



ACCC Childcare Inquiry draft findings and recommendations

Submission from Gowrie Australia
October 2023



Lady Gowrie ^{QLD}
Educating and caring
for children since 1940



Introduction

Gowrie Australia welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's (ACCC) call for submissions in response to its September 2023 second interim report for the Childcare Inquiry.

Gowrie Australia represents six member organisations who have been providing the highest quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) services for children and families for over 80 years (see Appendix A). Gowrie's vision is to ensure that all children participating in our ECEC services are provided with the best possible start in life and that we support the communities where they belong.

We welcome the vast majority of the ACCC's findings, including the second interim report's recognition of the importance of the ECEC workforce, the challenges families experience in understanding the system, and the role investments in staffing play in supporting quality. We strongly support the recommendations that government clarify the objectives of the system, move to a more equitable funding model for ACCO services, take a stronger stewardship role in thin markets and remove the activity test.

We support further investigation around the recommendations for shorter-term changes to the design of the Child Care Subsidy (CCS), including how CCS is indexed and a move to daily fee caps, and the medium-term recommendations around a supply-side funding model or direct price controls. There are potential benefits to these approaches and a real possibility to create a more equitable and high-quality system, but also considerable risks if they are based on blunt assumptions and are not designed for equity, inclusion and quality.

It is acknowledged that it is harder to provide the level of quality needed to close the gap in opportunity and outcomes for disadvantaged children given the complexities that communities and families living in disadvantaged circumstances experience. But, Gowrie has demonstrated that it is possible to provide quality despite these challenges – and that quality does not have to be compromised because of complex circumstances. All our services are noted for:

- **Their accessibility.** We engage families who might not otherwise access ECEC and enable the regular attendance of children experiencing disadvantage – we build strong local relationships, meaning we are trusted by the community and have a strong 'word of mouth' reputation within the communities we are trying to reach.
- **Their inclusivity.** We have very strong inclusive practice for children with developmental delays and disability, which means our services are often sought out by parents who do not trust other services or cannot find a service willing to take a child with disability.
- **Their quality.** Many Gowrie services have higher quality ratings than average, and many have received a rating of Exceeding NQS. Some Gowrie services have achieved consecutive Excellent ratings, the highest rating a service can achieve.

However, providing quality services like this relies on Gowrie's purpose-driven commitment and ability to cross-subsidise – which is not a scalable approach. As demonstrated in the findings from the ACCC's second interim report, the current

policy settings are not delivering on the objectives of accessible and affordable ECEC for all children and families across Australia. While accessible, high-quality ECEC for children experiencing disadvantage is demonstrably achievable, it is the exception rather than the norm in our current system. The current base settings of the CCS are not adequate to cover the cost of quality in disadvantaged communities. Gowrie's services – and others like ours – are only achieved when there are purpose-oriented organisations making deliberate decisions to invest in additional resourcing and support.

Response to recommendations

Overview of response to draft recommendations

ACCC Draft Recommendation	Gowrie Australia position
<i>Draft recommendation 1</i>	Support
<i>Draft recommendation 2</i>	Support further consideration for 2(a), (b) and (d) Strong support for 2(c)
<i>Draft recommendation 3</i>	Support
<i>Draft recommendation 4</i>	Support
<i>Draft recommendation 5</i>	Support
<i>Draft recommendation 6</i>	Support
<i>Draft recommendation 7</i>	Support further consideration

Draft recommendation 1

The ACCC recommends that the Australian Government reconsider and restate the key objectives and priorities of its childcare policies and supporting measures, including the relevant price regulation mechanism.

Gowrie Australia supports the ACCC's recommendation that the Australian Government reconsider and restate the key objectives and priorities of its ECEC policies and measures, and use these to guide decision-making. Gowrie Australia recognises that there are multiple objectives that government pursues through its investment in ECEC and that there are trade-offs involved in navigating these various, at times competing, objectives. However, Gowrie Australia maintains that the guiding objective of Australia's ECEC system should be benefiting children's development and learning, underpinned by a core commitment that the system delivers these benefits equitably.

