbs of Melbourne were willing to participate in a trial program

NSW

The Police Association of NSW identified geographic locations based on expressions of interest in utilising the trial programs in response to a member email. Members were contacted and asked to identify where their areas of

need for flexible child care were. The sites chosen were those that were central to the larger groups of respondents.

Queensland

The QNU identified trial geographic locations based upon membership clusters, location of hospitals and knowledge of members' child care needs.

Identifying Need

Time constraints due to the timelines imposed by the project contract meant that a comprehensive survey of families was unable to be undertaken at the outset to ensure trial sites matched current needs and that there are families in those areas wishing to participate in the trials, and geographic locations were selected based upon advice from participating trade unions.

Service Selection

Trial locations in the identified geographic areas were selected by the State-based Family Day Care Association representatives in these areas of identified need, i.e. NSW Service Providers were canvassed and selected by NSW Family Day Care Association, Queensland Service Providers were canvassed and selected by family Day Care Association Queensland and Victorian sites were selected by the Victorian Family Day Care Association.

This selection took place based upon assessment of both capacity and willingness to participate.

3. The Flexibility Trial

Aims

The Flexibility Trials were undertaken at a total of nine family day care sites in NSW, Queensland and Victoria. The trial aims were:

- To explore ways to provide providing participating families with access to more flexible child care that better meets their needs
- To explore ways in which to increase the supply of educators willing to provide more flexible child care to shift-working emergency services personnel.
- To research the effects of providing flexible child care upon Service Providers, Educators and their families
- Provide evidence of what would be required to support a sustainable model of flexible service provision into the future, including replicating in other geographic sites with similar needs

Trial Parameters

Each trial site was funded to potentially engage and/or recruit up to 10 Educators to participate in the flexibility trials project. The duration of the service delivery aspect of the trials was determined as 12 months per educator within the period 1 July 2013 – 30 September 2014. This time period was selected to allow for the trials to commence as soon as practicable following negotiation of a funding agreement and allowed sufficient time for project design and set-up. The 15 month service provision span allowed for the phased approach necessary for these trials.

Firstly, service providers were tasked with utilising existing capacity to extend their current availability of flexible care in the third quarter of 2013.

Concurrently a comprehensive recruitment phase was conducted to recruit new educators who have indicated a willingness to provide flexible care.

New educators required additional time to allow for the induction and

registration process, which includes home inspections and any alterations required, child protection and qualification checks, and training and set-up support.

It was envisaged that the majority of educators engaged for the trials would be newly recruited. This time span allows for these new educators to provide between 6-12 months of care as part of the trial, which was considered the minimum amount of time appropriate to evaluate effectiveness of flexible care for educators and families, and allowed for children to settle into the family day care environment, particularly given the likely fluidity to times and hours of care.

The 'flexible care' model

As part of the Trials, it was envisaged that families would be able to access:

- 1) Educators who have been specifically selected for participation in the Trial on the basis of their capacity and willingness to provide 'flexible care'. This meant a greater understanding from the outset on the likely implications of working with shift-working families.
- 2) A small team of educators (two-three) who would be responsible for working with the family to meet their care needs. It was envisaged a team approach would provide greater flexibility to meet the round the clock shift rosters of emergency service worker families, as well as support their unexpected changes to care needs. The team of educators would work closely with their 'families' to plan care around shift rosters and accommodate last minute changes. Children will be introduced to all educators as part of the initial trial establishment phase to ensure they are comfortable with educators, although it is expected that each family will have a 'primary' educator.
- 3) A single point of call to arrange changes to care arrangements. Families will be able to call their 'primary' educator who will be responsible for working with other educators to accommodate any changes to care

needs. If the primary educator cannot accommodate changes to care required, they will be responsible for working with other educators to meet the required care needs and then advise parent accordingly.

As part of the Trials, it was envisaged educators would be able to access:

- A one off incentive payment at the trial commencement to enable them to purchase any equipment necessary to accommodate trial families, e.g. bedding.
- Ongoing 'flexibility loading' payment, paid quarterly, in recognition of additional work required to accommodate families whose care needs are likely to change and the potential impost of being involved in a trial (likely need to contribute to data collection during trial to inform monitoring and evaluation requirements).
- Targeted training and support from Coordination Units, particularly related to providing outside traditional hours care and managing shift changes using a team approach.

Trial Parameters

- Trial operated within current legislative framework and policy parameters, including requirement for educators to meet National Quality Standards and adhere to child-ratio requirements;
- Children were not placed in care for more than 16 hours in one day or 60 hours per week, except in exceptional circumstances;
- Educators worked in accordance with their scheme policies and procedures in relation to overnight care, maximum numbers of hours worked per day/week. Further;

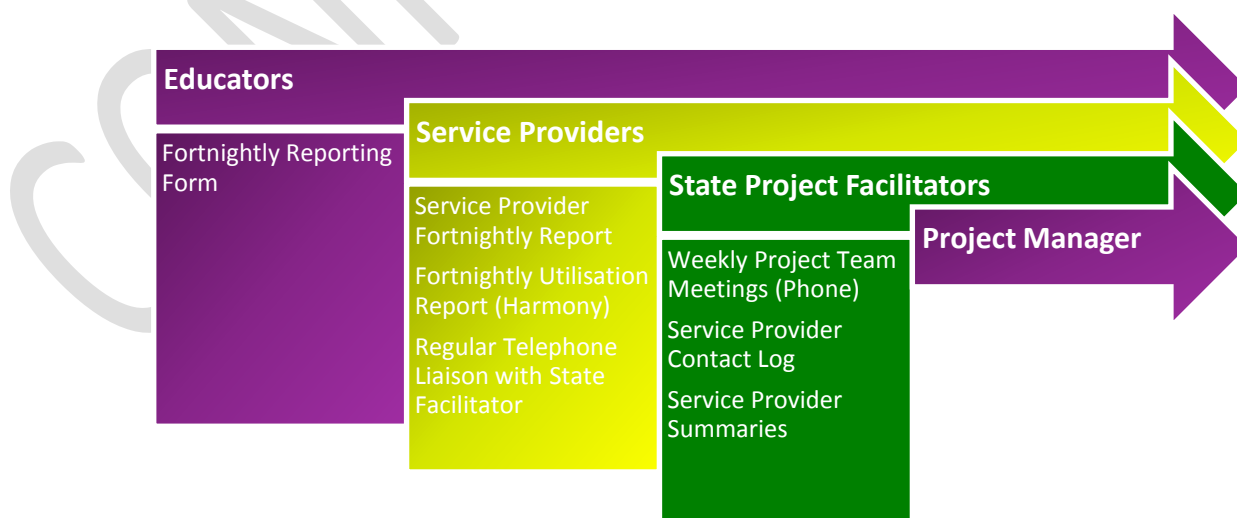
- a) Existing educators, those already providing care at commencement of trial, were available to take on a minimum of an additional two shifts of 'non-standard' hours care
 - b) New educators, those educators recruited specifically for the trial, were available to take up a minimum of two non-standard shifts and two standard shifts
- Educators were responsible for setting their own fees in accordance with the fee setting schedule established by the relevant Family Day Care Service Provider, and were the same for both existing and trial families;
 - Parents were informed of fees at commencement of trial period.

CONFIDENTIAL

4. Project Structure

The project was centrally managed by a Project Manager at Family Day Care Australia, based in NSW. Reporting to the Project Manager were three State Facilitators, with the NSW and Victorian Project Facilitation being undertaken by Family Day Care Australia, and the Queensland State Facilitation being contracted out to Family Day Care Association Queensland (FDCAQ). The roles and responsibilities of the Project Team are outlined in the Flexibility Trials Implementation Plan (see Annexure B).

Reporting templates were prepared to ensure that both relevant and sufficient data were collected. Educators providing education and care services to trial families were asked to provide a fortnightly report regarding the challenges in providing flexible care arrangements and the impacts of providing flexible care upon themselves and their families. Service Providers are responsible for collection and for submission of these forms to their State Project Facilitator, together with *Harmony* or *Hubworks* (child care software) Reports detailing trial families' participation. State Project Facilitators were responsible for collating and summarising these reports and providing these summaries to the Project Manager for formal reporting purposes. The reporting structures for the trial are depicted below:



A copy of the Reporting Templates can be found at Annexure C. Risk management for the project was also conducted to develop a plan to address issues that may impact upon achievement of the project objectives. A continuous risk management process was adopted to enable the project team to anticipate and mitigate the risks which impacted the project, and this process was done in collaboration with DEEWR and relevant stakeholders. A copy of the Risk Management Plan is attached at Annexure D.

CONFIDENTIAL



5. Expression of Interest Process

Initial EOI

The first round of the EOI process commenced in late March 2013 following The Hon. Kate Ellis, Minister for Early Childhood, Childcare and Youth's announcement that the Flexibility Trials would proceed.

It was envisaged during proposal development process that the Police Federation of Australia, Queensland Nurses Union and United Voice (Queensland) would be responsible for the EOI process, however in the end FDCA was responsible for producing the EOI (sample at Annexure E) and for the implementation of the Family Engagement process.

The first round of EOIs was sent to all members of the Queensland Nurses' Union (QNU) and ambulance officer members of United Voice (Queensland) in Queensland, to all members of the Police Association Victoria in Victoria and to all members of the NSW Police Association in NSW. This EOI asked families who were interested in participating in the trials to indicate their interest by returning their contact details and their postcode to FDCA. It was determined that this process would assist the Government to confirming the preliminary trial sites.

The responses were nowhere near the numbers expected, with the following number of EOIs returned by the due dates of 12 April for Queensland and 30 April for NSW and Victoria.

