



Fawn Law-Davis

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LEADERS IN
PRACTICE

The centre, affectionately known as 'Granny's', is licensed for 42 children aged between birth to 5 years each day. It provides long day care for children from families working in local fruit and vegetable plantations and mining companies. Professionals such as doctors, nurses, and school teachers who accept rural appointments and live in the community for two to three years also use Granny's for their children. Our community is very diverse and I am committed to employing staff from these communities to support children and families to feel more secure and welcome at the centre. When I was appointed as the centre Director, I realised the need for additional funds to improve Granny's services. While talking with a friend, I learnt about the 'grants register kept at the local library'. I borrowed it and went about identifying grants that had anything to do with children's services, and then wrote a whole lot of application letters to agencies. Over time, we have been successful in getting several grants and these have been used to upgrade the centre, provide professional learning opportunities for myself and the staff, and work with a financial consultant to develop a business plan for the centre.

As the centre Director, I believe it is my role to assess and mentor staff's professional development needs individually, as well as collectively. Through my awareness of expertise and networks locally and elsewhere, I have been successful in facilitating creative learning opportunities for myself and staff. One of these was bringing a Reggio Emilia specialist from the USA, who had been working in Perth at the invitation of a local school there, to the centre for one week. The consultant worked side-by-side with staff in their playrooms during the week of her visit. I secured sufficient funds for this by applying for grants to pay for everything including the consultant's fees, airfares, meals and accommodation costs. One of the conditions of these regional grant schemes was that professional learning events were shared with others in the community. In this case, the Reggio consultant offered workshops for local school teachers with 30 attending each night for three days. This also strengthened our connections with the schools.

Since 2008, I have embarked on several fundraising adventures to further develop the outdoor areas. We secured funding for a major redevelopment of the babies' outdoor playground. This included nearly \$100,000 from the state government lottery to remove almost half of the outside play areas and recreate bike tracks, grassed play areas, new swings, soft-fall and landscaping. In 2009, we received numerous small grants to provide books and resources for the children. In 2010, we also received small grants to provide nutrition information to parents in the form of lunch box buzz books, and hats for sun protection. In 2011, we were successful in obtaining co-funding for \$740,000 from four separate funding bodies, including state and Commonwealth government to provide funding for an extension to the building to provide us with space for another 12 to 15 children. This will enable us to better meet the demands for long day care in our community.

In 2010, we were also successful in our application to DEEWR Early Childhood Education and Care Best Practice workforce funding opportunities for professional development. I wrote a training program which was submitted and we were one of 14 submissions Australia wide to be successful. We received \$20,000 from DEEWR that year to complete staff professional development here at the centre. The title of the project was: 'Developing understanding about the Early Years Learning Framework, through intensive professional development'. We negotiated the program with Meerilinga Training College in Perth. They provided two extremely experienced and resourceful trainers with hands-on in the room assistance over a week-long period, plus two evenings of workshops for all early years practitioners in Carnarvon, hosted by us at the centre. In the DEEWR program, we maintained weekly telephone and email follow-ups with questions and answers flowing through weekly and sometimes daily sessions. At the end of the three months the trainers returned to the centre for another week of intensive training and again two evening workshops. I did apply for another round of funding for \$15,000 to bring them back a third time; however, this funding application was not successful. I was devastated; I'm not used to receiving 'sorry but you were unsuccessful letters'. However, I don't give up easily and I have been exploring other avenues for funding this work.