Through our work, Gowrie Australia has firsthand experience of the integral role of high-quality, accessible and inclusive ECEC in upholding the right of every child to thrive and addressing equity gaps in our society:

- **Upholding every child's right to thrive:** Australia is committed to children's rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Convention). The Convention outlines children's rights to an education, effective early intervention, and access to services that support children's health and wellbeing. ECEC plays an integral role in advancing these rights and enabling children's learning and development.
- **Advancing equity:** Children experiencing disadvantage benefit the most from quality ECEC, and in high-quality, well-delivered programs, can catch up to their peers.¹ These benefits are only realised if children have access to learning opportunities that are sufficiently high-quality to substantially impact their development.² Children experiencing disadvantage need higher levels of quality. The current system, however, is not delivering equitable access to quality services. Across the Australian ECEC system, the children with the greatest need have the least access, and service quality is variable and often lowest in disadvantaged communities.

Children's interests should be at the forefront of policy and investment decisions that determine the quality, accessibility and affordability of early learning.

¹ Duncan G J and Sojourner A J, *Can intensive early childhood intervention programs eliminate income-based cognitive and achievement gaps?*, Journal of Human Resources, 2013. See also Fox and Geddes (2016), *Two Years are Better than One: Developing a universal preschool program for Australian 3 year olds – evidence, policy and implementation*, Mitchell Institute, Melbourne.

² Torri K, Fox S and Cloney D, *Quality is key in early childhood education in Australia*, Mitchell Institute Paper No.01/2017, October 2017.

Draft recommendation 2

The ACCC recommends further consideration and consultation on changes to the Child Care Subsidy and existing hourly rate cap mechanism, to simplify their operation and address unintended consequences, including on incentives and outcomes.

- a) **Determining an appropriate base for the rate cap and indexing the cap to more closely reflect the input costs relevant to delivery of childcare services. This could include consideration of labour costs as well as the additional costs associated with providing childcare services in remote areas and to children with disability and/or complex needs**
- b) **Changing the hourly rate cap to align with the relevant pricing practice for the service type. This could include consideration of a daily fee cap for centre based day care. Consideration will need to be given to setting and monitoring minimum requirements to avoid creating incentives for childcare providers to reduce flexibility or quality**

Gowrie Australia supports further consideration and consultation on changes to the CCS and existing hourly rate cap mechanism. Our experience in delivering high-quality ECEC across Australia means we prioritise ensuring any changes to the CCS result in meaningful improvements to the key issues and work across different service and family circumstances – even if they are interim changes while larger-scale changes to the funding model are being developed (for example, in the context of Recommendation 7).

The following should be taken into account in considering changes to the way hourly rate caps (HRCs) are indexed and any movement to establish a daily rather than hourly fee model:

- **Indexing HRCs to staffing costs is a good first step:** The ACCC's analysis shows clearly that wages are the largest cost for services, and that high-quality services spend more on staff and workforce support. At a minimum, any methods for indexation need to take into account growth in salary costs. The indexation methodology should reflect *ECEC-specific* staffing costs, given the ACCC's analysis highlights the inadequacy of the Wage Price Index for this purpose. Further, the drivers of increased employment costs are likely to continue in the medium-term, as the sector responds to staff shortages, ongoing wellbeing challenges within the sector, wage pressures and potential changes in industrial relations through multi-employer bargaining processes.
- **Consideration should be given to indexing wider costs of delivery:** Salaries are the largest but not the only cost driver, and consideration should be given to the feasibility of indexing other key elements of the cost of delivery, including property and wider employment costs. For example, current workforce pressures are requiring additional investments in professional learning, wellbeing initiatives, and higher levels of central support to services, all of which is creating additional cost pressures. Further, there are costs involved in implementing new regulatory requirements and policy initiatives (such as updates to the National Quality Framework or introduction of new data collection requirements). Understanding how to factor in the increased

cost of quality into indexation requires collaboration with providers and partnership with policy agencies and the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA).