State	Location	Name of Service	
VIC	Shire of Cardinia & City of Bayside	Windermere Family Day Care	17
	City of Casey	City of Casey Family Day Care	9
	Wyndham City	Early Childhood Management Services	16
State	Location	Name of Service	
NSW	Goulburn	Goulburn Family Day Care	1
	The Hills District	Baulkham Hills Family Day Care	9
	Gosford City	Gosford and Peninsula Family Day Care	23
QLD	Brisbane & South East Qld	Wesley Mission Family Day Care	24
	Toowoomba	Kath Dickson Family Day Care	7
	Townsville	Townsville West Family Day Care	5

Table 2.1 Initial EOI

The Police Unions advised that one contributing factor to the disappointing response was the presence of school holidays within the period allocated to reply, together with insufficient time to reply for police generally as police officers do not necessarily access their email regularly. It was determined that a second round EOI should be sent.

Second Round EOI

The second round EOI was sent in mid-May with a reply by date of 7 June 2013. The numbers at the end of the second round EOI were as follows:

State	Location	Name of Service	
VIC	Shire of Cardinia & City of Bayside	Windermere Family Day Care	27
	City of Casey	City of Casey Family Day Care	25
	Wyndham City	Early Childhood Management Services	27
NSW	Goulburn	Goulburn Family Day Care	2
	The Hills District	Baulkham Hills Family Day Care	11
	Gosford City	Gosford and Peninsula Family Day Care	26
QLD	Brisbane and South East Qld	Wesley Mission Family Day Care	31
	Toowoomba	Kath Dickson Family Day Care	10
	Townsville	Townsville West Family Day Care	17

Table 2.2 Second Round EOI

It was determined after consultation with DoE in May that with only 2 responses from Goulburn, that a new trial site needed to be chosen in NSW. Further consultation with the NSW Police Association, together with 9 emails received from police officers in the Sutherland Shire (in response to the EOIs) asking for a trial to be undertaken in that area led to Goulburn being replaced with Sutherland Shire.

An EOI email was re-sent to NSW Police Association membership in late May announcing the inclusion of Sutherland Shire.

In addition, it was decided that in order to generate more interest in the flexibility trials, a DL sized flyer would be printed and provided to each service (x1000) together with a general DL sized tri-fold brochure about family day care. Services could then liaise with representatives from the relevant trade unions in their local area to distribute the flyers to potential trial families in their areas. A copy of the flyers is attached at Annexure E.

During July 2013, all families who returned an EOI and were located *outside* the trial areas were forwarded some details about family day care and the direct contact details of any family day care service in their region. The services themselves were contacted by FDCA's Sector Support team to let them know about the referrals and to discuss the provision of non-standard hours care.

Parents enquiring about the trials through the trade unions or via services were referred to the flexibility@fdca.com.au email until 31 March 2014, and were emailed a Parent Information Package so that they could complete the application process.

Parent Information Package

Parent application packages were sent to families who had responded to the first and second EOI requests commencing in May, and this process was ongoing until 31 March 2014. The application package was developed in consultation with DoE and participating trade unions, and contained an FAQ

document and a link to an online application. A copy of the Parent Application is attached at Annexure E.

Again, responses were disappointing. The NSW Police Association advised in June 2013 that their members do not have internet access whilst at work, and would therefore be unable to follow the parent application link to complete the survey online whilst at work. A printable version of the survey was then developed and forwarded to all potential applicants. United Voice advised at the end of 2013 that they can just found out that emails being sent by the union to work addresses had been blocked by the Queensland Government, and they were not aware how long this had been happening for, and therefore how much flexibility trial information had got through to their members. Further, the Queensland based trade unions were going through a difficult time industrially and therefore found it difficult to find resources to prioritise the Flexibility Trials.

In late June, the Hills District was replaced with Western Sydney as a trial location, as Baulkham Hills FDC were struggling to find the resources to participate fully and there had only been 2 parent applications received for the Hills District area. The NSW Police Association advised that Western Sydney was an area with large numbers of police officers with children, and St Marys/Penrith Family Day Care – Mission Australia were selected to participate in their place. An email inviting parent applications was sent by the Police Association of NSW to members living in Western Sydney in the last week of July*. Additional DL size parent information brochures were printed with the new NSW locations, and delivered to NSW services in early August (x2000 per service).

The parent application numbers as at 5 August 2013 were:

State	Location	Name of Service	
VIC	Shire of Cardinia & City of Bayside	Windermere Family Day Care	7
	City of Casey	City of Casey Family Day Care	8
	Wyndham City	Early Childhood Management Services	9
NSW	Sutherland Shire	Sutherland Family Day Care	5
	Western Sydney	St Marys/Penrith Family Day Care	1*
	Gosford City	Gosford and Peninsula Family Day Care	16
QLD	Brisbane and South East Qld	Wesley Mission Family Day Care	21
	Toowoomba	Kath Dickson Family Day Care	7
	Townsville	Townsville West Family Day Care	17

Table 2.3 Parent Applications as at 5 August 2013

Following Stakeholder Meeting One in August 2013, and submission of the *Preparatory Phase Report (August 2013)* a number of options for increasing family participation in the FDC Flexibility Trials were proposed, in brief:

- Extending trials to nurses, Ambulance Officers and police officers at each of the trial sites
- Extending trials to all shift-working families
- Extending trial duration parameters.

The options were prepared and costed just prior to the September Federal Election, and the subsequent change in government. A copy of the options paper can be found at Annexure F. Assistant Minister Ley responded to the proposal mid-December 2013 to advise that the trials were to continue, under the original contract and parameters.

An additional option was tabled at the second Stakeholder Meeting (November 2013) to extend the family commencement cut-off date from 31 January to 31 March 2014. This recommendation was accepted following the acceptance of *Formal Service Delivery Phase – Progress Report 1 (December 2013)*. This enabled new families to commence care arrangements for the first quarter of 2014, and for this care to be monitored as part of the trials for a minimum 6 month period.

Communications to potential families developed in conjunction with the trade unions were labour intensive for the April through December 2013 period. Activities included a number of direct emails and SMS communications to members, information nights/sessions being held in trial locations, promotional flyers being left in hospitals and police stations across the trial sites and articles placed in Union Journals and other member communications.

FDCA worked with the trade unions and the services on further family engagement strategies including:

- FDCA placing advertisements for the NSW services in local newspapers highlighting the availability of flexible care for police families.
- FDCA engaged local media in all states to promote the benefits of family day care and the availability of educators meeting individual family needs. This media featured, where possible, families who were participating in the trials talking about how the flexibility of family day care meets their needs.
- Services in Victoria extended an invitation to police officers to attend a family day care playgroup with their children. This approach was been designed to further enhance relationships with potential trial families and the services.
- Services explored further ways to engage with families locally in conjunction with local trade union contacts, including information sessions, where possible at police stations, hospitals etc. brochures being placed in hospital tea rooms and "new parent" bags distributed in hospitals.

Feedback with regard to reluctance by families to take up trial places included:

- An unwillingness to give up current child care arrangements. There was a fear that a long day care place, once surrendered, would be hard to find should family day care not work out for that family. The use of the term “trial” was detrimental as the message that care can continue at the end of the trial period is harder to communicate under the “trial” banner. The Police Federation of Australia requested the terminology be changed at the beginning of this process, however the Department advised that the ‘branding’ had already been formalised.
- A lack of knowledge of family day care, what it is, how it works and whether it is therefore appropriate for their children. Many families were not aware that family day care operates under the same regulatory system as other forms of child care. Work was done to enhance understanding of family day care to potential trial families.
- Affordability; whilst some families would prefer this type of organised care, their current arrangements often included a mixture of family, friends, etc. which is provided at no or low cost. Some disappointment was expressed that the trials did not include additional support for families.
- The affordability for long shifts. The cost of care for long shifts can be cost prohibitive, e.g. a 12 hour shift plus travel time may amount to a 16 hour shift of child care required
- The requirement of care was often for short shifts of a few hours only
- Families would prefer non-standard hours care to take place in their own home. This is particularly so for children under school age.
- The additional costs of non-standard hours care charged by some educators. Non-standard hours care flexibility trial educator fees vary from \$5.70 to \$20.00 and weekend care from \$6.00 to \$30.00 per hour dependent upon location, time of care and educators’ fee charging practice.

6. Service Provider and Educator Information Packages

Information packages were developed for both Service Providers and Educators. These were 'living' documents, with material being added as and when required, and incorporated:

- Trial Overview and Guidelines
- Service Provider Contracts
- Educator Agreements
- Police/Nursing Case Studies
- Registration and Payment Forms
- Reporting Forms and Templates
- Parent Information Packages/Hard Copy Questionnaires
- Overnight Care Reflection Documents

A complete copy of the Service Provider Information Packs are provided at Annexure G.

7. Stakeholder Meetings

Stakeholder Meeting One

The first Stakeholder Meeting was held on 18 July 2013 in Sydney. The meeting was chaired by DEEWR and attendees included the FDCA project team, the Police Federation of Australia, Police Association Victoria, Police Association of NSW, Queensland Nurses' Union, United Voice (Queensland) and representatives of the 9 Family Day Care Service Providers.

The meeting confirmed Terms of Reference (see Annexure H) and were updated on current project status.

Discussion was also held as to barriers to participation viz:

Police Families

- Difficult to get information to police officers
- Marketing materials did not place enough emphasis on the particular benefits of FDC for Police
- Mid-year start date and unwillingness to give up current care arrangements
- Insufficient knowledge about FDC in comparison with Long Day Care
- Lack of understanding of NQF and what it is (used extensively in promotional material).

Reponses:

- FDCA to look at changing language in further promotional material and place greater emphasis on 'selling' FDC benefits to police
- Services to offer parent information sessions
- FDCA/trade unions to look at developing 'case studies' to demonstrate benefits of FDC

- FDCA/trade unions to look at utilising police officers who already use FDC to promote its benefits, hopefully building trust about FDC.

Minutes for Stakeholder Meeting One are located at Annexure I.

