



Early Childhood Service of the Year

Submission Form, 2015

Nominee Name (Service name):	Jindi Woraback Children’s Centre	
Contact Name (Your name):	<i>First Name</i> Michelle	<i>Surname</i> Walker

Professional Philosophy (100 words maximum):

Summarise the service’s philosophy towards early childhood education and care

Our service Philosophy recognises our Acknowledgement to Country, our connection to our land and stories, accessing high quality early childhood education as a right that strengthens culture, identity and promotes empowering programs for all in our community and beyond. The children participate in creating our Philosophy; they value: laughing, playing, visiting school and elderly friends at Bupa, sharing stories, exploring our wetlands, Indigenous garden and growing flowers (these are their words). Our families value; equity, belonging, sharing stories, high quality care and Educators value; identity, promote wellbeing and advocate for our community, (these too are their words).

1. WELLBEING:

Explain the process that your team/scheme uses to identify and manage the emotional, social and/or physical wellbeing needs of all the children in the centre/scheme. Describe the planning, training, implementation and/or impact of this process on children, families and staff. (max 200 words)

We understand our journey is forever changing and as such continue to explore new ways and possibilities to improve the educational outcomes for children to promote physical and mental wellbeing. All children have a right to expect that educational programs provide for them opportunities which harness and afford them the best possible start to life. Our Love of Literacy and Better Buddies programs developed with University Park Primary has been designed to enhance the transition to school experience which can cause great anxiety for both child and family. Children and families attending our kindergarten program build early relationships with our local school a full year prior to Prep. On a monthly basis our children are in contact with the primary school participating in programs with their buddies extending on their knowledge of the school environment and expectations, also once a term our children visit the school to participate in the Love of Literacy program promoting early literacy skills with Prep teachers. Developing early relationships with the local school has proven to assist Prep teachers be ready for the children coming from our environment allowing the children to settle early and be ready to learn in the classroom.

2. PROGRAMMING:

Describe one innovative change or shift made to the children’s program in the last 12 months that has led to authentic learning experiences for the children. Describe why this change was made and how children have benefited as a result. (max 200 words)

Children with additional needs have and remain a central focus of the pedagogical endeavours at Jindi Woraback. One such program that supports our children and families is The Little Champs program, a new approach to individualise each child's outcomes in relation to their diagnosed or yet to be diagnosed needs relating to early intervention. We recognise the benefits of early intervention and the impact this makes in the life long outcomes and health benefits for children and their families. We have employed a fulltime ABA therapist to work one on one with our identified children with additional needs. ASD is one of the highest requirements currently in our service. Our ABA therapist works with the family, educators and children setting goals and providing individual one on one therapy in our therapy room. This is then transferred into the real play situation to strengthen what was achieved in the therapy room. Children and families who face vulnerability due to personal circumstances are left on public waiting lists and cannot afford private therapy, therefore it is our duty of care to ensure we are providing an inclusive high quality early childhood education for all.

3. SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS:

Describe a recent improvement made to the service (physical space, operations, structure, culture etc); discuss the process of engagement/consultation with the team/families and the importance of leadership, culture and teamwork in driving this improvement. How has this improvement impacted on educators, the children, families and/or others. (max 200 words)

We have recently created a community kitchen where our children come out of their program room to eat. The community kitchen or alfresco dining as the families like to call it gives our children an opportunity to eat with all age groups, siblings and friends who are in another room. In the community kitchen we share the vegetables we have grown in our vegetable garden, we collect the food scraps from the kitchen and recycle them in our compost bin, we develop independence where we choose from the menu what we want to eat, doing the dishes, and helping clean up. If a child wants to eat earlier than their room is ready to, children are welcome to go out and have an early lunch, this is also the same for morning and afternoon tea. The chef is now able to interact with the children and collaborate with them what to put on the menu and make connections between healthy food and physical activity, we connect the importance of sharing meals and healthy eating habits in relations to a person's mental health and wellbeing. The creation of the alfresco dining was a collaborative approach between educator's, children and families.

4. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

How are individuals' professional development goals supported/recognised? Describe any ways in which your service/scheme has become a recognised leader or provider of certain approaches as a result of its ongoing program of professional development. (max 200 words)

Working in the NQF we challenge ourselves as educators to travel through the quality areas and write our individual QIP's. We ask ourselves what we are doing and how we can do it better. Our commitment to educational leadership does not just belong with our Educational Leader, we have developed a Leadership and Development team and meet once a month at a local restaurant to discuss and reflect on what we are doing and how we can continually do it better. Through this process we established we needed a full time Educational Leader who does not work on the floor but is available to oversee the programs anytime of the day. Since introducing the fulltime role of the Educational Leader our professional knowledge and ability to deliver a high quality program has helped us achieve a rating of Excellence by ACECQA. The culture of our educators, children and families has shifted from needing more time to develop programs to now being able to support programs at a moment's notice. Our curriculum changes as the needs of the children change, we want to be able to do this instantaneously to capture the child's needs, scaffold with appropriate knowledge and resources.

5. FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS:

Describe your community of families and the steps that you have taken to build and encourage interaction between families and your service. What, if any, challenges did you face and were they overcome? What benefits did you achieve? (max 200 words)

Our community of families are made up of more than 30 nationalities and languages. We are extremely multicultural and require a lot of verbal communication to ensure we are meeting family's needs and expectations; this can be a big challenge! In order to do this we open everything up to families in the hope that they can participate in any way they feel comfortable. Drawing on the strengths of the families and their knowledge we have been able to challenge ourselves to think outside the square. From developing our Explorations and Excursion policy to our up recycling furniture adventure. We have developed strong and trusting relationships so much so that our families now allow us to take their children out of the centre to explore the University campus life without seeking permission, our families, educators and children worked together to develop the Exploration and Excursion policy. Together we developed the risk assessments, aims and objects. We are seeking an environment where children are able to take risks that are calculated and safe. Learning to keep ourselves on a journey of learning, exploration that contributes to our connections to our land, community and creating a feeling of belonging, being and becoming.

DESCRIBE FUTURE PLANS

1. These awards can create opportunities even for those who do not win (eg networking, PR, reflective practice etc). What opportunities do you believe your service will benefit from as a result of being involved in the awards and how might these opportunities be used professionally? (max 200 words)

The Awards so far have afforded our profession invaluable coverage highlighting the importance of early childhood education and care. The first 5 years are so important to the developing brains of our children. The awards give us a platform to share our knowledge with the community and that funding children in the early years is economically viable and important. Margaret Sims talks about the financial benefits of early childhood investment, where a study in 1999 showed that for every dollar we spend in early year's education and care equates to \$17 dollars of long term economic benefit!! The awards provide our service a platform to share our knowledge and be proactively promoting these outcomes. To create a society where early childhood education and care is seen as necessary for the benefit of long term health and wellbeing, preventing youth suicide, aggression, hypervigilance in children due to the effect of negative brain development, social isolation, and substance abuse. These are all serious side effects that can be prevented, if we have a platform to highlight the important work early quality early childhood services perform and are taken seriously.

2. If you were to win the National Service of the Year Award, what would you do with the prize (\$4,000 training with One World for Children and \$4,000 PD grant)? (max 200 words)

This would allow our not for profit service to continue on our path of early childhood professional development. We were so fortunate to receive funding from the Federal Government to put towards our continual journey of professional development. This would enrich our opportunities to build on what we already know and support our service to challenge ourselves to continue to do better. Part of our reflective practice involves questioning where to from Excellence? One World For Children grant would ensure we are financially able to continue our journey beyond Excellence. We are developing our theories on brain research and how loving relationships are so important to a child's brain development. We are learning about Neuroscience and Biogenetics; how the brain develops synaptic pathways based upon the relationships that are loving and caring as opposed to neglectful interactions, maltreatment and family vulnerability that can cause biological stress which then effects learning. Research is important in developing our philosophies and goals, creating a centre of mindful educators and focus on strengthening a child's spirituality. Funding will strengthen our opportunities to continue our education in this field.