Stakeholder Meeting Two

The second Stakeholder Meeting was held on 28 November 2013 in Sydney. The meeting was chaired by AGDE and attendees included the FDCA project team, the Police Federation of Australia, Police Association Victoria, Police Association of NSW, Queensland Nurses' Union, United Voice (Queensland) and representatives of the 9 Family Day Care Service Providers.

Progress reports were given on a state by state basis, and discussion centred generally on family recruitment and families' needs. Further discussion also took place in relation to the type of care requested by families.

There was general consensus that up-take will likely increase slowly over time, and that it is worth considering with any further promotions that these promotions be centred around family day care and what it can provide, rather than the flexibility trials themselves, so that potential families see family day care as a possible permanent rather than temporary solution to their child care problems.

The trade unions reiterated their commitment to the trials, and will continue to work with FDCA regarding exploring more promotional activities with their members.

The Steering Committee met following the Stakeholder Meeting and discussed potential changes to the parameters of the trials, as outlined in FDCA's September 2013 submission regarding family engagement. The AGDE advised that they are still awaiting a Ministerial response with regard to this submission. Discussion was also had around the possible extension of starting dates for trial families to end March 2014 (from end January 2014).

Nurses/Ambulance Officers

- The industrial climate in Qld has meant that the unions are busy fighting against job losses and other industrial issues and have not been able to give much attention to the flexibility trials.
- Ambulance Officers currently have a 3 month roster which may be reduced to three weeks. This will make child care more problematic, but change not likely to be implemented/felt until late 2013/2014.
- A lack of FDC knowledge is also an issue

Responses:

- FDCA and FDCAQ acknowledge that FDC need to better market their services
- Information nights for parents may assist in developing knowledge of FDC.

The FDCA project team gave an overview of where services were up to, and key issues for their services. A copy of the second Stakeholder Meeting minutes is at Annexure J.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee met following the Stakeholder Meeting. In summary, the key issues for the meetings were:

- Communication is essential for ensuring the trial is successful, including learning lessons along the way and being adaptable to changing circumstances.
- It is important to manage the expectations of parents, educators and the Minister and that all parties have an understanding of realistic timeframes.
- Building trust with parents, and understanding about the nature of FDC, how it is regulated and how it operates is also essential to ensuring participation.
- Information sessions for parents, case studies and word of mouth from existing FDC users are the most likely ways to build participation rates.

- Keeping in mind the goal of a sustainable model of FDC service provision for non-standard care into the future.

Stakeholder Meeting Three

The final stakeholder meeting was held on 9 September 2014. The meeting was chaired by AGDE and attendees included the FDCA project team, the Police Federation of Australia, Police Association Victoria, Police Association of NSW, Queensland Nurses' Union, United Voice (Queensland) and representatives of the 9 Family Day Care Service Providers.

Progress reports were given on a state by state basis, and discussion centred generally on family recruitment and families' needs. Further discussion also took place in relation to the type of care requested by families.

The AGDE and FDCA acknowledged the usefulness of the Flexibility Trials in informing their responses to the Productivity Commission Inquiry, and also worked to highlight the issues surrounding flexible care.

There was general agreement that the Flexibility Trials had been a worthwhile learning experience for educators, services, peak bodies and the Australian Government, as there is a lack of readily available information about flexible care, and how and when it occurs in Australia.

Minutes for Stakeholder Meeting Three are attached at Annexure K.

8. New Educator Recruitment

FDCA developed an extensive recruitment package for new educators, which was forwarded to services in August 2013. New educator recruitment was considered a priority given the lack of standard-hours care places available through existing educators and many initial parent applications indicating that this is a high area of need.

The recruitment package incorporated:

- Educator Recruitment Guidelines – outlining the parameters of the recruitment campaign and providing details of the materials developed to assist services; and
- Educator Recruitment Toolkit – providing a guide to services for marketing and recruitment.

In addition, FDCA developed the following resources:

- Microsite – website specific to Flexibility Trials:
<http://flexibility.fdca.com.au>.
- Educator Recruitment DL – x2000 per service – printed to utilise in recruitment, for letterboxing, information handouts, etc. These have been delivered to the services.
- Becoming an Educator Brochures – x750 per service
- Seek.com.au advertisement x9 per service
- Advertisements in Sydney Child and Brisbane Child Magazines (September editions) – for 3 NSW services and Wesley Mission FDC
- Newspaper advertisement copy
- School newsletter advertisement – black and white and colour
- A4 Printable Poster
- PowerPoint Presentation – for Flexibility Trials Educator Recruitment
- Facebook and Google search word advertising.

An example of the educator recruitment package provided to a service (Sutherland) is provided at Annexure L.

As outlined above, the materials developed included national and local marketing resources such as print ads, promotional materials, flyers etc. and a number of materials were printed and distributed to the 9 trial sites for distribution.

Services were allocated a budget of \$5,000 with which to place ads, distribute flyers or develop service specific resources related to educator recruitment. Services utilised these funds in varying ways dependent upon their location and their experiences as to what type of promotion had worked best for them in the past.

Activities included:

- radio advertisements, interviews and community announcement placements throughout Queensland.
- local newspaper advertisements and editorials in trial locations, as well as local media generated highlighting satisfied family day care families who already utilise flexible care
- electronic newsletters to union members, through metro hospitals
- advertisements in school newsletters
- promotional banners and signs
- letterbox drops around Brisbane hospitals, and in targeted areas of Victoria where there is an undersupply of educators
- bumper stickers
- information nights.

Some services did not utilise their recruitment budget as they had sufficient educators ready to provide services.

Nationally, FDCA also placed advertisements on Seek.com for services, and advertised in both Sydney Child and Brisbane Child magazines (Victorian services did not think that Melbourne Child magazine would be effective for them).

Recruitment Outcomes

The most successful methods of recruitment were both the letterbox distribution of flyers, and advertisements in local newspapers. These activities have resulted in interest by prospective educators with qualifications and/or experience and have been the most likely to result in commencement of the induction process.

There were a large number of expressions of interest received via the Seek advertising for all services, however most of the applicants were not suitable for recruitment, for reasons such as:

- Located in the wrong area
- No qualifications or experience
- No knowledge of family day care, what it is, how it operates, etc., and subsequently no interest.

The Sydney Child and Brisbane Child advertisements did not generate any applications.

The three services who conducted radio advertising generated a few calls from people interested in becoming an educator, and much interest in family day care in general, however no educators were recruited to the trials as a result of the radio advertising.

Further feedback from services was that potential applicants are concerned with providing non- standard hours and overnight care when new to family day care due to lack of experience and support during these times. FDCA reiterated with services with regard to the parameters of non-standard care, as the care offered by trial educators does not necessarily need to encompass overnight care, and may consist of weekend care or pre 6.30am starts, post 6.30pm finishes. As outlined previously, the majority of requests made for non-standard hours care were for extended hours care rather than overnight, and overnight care was more likely to be requested some time into the trials once the family was comfortable with the educator.

Recruitment Numbers

The trials allowed for 6 existing educators and 4 new educators per service to be recruited to the flexibility trials to be available to provide care for potential trial families. This arrangement had flexibility within participating states as long as it remained within the trial parameters and budget requirements.

Total Number Educators Registered to the Flexibility Trials		
Service Name	Existing Educators	New Educators
NSW		
Gosford & Peninsula FDC	3	2
Sutherland FDC	4	0
St Mary's / Penrith FDC	0	0
VIC		
City Of Casey FDC	0	1
ECMS FDC	3	0
Windermere FDC	1	0
QLD		
Lady Gowrie / Townsville FDC	7	4
Wesley Mission	7	3
Kath Dickson	4	2

It should be noted that in St Marys, and the 3 Victorian Services the lack of educators being recruited to the trials was because of a lack of parent applications. Services were mindful of not signing up Educators to the trials unless there were children requiring placement. This, however had to be balanced with recruiting and having educators inducted and ready to provide care for families who did apply.

9. Education and Care Provision

Family placement was dependent upon matching both trial families' needs and locations to participating educators' available places and location. This task was time consuming for those services placing families, as shift requirements can be extremely complicated, and existing educators have many or all of their standard hours places full with existing children.

In addition, as envisaged, once in care, there are challenges to be found in balancing educators' availability and need for assured income with the families' changing and often unpredictable roster needs, with a general reluctance for families to pay for care hours that they may not need, but nonetheless mean that the place is unable to be filled by the Educator in case it is required.

Family Placement

Some of the challenges encountered with regard to family placement include:

- The majority of families requiring placement were not looking for overnight care (particularly in NSW and Victoria). Feedback suggests that:
 - Families prefer to start with standard hours care, and then if things are working well they will consider overnight care.
 - Families are reluctant to place pre-school aged children in formal overnight care unless absolutely necessary.

Existing educators did not have much standard hours care available, and it takes around 3 months to recruit and induct new educators.

- Care that was sought was often for extended hours non-standard care (i.e. early starts or late finishes) but was often requested as a stand-alone

services, rather than an extension to a typical 8 hour care period. For example, A family may wish to have a child place in care from 530am until 11am to cater for the beginning of an early shift until the second parent finishes work. These placements are often not viable for the educator, who may only have that one child in care until 8am, and then from 11am onwards be unable to fill the 4th care place.

- Some services had limited standard hours placements available, and in some cases waiting lists within their service. This meant that there were not standard hours places available for those families wanting a “mixed” shift of standard and non-standard hours.

This was envisaged, and an educator recruitment component was built into the Flexibility Trials Project to recruit new educators. However, the recruitment and induction process can take from 4 weeks to 3 months, so given the high percentage of requests for standard hours care, some of these were unable to be met.

- Some newly recruited educators expressed a desire to only undertake overnight care when they have become comfortable and familiar with their new role as a home-based educator, but were available for early starts, late finishes and weekend care. Educators were asked to be available for a minimum 2 non-standard hours shifts; these do not have to be overnight shifts and can encompass early mornings, late evenings or weekend care.
- Matching trial educators to families. Some services are quite large geographically, challenge is found in recruiting educators to be ready for prospective families without being able to accurately predict where families will require care.

Some services have managed this by holding off registering educators to the trials until more families come on board, other services have made the decision to recruit educators to enable them to have educators “ready to go” when families come on board. One service in Victoria led a (largely

unsuccessful) recruitment drive in a particular area to try to recruit educators where there was already an identified need.

Some families have expressed a wish to participate, but are not looking for care until 2014. The deadline by which families could enter into the trials was originally extended from 31 December 2013 to 31 January 2014, then to 31 March 2014. This allowed families to commence with the trials as children returned to school and still allowed a 6 month monitoring period. This resulted in additional families being registered to the trials.

Following March 2014, Services still tried to place any families who required care in accordance with their usual procedures, however those families are not be part of the formal monitoring process for the trials.

Some additional challenges for educators include:

Bookings

Finding a balance between managing bookings and surety of income can be difficult. For example:

- Difficulty in deciding how to best book minimum hours when care requirements change each week.
- Some educators felt they needed to hold a full time place for their trial family to be able to accommodate different days each week, and whilst some parents are happy to do this, others are not.
- If a family does not require care until 3pm, a full day still has to be held open, yet often families do not wish to pay for care they do not utilise even though educators cannot fill the place.
- Parents not happy having absences recorded against them when they do not use all hours agreed upon.

Finding the balance for educators and families is dependent upon both parties individual needs and ability to be flexible.

Educators are managing their bookings in different ways. For example, one educator has a minimum 40 hour per week booking, with care

booked 2 weeks in advance but able to be changed up to 1 week in advance. Another new educator has commenced on purely a casual basis, with all bookings being done as needed with no minimums, but with the slightly higher (casual) hourly rates.

These differences are dependent upon the particular situation of that educator, their vacancies and income needs and what arrangements they negotiate with trial families.

- Impact upon family life. Educator feedback has been that non-standard care takes additional tolls on families, and with family activities.

The ways in which services manage the provision of non – standard hours, weekend and overnight care varied, and depended entirely on the service policies and procedures in addition to the individual educators' service.

The full data set of care utilised during the trial is at Annexure M.

A note on the Team Approach

Whilst a 'team' educator approach was envisaged, a number of trial families have indicated that if their primary educator is not available they would prefer to make private arrangements for alternative care. However, In Brisbane, a team of 3 educators covered each other's holidays.

10. State Reports

Queensland

Townsville West Family Day Care

During the trial, Townsville West Family Day Care had a minimum of seven and maximum of 11 registered educators for the program. The number of educators who provided care during the trial fluctuated from two to six educators.

The number of participating families ranged from two to nine with the number of children in care fluctuating from two to eleven.

Parent's occupations included nursing, concreting, paramedic, emergency services, policing and Australian Defence Force personnel. Three of the participating parents were sole parents employed as nurses.

"I will be providing care for the school aged son of a nurse who is a single mum with sole custody who works full time, including before/after school care, evening and overnight care". (04/05/2014 – Educator)

Families accessed a mixture of care over weekdays, weekends, evening and overnight care. Care was also provided during holiday periods including Christmas and New Years. Hours of care included short shifts (two hours), split shifts (before and after school) and longer shifts (over 12 hours and overnight care).

Registered educators experience ranged from new educators (less than one month) up to 20 years' experience. Most educators extended their availability for trials for 24 hours most days of the week and for weekends. Registered educators qualifications included working towards a Certificate III, Certificate III, Diploma, Bachelor of Education and a Graduate Certificate.

Overall the trial provided local families the opportunities to access flexible care to accommodate to the employment needs of parents.

Key Findings (Service)

Educator retention

The service experienced challenges in educator retention and educator's changed circumstances which subsequently made it difficult in finding replacements for and accommodating for the families care needs. These issues were out of the control of the service with educators leaving due to maternity leave, serious illness and relocation.

"It's been a pretty tough time finding out that we have two educators resigning, another going on maternity leave and another who we were not sure if she could continue working due to her illness. It feels like the pilot is starting to fall apart for us and we won't be able to continue recruiting new families into the pilot. Our intention has always been to continue growing, we just won't have the educator availability anymore to the extent which we have had unfortunately". 15/06/2014

Contacting families

The service experienced difficulties contacting families during business hours. Unsuccessful follow ups with interested families was an ongoing challenge for services, however, it should be noted that this is an issue that is contended without outside the flexibility trials.

"We are also disappointed at the lack of parents returning our calls when we phone them but this is not only in regards to the flexibility pilot although these parents have been extremely hard to get in touch with." 9/03/2014

Relationship with Union representatives

The service experienced challenges in establishing contact with Union representatives over the course of the trial. The support and promotion of the trial by the Union to its members was important for the success of the programme.

- *No time to organise info session with nurses and paramedics. Have left emailed union resp - no response. 12/01/2014*
- *No response from Nurses union or paramedics re information sessions. 26/01/2014*
- *Union reps are not responding to messages left. 23/02/2014*
- *I have emailed the Paramedics union rep to ask for assistance in organising some information to go out to the Paramedics. I have made contact with him a few times with no response, so I don't really expect to hear back from him. 4/05/2014*
- *I have phoned the nurses union office in Townsville to organise advertising again in their newsletter. The admin lady, Mary is going to find out how to do some advertising again for us in the hospital's newsletter. 4/05/2014*

Educator Engagement

The level of engagement for educators was positive. The service made observations that educators were willing and interested participants in the trial and invested in making it a success.

- *We find that when we have a request for care, if we email the request to educators they are very responsive and let us know if they are able to help or not. 23/03/2014*

Advertising

The most effective form of recruitment was through the promotion of the trial through the Unions. Promotion through Union membership was more effective than advertising in local papers.

- *no response from 2 ads in local papers. 9/03/2014*

- *Advertisements that went into the two local papers have had no effect. We have had a new family added to our expression of interest list as they had seen the advertising on the QNU website. 23/03/2014*
- *We have had contact from two new nurses looking for care for their children. One was referred by another nurse using the service and the other heard of the trials through the news. It must have been a while ago as there has been nothing on the news about the trials since May 2013*
- *It would be great if more of our enrolled nurses and paramedics would talk about their care in our scheme with work colleagues 4/05/2014*
- *It will be beneficial if we could continue to have our services advertised through the QNU website and in their newsletters as well as with the paramedic's newsletters and websites if possible. 4/05/2014*

Shared Care Arrangements

Shared care arrangements between educators provided solutions to flexibility issues for families during the trial. One instance of the success of shared care arrangements between educators was where one parent was working as a nurse and the other parent was working in China. The child was sent back to China to be with the father due to the issues with accessing flexible care. The shared care arrangement between two educators allowed the family to bring the child back to Australia to live.

"We have been luck to find some educators who are able to provide a shared care arrangement for [parent] who has been on the waiting list for a long time and ended up sending her Child back to China with her Father last year as she was unable to find care for him. Arrangements for interviews have been made for [parent] to meet [educators] this week as care commences next week". Service, 20/07/2014

Timesheets

The service noted some difficulties in entering timesheets into the systems for children whose care crossed across non-standard and standard hours. This meant that fees charged were different across the one shift and therefore had to be entered manually to reflect the differences in fees.

We have had a few issues with entering timesheets for two of the flexi children who are school aged children whose booking commences at 6am to 9am then 3pm to 6pm some days. This is difficult to enter into our system as it falls into non-standard hours care and is charged at a different rate than the schoolie rate. Our scheme's standard hours are from 7.30am to 5.30pm. This has been an ongoing issue as neither Harmony nor Hubworks allows enough spaces to enter all of the different areas. What we need is to enter 6am to 7.30am at the non-standard rate, then 7.30am to 9am at the schoolie rate, then 3pm to 5.30pm at the schoolie rate and 5.30pm to 6pm at the non-standard rate. These fees always have to be entered manually although it is not an issue just for the nurses children, it would be an issue for any children using these sorts of hours and any educator charging at the different rates for each session of care.

Preference for Care in the Family Home

There were instances where families were interested in flexible education and care however had a preference for it in the home of the child. This was particularly evident for overnight care or care that started very early in the morning or late into the night.

... [Child] didn't like the idea of going into care as she thought she was too old for it. [child] got to the point of making herself sick with worry about care so was allowed to stay home sometimes alone. The family found that [child] was getting up to mischief when staying at home alone so they have hired an Au Pair to take over the care in the children's own home. 14/09/2014

Key Findings (educators)

Frequent changes to bookings/change of hours

Due to the nature of parent's work, including rotating rosters and extended shift times, frequent changes to bookings and late pickups were issues that educators were faced with during the trial.

- *Finding it hard to be fully flexible for one family as shifts are now on a rotating roster and some shifts I cannot cover for family. Family so far have been able to split care between myself and another family member. (Educator 18/05/2014)*
- *I have had to explain to parents that although I am flexible with hours, if you tell me you will collect at certain time they need to let me know if they will be late as I have to deal with my own children and husband. (Educator - 06/04/2014)*
- *I feel that there is a need for parents requiring flexible care to be able to have a window of time allowed to be late at pickup without prior approval as they may be unable to contact the educator if they are with a patient, however, as it is infrequent it would not be fair to extend the booked hours. (Educator, 25/03/2013)*

Managing expectations

Educators reported difficulties in balancing the needs of flexibility families and their own families. Strategies educators used to overcome such issues included having clear communication on educator availability and managing expectations of families.

- *I am finding that some parents are expecting me to drop everything and accommodate their demands, despite any impact that it has on others (early and late pickups/drop offs, extra days required). They do*

not want to use other carers. I have had to BOOK in some days that I am unavailable. I am struggling to find days off for myself in an effort to accommodate everyone else. (Educator - 22/09/2013)

Relief educators

Educators commented that families were often uncomfortable with engaging a relief educator in the event that the educator could not meet the care needs of the families requiring care. A strong relationship between the educator and families, with a solid level of trust and consistency is often required by parents when engaging education and care services.

- *Parents are not keen to send their children to secondary carers for overnight care as there is no established relationship. (Educator 07/09/2013)*
- *This fortnight has been a hard one for me as I have had my family and two children from my care also sick. So have needed to clean all my toys and home and also recover myself. I did feel guilty for letting down my flexibility family when I said I couldn't care for their children as they both needed to work and they were not happy using another carer. (Educator - 18/05/2014)*

Impact on educator's family

Educators reported the impact that offering non-standard hours would have on their personal lives and families. This included issues such as reduced time spent with family, managing the expectations of the educator's children and family and forgoing social events due to work on weekends and during holiday periods.

- *We are finding celebrating some aspects of Christmas difficult. We have included the children into our traditions. This comes at a financial cost to us and makes it feel a little less of a family tradition. We have had to buy advent calendars and Christmas PJs for the children. My son sometimes*

feels a little put out that the other children are included in our traditions. I have spoken to him and he seems okay with it now. (Educator, 15/12/13)

- *Being summer we are finding it hard not being able to use our pool a lot. We have done a major home rearrange and created a space for my 9yo to escape from the day care children from time to time. (15/12/13)*
- *I am unable to attend many Christmas events with friends and family due to working. (Educator, 15/12/13)*
- *I am also finding it increasingly difficult to maintain my paperwork and own housework. I am needing to rely heavily on my family to help maintain the household or take less children during the day. (Educator, 23/03/14)*

Financial Impact on Educator

Educators reported financial impacts and associated costs in undertaking the trials. This was particularly evident due to overnight care and the extension of operating hours. Financial impacts, such as electricity bills, were exacerbated due to the summer period and heat experienced in Townsville and therefore the need to use air-conditioning.

- *Financial impact is greater (around Christmas) with families in the flexibility trial as they are often here at night time and when friends etc come to give gifts to my children, I usually provide a small gift for the care children so they do not feel left out. Weekend activities are becoming a little taxing as one of the care families is unable to afford some of the activities and I am paying for them so the children do not miss out. (Educator, 15/12/13)*
- *I have received my first summer electricity bill whilst doing 24 hr care. Due to air conditioners running day and night, increase in hot water for baths and extra cleaning, introduction of a second fridge due to the need to have extra food available, extra washing machine and dryer use due to turning over linen often and quickly, extra dishwasher use my bill has INCREASED \$2000.00 (total bill of \$3100.00) (Educator, 23/03/14)*

- *Have recently spent approx. \$1000 upgrading my overnight care facilities (repaint, new carpet and additional bedding, towels etc for this bedroom). The costs of providing overnight care are significantly higher when you consider this as well as the fact that you generally only have 1-2 children in care so your hourly rate is effectively less. This needs to be considered if there is to be an ongoing start up grant for flexi hours care providers. (Educator, 24/04/2014)*

Other factors

Other considerations for educators in the Townsville area were concerns about cyclone season and how this would be managed during out of standard hours. One educator noted that they were unsure if CCB would be payable under a period of local emergency due to the non-standard hours of care.

During Cyclone warning period it became a concern that children may be in overnight care whilst a cyclone was imminent. Steps were taken to ensure that this did not occur, however, it was not known as to if CCB would be payable under the "period of local emergency" clause, due to the fact that the threat was overnight and not during school hours. We use the trigger if schools are closed we are. (Educator, 09/02/14)

Kath Dickson Family Day Care - Toowoomba

Kath Dickson Family Day Care had six registered educators as part of the flexibility trials. Two registered educators were recruited specifically for the trials. Kath Dickson Family Day Care had three educators who participated in the trials.

The experience of educators ranged from new to 30 years' experience. Qualifications ranged from Certificate III to a Diploma in Children's Services. Registered educators extended standard operating hours to be available for

families 24 hours per day seven days per week. Educators were supported by the Kath Dickson Family Day Care coordination staff on a fortnightly basis. During the trial period, five staff members of Kath Dickson Family Day Care were made redundant including the Service Manager and resources were stretched.

Kath Dickson Family Day Care had two families actively participate in the flexibility trials. One participating family was a sole parent family that required assistance with early starts, late finishes, overnight, weekend and pick up and drop offs. The other family did not require flexible care after registering for the trial as the parent left work.

Key Findings (Service)

Promotion

Kath Dickson Family Day Care undertook an advertising campaign during October 2013 that included three-half page advertisements in the local newspaper over a six week period, an editorial in the local paper, radio advertising, and external banner and flexi trial bumper stickers. There was a concerted effort by the service to promote the trial to the public in the hope of reaching emergency services families.

The participating family and educator featured in the local newspaper and highlighted the positive outcomes from the trial. The Coordination Unit also delivered brochures on the trial to key locations around the trial site and undertook information sessions for prospective educators which resulted in three new educators.

Matching families

The service decided to not advertise the trial for families until they had inducted new educators with available standard hours of care.

Key Findings (educators)

Educator teams

The educator worked closely with another registered educator (mother-daughter team) to manage the flexible care requirements of the family. The educators coordinate between early morning drop offs (often requiring 4am starts) and late night care (11pm collections). The team arrangement allows one educator to collect the child from school and the other educator to stay at home with other children and avoid disruptions.

Stability

Prior to the trials, the child was in Long Day Care and the parent was required to juggle between 3-4 babysitters in the evenings and weekends.

Overnight and late night care

The educator and the parent came to an agreement to manage late night shifts and overnight shifts in the best interests of the child. The arrangement was if the parent started a shift at 11pm, the child would go into the educators care at 7pm to ensure a full night's undisturbed sleep. The child would then be dropped to school by the team educator to allow the parent to sleep after night shift and ensure that the primary educator could be available for children booked in standard hours.

Extended shifts

The educator's shifts changed due to the parent's shift being extended. The educator was able to be flexible and accommodate for the parent's shift extensions. There were instances where booked care was cancelled and the educator was unsure whether to charge for the shift when it was no longer required. This was an ongoing difficulty for educators across the board due to the nature of the parents work as well as the close relationship that is formed between the educator and family.

- *I didn't know whether to charge her for the shift, or tell to keep child home with her for the day at no cost. Gets a bit confusing. (Educator 1/12/2013)*

Parent satisfaction

Parental satisfaction for the provision of education and care was very high in the trial. Prior to the trials, the child had been in Long Day Care and the parent was required to juggle between three to four babysitters in the evenings and weekends. The educator reported that the parent was very happy with the flexibility and accessibility provided that took into account shift and overnight hours.

- *Parent is really happy with accessibility of care, considering her rosters. Child is fitting in well to routine and facilities provided. (Educator 23/03/2014)*
- *(Educator's name), you are a life saver for me" says parent. (Educator 6/4/2014)*

Wesley Mission Family Day Care – Brisbane & Surrounds

Wesley Mission Family Day Care had 10 registered educators part of the flexibility trials with three registered educators recruited specifically for the trials. Wesley Mission had seven educators who actively participated in the trials.

The experience of the educators ranged from newly engaged educators (18 months) up to having worked in the sector for 13 years. The qualifications of the educators also ranged from working towards a Certificate III (five educators), holding a Certificate III (four educators) and Diploma (one educator) in children's services. Educators were supported by the Wesley Mission Family Day Care coordination, in line with the general practices of the service.

Educators operating hours were extended as a part of the Flexibility Trials to accommodate to families looking for non-standard hours care. Prior to the trials, educators operated from generally starting between 06:30-08:00 in the morning up until between 5pm and 6pm in the evening from Monday to Friday. The majority of registered educators extended their standard operating hours to be available for families 24 hours per day, seven days per week. Educators indicated that they were open to and flexible to the needs of families accessing care outside of core hours. Two educators worked in a successful shared care arrangement for one child.

Wesley Mission Family Day Care had 10 families participating with a total of 17 children. Families participating in the trials and those in the area generally sought standard hours of care that extended into non-standard hours of care. The service, at its peak, had a waiting list for the Flexibility Trials of 30 parents and 42 children.

[Key Findings \(Service and Educators\)](#)

Travel

The service reported that travel was a factor for families to consider when deciding whether family day care was suitable for their education and care needs. Having family day care educators in close proximity to the family home was more important rather than educator's homes being close to the workplace.

- *Families are declining due to travelling to another location prior to having to travel to educators (Service Report, 10/11/2013)*
- *Parents have informed me they are looking to move into my area so they can be closer to me and make it easier to drop off and pick up (Educator Report, 10/11/13)*

Preference for overnight care

Families indicated a preference for educators to provide care in the family home when overnight care was required. This is consistent with parents being unwilling to unsettle a child's sleeping routines.

- *Conversations with parents indicate In Home Care - less stress and change for the children. No families have ventured into overnight care. (Service Report, 10/11/2013)*

Promotion

Wesley Mission Family Day Care undertook a marketing and promotion campaign to raise awareness for the trials and attract more educators and therefore more families.

- *Looking at 25,000 flyers for new educators to be distributed in locations surrounding the Brisbane Hospitals. Having educators located nearer to the workplace we hope will improve interest from families. (Service Report, 10/11/2013)*

As well as flyers distributed through a mail drop, the service also promoted the trials in the local community through flyers displayed in hospital and health services staff rooms. The service advertised in the local paper promoting family day care as the flexible early childhood education and care option to parents.

The service utilised existing community networks to promote the trial to the target group of families. A new educator had previously worked in the nurse's recruitment agency prior to becoming an educator. The educator promoted the trials with her old contacts in the profession.

- *New educator worked for a nurse's recruitment agency prior to becoming a FDC educator and said that she will contact her old colleagues to help push the work on Nurses and paramedic needing care through the agency. (Service Report, 19/01/2014)*

Word of mouth was a successful approach that promoted the flexibility trials to potential families with participating families promoting the trial and the benefits of family day care to colleagues and friends.

- *A trial parent has kindly pass on and recommended care to another family. That family has been for an interview and is to start mid march. (16/02/2014)*

Xmas period

The demand for family day care services during the Christmas and holiday period significantly slowed for educators. This is indicative with the general trend in early childhood education services over this time.

- *Parents shifts have now slowed down because of Christmas. Will start up again next year. (Educator Report, 8/12/13)*
- *Little interaction over Christmas period. (Service Report, 19/01/2014)*
- *Shifts are yet to resume after Christmas break. Should become more regular in February (Educator Report, 19/01/2014)*

Nurses already accessing family day care

The trials allowed services and educators the opportunity to realise what type of professions parents were in that required flexible home-based care. It became evident that there were a number of parents that were in the nursing profession that already accessed family day care in an organic manner outside of the trial.

- *This period I have gone through the list of children in care with our Educators and have discovered we have many Nurses with children in the care of our Educators. (Service Report, 16/03/2014).*

Impact on educator and interaction with families

Educators reported positive relationships and supportive feedback from parents participating in the trials and accessing flexible care arrangements.

- *I have let parents know I am available whenever they need. They appreciate this very much. We are in touch every week. (Educator Report 13/10/2013)*

Family day care shifts were generally characterised by no fixed shifts and no set time for care. Educators were generally very flexible to the needs of families.

- *Mums shifts have not been fixed so there have been no set times for care. The parents know I am available when they need and they are very happy for the flexibility of care. (Educator Report, 27/10/2013)*

Educator's hours were also extended on short notice and extra days were booked in at the last minute.

Educator feedback indicated that offering flexible education and care services to parents had little impact on their home life and family. This may have been due to the fact that families in the area were mostly requiring standard hours of care that at times extended into non-standard hours. Nonetheless, the open availability of educators and the support this provided parents did not impact largely on educators.

Victoria

City of Casey Family Day Care

City of Casey Family Day Care Service had one registered educator for the flexibility trials. They had other interested educators in participating in the trials however the service would only register these educators for the trial if families who require care in the area became evident.

The participating educator was a new educator to the service. The educator was actively working towards a Diploma in Children's Services and held a Certificate III, Diploma in Outside School Hours Care and a Certificate in Integration Aide.

As a result of the trial, the educator extended her operating hours from 8:30am to 6pm into non-standard operating hours from after 8pm and overnight.

The educator worked with one participating family with one 7 month old child as part of the trial. The father of the child was in the police force and the mother was an accountant who worked locally. While the family had the option of flexible care, the family accessed care around the mother's work hours which were standard hours. Care was provided for 9.25 hours 4-5 days per week. There were instances where the family made changes to bookings due to the nature of shift work for policing. The option of flexible and non-standard care was always available for the family however if the need arose for non-standard hours.

[child] has been coming into care later, and leaving earlier some days because [parent1] is on shift work. [parent2] had Friday off (27/06/14) to spend time with her family before [parent1] starts night shift next week. (Educator Report 29/06/14)

Key Findings (Service and Educator)

Service Recruitment

The service did not undertake specific recruitment for the Flexibility Trials instead it undertook general recruitment of educators. The service indicated that several educators indicated that they would be interested in provided flexible care to families if the need arose.

- *Several educators have previously indicated that they would be interested in providing flexible care to trial families if they enrolled with City of Casey FDC (this has not yet occurred). City of Casey has a higher number than normal for their service of vacant care places across their service delivery area. There is a level of confidence that if a family registered for care with the trial then would be able to find a suitable placement for the family. (Service report 06/04/2014)*

Promotion of Flexibility Trials

The service did not undertake separate promotion for families for the trials. They instead promoted general flexible care in line with general promotion of the service.

- *The service is not conducting separate promotion for families for the trials. They are promoting flexible care with City of Casey FDC across their local government area, through local media, MCHN other promotional steps... (Service report 06/04/2014)*

Had the service undertaken targeted family recruitment for the trials (e.g. through local police stations) the service may have secured additional families requiring flexible care for the trial.

- *The service has not had an opportunity to engage with the police members directly via the police stations. Given this restriction they (City of Casey FDC) have identified the most effective approach to be to promote FDC to families and when a police family is identified at enrolment they will be provided with information regarding flexi trials and encouraged to participate. (Service report 06/04/2014)*

A second family registered for the trials and met with prospective four educators offering non-standard hours of care. This is reflective of the educators' general willingness to provide flexible care. Although the family was looking for care on a casual basis, the family was willing to use any of the four educators they met with.

Educator relationship with families

Both the educator and service reported a highly successful relationship between the educator and the participating police family. The educator maintained a strong connection with both parent's and this is reflected in all reporting documents.

- *[parent] graduated last week – Friday (1/5/14). Exciting and emotional times for the family. (Educator Report – 10/08/14).*

ECMS Family Day Care

ECMS Family Day Care had three educators registered for the Flexibility Trials. Due to a lack of demand from families in the geographic area the educators catered for, ECMS Family Day Care were signed off from the trials for reporting purposes from 31 March 2014.

The registered educators were highly experienced with experience ranging from 6 years, 14 years and 23 years. One educator held a Certificate III and the other two educators held a Diploma in children's services. The educators standard hours were from 7am to 6pm Monday-Friday. As part of the trials, the educators extended their operating hours to cater for overnight shifts and weekend care.

Key Findings (Service and Educator)

As outlined above, there was a lack of demand from police families in the educator's locations, with some care sought in the Point Cook area, where the service did not have any educators. Some families who had initially indicated an interest in the trials indicated that their reasons for not proceeding with a booking was their desire to keep their current arrangements at that time, families not needing care at that time but possibly in the future. As with other feedback given by policing parents, there was also a preference for children to be cared for in their own homes during overnight shifts.

- *"We received a phone call from a grandmother who said her son is a single dad and a police officer and this would be an interest for him but when she found out that the child was to be cared for in the educators home she declined and said no, I though the child will be cared for in their own home."* (Service report 09/03/2014)

The service undertook a recruitment drive for new educators in the Point Cook area to try to meet the need of police families in that area who had expressed an interest in participating in the trials, however they were unsuccessful. The recruitment drive included extensive letter boxing and

advertisements in the local newspaper. The service advised that they believe that their lack of success is because Point Cook is in a high socio-economic area.

In retrospect, more targeted advertising and promotion to police families through the workplace and with the direct engagement of the Victorian Police Force may have increased awareness of the flexibility trials for potential families.

Windermere Family Day Care - Shire of Cardinia & City of Bayside

Windermere Family Day Care had one existing educator participate in the Flexibility Trials. The service had other educators available and ready to participate in the trials, however the service did not register them to the trials due to the lack of interest from police families in the area.

Families were referred to the trials as the need arose, however the police families in the area did not generate interest.

- *Lack of family interest has impacted on trial and inability to have educators waiting. (Service Report, 23/03/2014)*

The participating educator provided care for a family during the trials however, the care ceased due to the service being unable to accommodate for the changing work roster and needs of the family. The trial family explored options for in-home-care and as a result the family was referred to Windermere's In-Home Care Service. The family wished to stay in contact with the educator and have access to casual care where possible.

- *Children/family have terminated booked care. Wish to stay as casual if/when required and positions are available. (Educator Report, 09/03/2014)*

New South Wales

Gosford and Peninsula Family Day Care

Gosford and Peninsula Family Day Care had five educators registered and three educators providing care during the Flexibility Trial. The number of children participating in the trial ranged from one to five children coming from between one and four registered families.

Two out of the three registered educators who cared throughout the trial were new educators. These educators became registered in July and August of 2013, while the third participating educator had been providing family day care services to families for over 23 years.

Qualifications among actively participating educators also varied. A newly registered educator was working towards a Certificate III in Children's Services and held other field specific qualifications, such as in Business Administration. The second newly registered educator held a Bachelor of Early Childhood Teaching. Both newly registered educators had small children (2x one year olds and a two year old) of their own they also cared for. The educator with the most experience in family day care held a Diploma in Children's Services.

As part of the trial, the actively participating educators extended their standard operating hours to accommodate for the flexible needs of policing families. Hours ranged from extended business hours, weekend care, over night care and before and after school hours.

Key Findings (Service)

Preference for casual care

A family regularly using flexible care under the flexibility trials utilised casual care as one of the parents finished work at varying times and the other has

changing shift work. The family had a preference for the 'casual' nature of flexible family day care that was offered under the flexibility trial.

- *It seems likely that once the trial has completed that the family will no longer require care. Their choice is to have casual flexible booking and they are not keen to book into a permanent arrangement as this becomes unaffordable for them. They have enjoyed the benefits of the trials, being able to access casual occasional before and after school care for their children. (Service Report 01/6/2014)*

Word of mouth

Word of mouth was a useful form of family recruitment for the trials. The Coordination Unit took advantage of existing family connections and flexibility trial families referring friends and colleagues to the trial. The service would actively follow up potential families with emails and phone calls.

- *In February the family contacted G&PFDC to discuss enrolling in our service. They are friends with one of the FT families already participating. An initial introductory email sent on 21 February 2014 to gauge interesting participating in the FT and a follow up email sent on 21 March 2014 once care was confirmed. Following another email on 25 March 2014 the family confirmed on 26 March 2014 that they are interested in participating. (Service Report 6/4/2014)*

Recruitment and promotion to families

The Coordination Unit explored alternate ways of promoting the trial to the target group of families. This included running a flexibility trial information session at the local police station. The Coordination Unit also pursued the option of engaging flexibility parents in delivering an information session at their own workplace. While these avenues were useful, a more coordinated and widespread promotion of the trial undertaken by the participating Unions may have produced a higher awareness of the trial and recruitment of families.

- *The Coordination Unit is working with one of the families enrolled in the trials to arrange an information session at their workplace. They are so pleased with the service provided that they are very keen to promote to their colleagues in their workplace. (18/05/14)*

Non-standard hours educator visits

The service Coordination Unit undertook regular visits to educators participating in the trials. Coordination Unit visits were part of the service's ongoing activities and were normal practice. Visits would occur in non-standard hours for educators providing those services.

- *Regular visits are an intrinsic part of their registration with Gosford and Peninsula Family Day Care and coordinators vary their days and times of visits to meet their individual operating hours of individual educators. Visits take place outside normal business hours, including early morning, evenings and weekends. (Service Report 04/05/2014)*

Flexibility and normal practice

Gosford and Peninsula Family Day Care offered and promoted their service as a flexible education and care service adaptable to the needs of families. This was normal practice prior to involvement in the flexibility trials and as such there were minimal changes to the activities for the service in terms of recruitment, promotion and support.

- *The flexibility trials have provided an opportunity for Gosford and Peninsula Family Day Care to recruit families and educators within the trials. All educators and families have been supported as per our normal practice and as a consequence there have been no impacts on the service. (Service Report 04/05/2014)*
- *The Coordination Unit has not reported an increase in requests for flexible care as each new family contacting Gosford and Peninsula Family Day Care has individual care requirements, some of which need*

to be flexible. Individual care needs are matched to family day care educator vacancies. (Service Report 04/05/2014)

Coordination Unit Open House

The service held a successful open house at an educator's home who was engaged in the flexibility trial and offering occasional/casual family day care to families. The open day produced positive outcomes with interested parents being invited and many enrolments being taken up on the day. The open day showcased the occasional care family day care model.

- *On Saturday 3rd May 2014 the Coordination Unit held an Open House at Educator's service, Occasional Family Day Care. Families who had expressed an interest in her occasional model of service delivery were personally invited to the Open House. The response was very positive and several new enrolments took place on the day. (Service Report 04/05/2014).*

Key Findings (Educators)

Business Model

One of the educators participating in the trials developed an occasional care business model for her family day care service. This was extended to all families seeking flexible care and not those just participating in the Flexibility Trials. The service did not accept any permanent booking requests and families were not able to book a permanent time slot for her service. The family day care service was available 24 hours for seven days per week. Parents were not charged for changing bookings, changing hours and if bookings are cancelled with 24 hours' notice.

- *Educator is open 24/7 so if shifts run late the family don't have to panic about having to pick up their children as Amanda stays open. Generally families use (Educator's) service to cover shifts, cross over shifts, to catch up on paperwork, to catch up on sleep, housework and everyday tasks. (Service Report 01/06/2014)*

- *Educator is committed to operating her occasional family day care service in the long term and she will continue to offer families occasional care when the trials have ended. (Service Report 01/06/2014)*

Casual bookings issues

Viability

One educator provided casual bookings for after school care for two children. The educator also provided school pick up services for the family. The family indicated an interest to continue to utilise the educator's flexible services through a casual booking approach at the completion of the trial; however, the educator indicated she would require an ongoing commitment or formal booking to ensure ongoing viability.

- *The family have requested that they continue with their current casual booking after the trials are completed, however it is likely that on completion of the trials (Educator) will require a permanent commitment/booking from the family, in order to ensure her business remains viable. (Service Report 04/05/2014)*

Personal commitments

In the absence of formal bookings, the educator experienced some difficulties in balancing personal commitments and meeting the education and care needs of the flexibility trial family. This meant that the educator would require a formal booking/ongoing commitment from the family at the completion of the trials.

- *The family usually book the days two weeks in advance. This is normally not a problem but of late Educator has had to juggle other activities and appointments to suit. Educator feels at the end of the trials she will ask the family if she can book in her specific days so Educator is able to fit in her personal requirements. (Service Report 12/06/2014)*

- *Yes - one booking fell on a scheme professional development training night. I was able to attend, but arrived later than the commencement time. (Educator Report 01/06/2014)*

The family accessing casual care indicated that they would not continue with care if it required a permanent booking as their preference was to casual flexible bookings as permanent bookings are unaffordable for them. In the end, the family had a family member move into their house and was able to provide the majority of flexible care needed.

- *The family have informed their educator that they care needs will be changing as a family member will be moving to live with them and they will provide the majority of child care required. The educator has assured them that she is available to provide any care which may be required. (27/07/2014)*

Managing Ratios

One of the flexibility trial educators who operated the occasional care model of family day care had two young children of her own. To manage the difficulties associated with complying with allowable educator to child ratio and managing the ongoing viability of her business, the educator engaged an au pair to look after her own children and take them to activities so she could work with her full quota of children in her family day care service. This is allowable under the National Regulations at section 124 (2) b (ii) whereby:

- (2) In determining the number of children who can be educated and cared for by a family day care educator for the purposes of subregulation (1)-*
- (a) no more than 4 can be preschool age or under; and*
 - (b) if the children are being educated and cared for at a residence, the educator's own children and any other children at the residence are to be taken into account if-*
 - (i) those children are under 13 years of age; and*
 - (ii) there is no other adult present and caring for the children.*

- *She has 2 of her own children 2 years and 3 years and has an au pair to look after them and take them to activities so she can work with her full quota of children. The flexi children are using standard hours and a couple of times have used 4pm – 7pm or 9pm. She is flexible to family needs. She also provides flexible occasional care to families of nurses, doctors and casual teachers travelling to Sydney. She works overnight and weekends. Her husband provides care to her children if she needs to care for more than 2 children on weekends. She is very happy to be able to offer this type of care to families. (Service Report 01/06/2014)*

Positive impact on educator's family

As is the case with many family day care educators, many parents are attracted to the benefits of being at home with their own young children while also running a family day care business. This was also evident with the newly engaged educator who provided occasional care for family day care. The educator reported positive effects of providing family day care for herself and her children.

- *Flexible care fits in well with my family. My children love playing with the other children and we love having surprises of children turning up last minute or overnight care. (Educator Report 27/07/2014)*

Sutherland Family Day Care – Sutherland Shire

Sutherland Family Day Care had four registered educators as part of the flexibility trials. Two educators began in December 2013 and two educators began in February 2014. The participating educators were existing educators at who extended their standard hours of operation as part of the trials. The service experienced a number of staff members turnover during the first 6 months of their participation, which negatively impacted on the progress of the trials, and in particular the recruitment of new educators, which did not occur. These staffing issues meant that there was a significant delay in Sutherland Family Day Care developing and finalising service policies and

procedures regarding non-standard hours, weekend care and overnight care, there were delays in the registration of educators during the roll-out of the trial.

The educators' qualifications ranged from Certificate III to an Advanced Diploma in Children's Services. Registered educators extended their standard operating hours, usually 7:30am to 5:30pm, into early morning, late nights, overnight and weekend care. One participating educator was initially available for care to families 24/7, however during the trial this educator encountered personal difficulties and therefore reigned in the promotion of non-standard hours for her service.

Key Findings (Service and Educators)

Educator interest and participation

Sutherland Family Day Care was unsuccessful in securing new educators as a part of the trials. There was also a lack of interest from the service's educators in participating in the trials.

- *Limited interest from existing educators (Service Report, 9/2/2014)*

Due to the lack of vacancies in standard hours, supply of flexible care was restricted in the area despite the demands from parents. This resulted in a waiting list for families attempting to access flexible care arrangements.

Educator vacancies

The educator's vacancies for standard hours were limited at the beginning of the trial. This meant that educators could not accommodate for families needing hours of care that overlapped with standard hours and extended into non-standard hours (e.g. early starts and late finishes). Having a lack of vacancies during standard hours was problematic in terms of offering flexible care to families.

Demand for out of standard hours

Families requiring flexible care in the Sutherland Shire area were characterised by needing longer hours of care (e.g. 6am start to 10pm finish or roster care covering early starts, afternoon shifts, overnight and weekend care). Educators did not have vacancies to cater for all of the families care requirements and families did not wish to have shared care arrangements among the educators.

- *(Educator) has no vacancies available within her core hours that could meet the needs of families. Families on the waiting list care needs extend from out of core hours into care. (Service Report, 9/2/2014)*

CONFIDENTIAL

St Mary's/Penrith Family Day Care – Mission Australia

St Mary's/Penrith Family Day Care did not have any participating family day care educators or families in the trial. The service had a number of educators who were already providing non-standard hours of education and care to families in the area that required overnight and weekend care, and who were willing to provide care as part of the Flexibility Trials, however there were no police families ultimately requiring placement. Families who initially expressed an interest were either out of the service area and referred to another service, advised that they no longer required care or were wanting care to be provided in their home.

The service was pro-active in utilising local media to promote flexible care and the Commander at the local police station was very supportive and assisted with organising an information session where staff were provided with an overview of family day care and the flexible care options. This did not generate any further interest, however it is noted that police working at Penrith do not necessarily reside in the Penrith area – this creates problems in terms of trying to communicate with police officers in this way.

Due to the lack of police expressions of interest for flexible care in the areas covered by St Mary's / Penrith FDC, FDCA in consultation with the Australian Government removed the service from the trials for reporting purposes from 31 March 2014.

11. South Australia

A representative of the South Australian Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) took part in the initial stakeholder consultations undertaken prior to the development of the Flexibility Trials project proposal.

The representative advised that the provision of non-standard and flexible family day care was already widespread across South Australia, with the vast majority of educators either undertaking or being available to undertake this type of work. DECD advised that initial enrolment of educators by them included provision to “opt-out” of providing this type of care, but that more than 80% of their educator’s opted in. On advice from DECD representatives, it was determined that Project Assistance was not required in order to trial new types of flexible and non-standard care in South Australia. It was also determined that the South Australian “model” of family day care provision should be examined further to determine what had enabled this type of care to be widespread and available.

DECD South Australia also provided FDCA with copies of their overnight care policy and procedures documentation which was shared with Flexibility Trials Service participants, and we thank them for sharing these documents with us and with participating services.

DECD offer support to educators undertaking this type of care by utilising an after-hours emergency contact number which is external to DECD and provided under contract. This is the first point of contact for educators who may face an emergency situation outside of office hours.

FDCA visited DECD in May 2014 and met with 4 DECD Family Day Care Business and Customer Support Centre staff and the Managers of 8 South Australian family day care services operated by DECD to discuss the provision of flexible, non-standard hours care in South Australia. Prior to FDCA’s visit, questionnaire documents were provided to DECD seeking quantifiable information as to the nature, type and amount of flexible care being

undertaken in South Australia. Copy of this questionnaire is attached as Annexure N.

DECD were only able to provide some basic utilisation data in response to these requests, as they were unable to obtain a lot of the specific information required. As a result of their enquiries, DECD determined that very little flexible care was actually occurring in their services, and much less than originally envisaged. Data provided by DECD in relation to utilisation can be found at Annexure O. DECD were unable to provide specific information with regard to utilisation which would have been useful to the flexibility trials, such as the patterns of non-standard hours care, the occupations of parents, etc. as this information was too difficult to obtain.

DECD also provided information obtained from a pilot project undertaken by one of their services, Northside FDC, in 2010. Northside FDC was chosen at that time as they provided the highest amount of non-standard hours care in South Australia. A copy of the project summary is located at Annexure P, and contains findings with regard to industrial and staffing issues, emergency contact issues, resources and impacts upon educators.

12. Findings and Recommendations

The following provides a general summary of the findings and recommendations contained in the body of this report. Further detail in relation to each can be found within the report.

Trial Timing, Structure and Communication

- The timing of the trial commencement (mid-year) had some impact upon participation rates, with most families looking to alter child care arrangements in line with calendar years and a general reluctance to change child care arrangements mid-year.
- The initial labelling of the Flexibility “trials” led to a misunderstanding that care arrangements entered into would be for a finite period of time.
- There were difficulties getting a clear message out to potential trial participants about both the nature of the trials and of family day care. Any future attempts to promote family day care, and to police officers in particular, would need to be more targeted and more personal in nature as email and electronic promotion of the trials was not effective due to a combination of both email fatigue and the nature of police and nursing work not being a “desk-bound” profession with easy internet access whilst at work.

Word of mouth was the most effective means of communication about the trials, and about the flexibility offered by family day care. Again, any future promotions should include examples of shift-working families utilising family day care and discussing the benefits of family day care as a highly flexible form of care.

Barriers for Participation

- Long shifts of care are unaffordable for many families. Some families who initially indicated an interest in the trials did so in anticipation of free or funded participation they had through would be available through the trials.
- Some families wanted short, flexible shifts of child care to act as a “stop-gap” where other forms of family or informal care are not available. They were not willing to pay for hours of care they did not use, and Educators did not wish to use up a full day place with a child who is only in care for 3-4 hours as it impacts upon their income.
- Some families had made an assumption that provision of overnight care would occur in their own home. It was this type of care that they were seeking.
- There was a lack of knowledge of what family day care is, and how it is regulated. The Family Day Care sector needs to work on promoting family day care at a basic level, i.e. what it offers, how it is regulated, etc. to ensure that there is understanding outside of the sector as to the nature of family day care, its history and regulation. This can be done with an eye to the target market, i.e. using police families utilising family day care to promote to the police community.

Provision of Care

- Educators need to have a clear and robust process in place for both fee setting and booking processes prior to families signing up for flexible care so that all parties understand their commitments.
- Any ‘team approach’ to providing education and care needs to be organised from the commencement of care, so that the introduction of a back-up educator is a standard component of the enrolment process.

Many parents did not wish to utilise the services of an educator team, as their child/ren had developed a bond with their primary educator, and if that educator was unavailable they preferred to make other arrangements for care.

- The greatest beneficiaries from the trials were single parents without other support within the community, as families with two parents were often able to rely on the other parent to look after children outside standard hours.
- There is a noticeable impact upon family life for Educators.

On a final note, Flexibility Trial participating educators are also providing flexible care for chefs, respite care workers, hospitality, retail and factory workers, outside of the parameters of this trial.

FINAL STATEMENTS FROM OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Participating trade unions provided these final statements for inclusion in the Final Report:

Police Federation of Australia

The PFA welcomed the Childcare Flexibility Pilots initiative and believes the Childcare Flexibility Pilots were a very positive step toward identifying the major challenges involved in providing outside standard hour's childcare to policing families. The trials did address the lack of flexible care for some families but there were a number of factors which impinged on the trial being widely successful. Anecdotal evidence suggests the lower than expected take up rate was likely due to the following reasons:

- The commencement of the trials being set for the middle of the year. Many members already had child care arrangements in place or preferred to wait for a new year to arrange care
- The fact that the Pilots were originally titled a "trial" may have deterred some/most members taking this opportunity up, as families needed certainty of care
- Location changes. NSW had a number of trial location changes, so this delayed 2 of the areas in the early stages of the roll out
- Difficulty receiving information. NSW had good Commander's support for Family Day Care Australia (FDCA) to come to the workplace to inform members of the trial, unfortunately for those working shifts it was difficult to attend these sessions.
- Although significant effort was made to inform members of the types of different arrangements that FDC could provide, members were still unfamiliar with FDC and its services and did not have "faith" in this type of care. For example many were unaware that FDC carers were childcare educators with qualifications
- Our members needed "ad hoc" flexible care, for example, covering recalls to duty, shift changes. This was challenging for FDC to provide at all times
- There were complications around FDC being able to match up carer's availabilities with our members needs for care.

The Childcare Flexibility trials were an encouraging attempt toward addressing the growing need for a more flexible and accessible model of childcare for policing families. The results of the trial demonstrate that the working patterns of police are indeed unique and any new model of non-standard hours childcare will need to bend to accommodate this uniqueness. The PFA looks forward to working with Government and

childcare providers to come up with solutions to make childcare flexible, affordable and accessible for our members.

Queensland Nurses Union

The QNU appreciated the opportunity to be included in the childcare flexibility trial. As around 90% of our members are female working in a continuous shift environment, flexible, affordable childcare is an important aspect of their working lives.

We promoted the trial to members in south-east Queensland including the Gold Coast, Toowoomba and Townsville. Townsville recorded the highest take-up rate. In our submissions to various inquiries, we have urged the federal government to continue support for extended hours childcare. Whilst we had hoped the number of nurses who took part in the trial would be higher, we also know that changing attitudes and cultural norms takes time. Many nurses rely on family to help with outside standard hours care. They are also a workforce with a high level of part-time and casual staff. For those reasons, there was a preference by some nurses for occasional outside hours care rather than ongoing care and this may be a service that could be offered in the future.

We believe that flexible, affordable childcare must be available for all workers, not just those in service industries. To that end, we support initiatives that may offer extended hours of care to other workers so that they too can share in the benefits of the high quality care that Family Day Care Australia provides.

United Voice (Queensland)

As the professional ambulance officers' union, United Voice Queensland appreciated the opportunity to be involved in the childcare flexibility trial. Ambulance officers work irregular, unsociable hours and their shifts could be extended or changed with very little notice. Unfortunately, standard

childcare hours are not always suitable for ambulance officers and they sometimes struggle to find an alternative.

We sent out expressions of interest for the trial to all our members in Townsville, Toowoomba and Brisbane, the three sites identified as part of the trial. Our ambulance organisers also brought flyers and other literature to local stations and spoke to members about the trial. We also updated members on the various stages of the campaign via email and letters with information provided by Family Day Care Australia.

From speaking with members, it became clear that they are interested in more flexible childcare arrangements. However, in reality the take up from ambulance officers was disappointing. There were a number of reasons for this. First and foremost, a lot of ambulance officers are in a position where they can organise their shifts around their children and current childcare arrangements. They rely on family to help out when needed. Quite simply, they weren't prepared to give up their current childcare arrangements and risk unsettling their children for a trial. Also, they felt that they did not have enough information about Family Day Care. The current political climate was another factor as ambulance officers were in the middle of a long battle with the government over their Enterprise Bargaining Agreement.

Overall, we believe a lack of understanding, unfortunate timing and a reluctance to change current arrangements were the reasons why this trial wasn't as successful as anticipated with ambulance officers. However, United Voice does believe that flexible childcare arrangements are needed particularly for shift workers. As a union, we would be happy to take part in a similar project in the future.

13. Final Budget Reconciliation

Item No.	Project Detail	Total Project Budget	Expenditure to Project End
1	Project Design, Implementation and Management	\$ 240,000.00	\$ 240,000.00
	Travel Costs		
	Project Management Internal - 4 Project Team Meetings	\$ 10,400.00	\$ 4,038.08
	Qld Service Provider Visits	\$ 12,000.00	\$ 2,009.52
	NSW Service Provider Visits	\$ 4,800.00	\$ 1,828.55
	Vic Service Provider Visits (x12)	\$ 4,800.00	\$ 3,639.69
	Parent Information	\$ 7,500.00	\$ 2,273.33
2	Communication		
	Stakeholder Meetings (x3)	\$ 42,000.00	\$ 23,453.44
	Teleconferences	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 1,545.72
3	SA Research	\$ 6,800.00	\$ 2,208.87
4	Service Providers		
	Sign Up Payments	\$ 90,000.00	\$ 90,000.00
5	Educators		
	Upfront Educator Payment	\$ 126,000.00	\$ 53,000.00
	Flexibility Loading	\$ 252,000.00	\$ 47,500.00
	Recruitment	\$ 81,000.00	\$ 32,071.28
6	Families	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 4,188.63
		\$ 883,800.00	\$ 507,757.11
NOTE:			
Project Funds received from Australian Government:		\$ 675,117.00	
Funds due for return to Australian Government:		\$ 167,359.89	