- **Enhanced indexation alone isn't sufficient to address the core issue that the funding model does not cover the full cost of delivery for inclusion and equity – and HRCs may not be an appropriate mechanism for fixing this:** The funding model should be built to reflect the real costs of high-quality, inclusive and equitable early learning. This includes effective support for the workforce (professional learning, quality improvement, wellbeing support, and workplace conditions that support retention and growth), the costs of inclusion and equity (additional staffing and resources), organisational support structures (teams that support quality practice, compliance, leadership development, administration), and the additional operating costs incurred in high-cost communities (higher rents, higher staffing costs). Any models that fail to take these costs into account will reproduce the current unintended consequences of existing mechanisms – such as disincentivising providers from delivering services to communities experiencing disadvantage. However, HRCs were not designed to deliver loadings for different operating contexts and may not be the appropriate mechanism for providing this type of support.
 - **There are clear benefits to moving to a daily fee model but it's important to get the design right and understand the implementation costs:** Consideration of a daily fee cap needs to take into account diverse operating models across different communities and contexts, and be set at an appropriate rate. There is a risk that a daily cap built on blunt assumptions about cost could create viability challenges in high-cost contexts, or incentivise providers to run shorter hours to manage costs. For example, if a service is open for longer hours, consideration should be made for additional loadings to take this into account, and ensure that services are not disincentivised from operating over longer hours. The interaction between this change and the longer-term changes signalled in Recommendation 7 are important to understand, as the transaction costs of this change may outweigh the benefits if it is envisioned as a short-term change.
- c) **Removing, relaxing or substantially reconfiguring the current activity test, as it may be acting as a barrier to more vulnerable children (for example, households with low incomes or disadvantaged areas) accessing care and creating a barrier to workforce entry or return for some groups. An alternative would be to consider a specific entitlement, such as a certain number of days of care**

Gowrie Australia strongly supports the ACCC's recommendation of the removal of the current activity test. The activity test currently acts as a barrier to children experiencing vulnerability in accessing early learning and a barrier to workforce entry or return for some families. This means that children and families who are most likely to benefit from high-quality ECEC are most likely to experience barriers created by the activity test.

- d) **Including a stronger price and outcomes monitoring role by government, supported by a credible threat of intervention, to place downward pressure on fees.**

Gowrie Australia supports the government taking a strong role in price and outcomes monitoring, but in taking on this role there is a need to ensure government has a nuanced understanding of the cost of delivery, the drivers of fee increases and factors that shape and influence both price and outcomes. If used inappropriately or if based on blunt assumptions, a 'credible threat' could drive or incentivise decisions that limit quality or equity.

Draft recommendation 3

The ACCC supports reconsideration of the information gathered for and reported on StartingBlocks.gov.au so that it is better focused on meeting parents' and guardians' information needs, and balanced against the costs of collecting and publishing information. This could include:

- a) Considering the frequency, granularity and accuracy of information collected and published, to ensure currency for parents and guardians**
- b) Focusing on publishing information that assists parents to accurately estimate out-of-pocket expenses and relevant information to assist parents assess quality factors**
- c) Incorporating input and advice from the Behavioural Economics Team of the Australian Government**
- d) Ensuring information is appropriately and effectively publicised to parents and guardians.**

Gowrie Australia supports the ACCC's recommendation to reconsider information gathered for and reported on StartingBlocks.gov.au to meet parents' and guardians' information needs. We support efforts towards ensuring the information is relevant and meaningful to parents and guardians, and that the information is up to date and accurate:

- Government should consider the relevance of the information published on StartingBlocks.gov.au to parents and guardians, and how parents and guardians are using this information to make decisions about ECEC services – noting the inherent complexity embedded in the design of the CCS system makes clear and transparent communication of out-of-pocket costs very challenging.
- Government could consider ways to ensure the information published on StartingBlocks.gov.au is up to date and accurate – such as mechanisms to compel providers to ensure the correct information is available to parents and guardians.
- ACECQA should have adequate resources to proactively promote and share StartingBlocks via the channels families use, including social media, language and cultural groups, and via other trusted sources.

Draft recommendation 4

The ACCC recommends that governments further consider how the existing regulatory frameworks support and influence the attraction and retention of educators and workforce in the early childhood education and care sector.

Gowrie Australia supports the ACCC's recommendation to carefully consider workforce pressures influencing the attraction and retention of educators and workforce in the ECEC sector. Current staffing shortages are having a material impact on the costs to deliver our services and ensure the provision of high-quality ECEC. This creates heightened costs of delivery in the short-term, as well as requiring ongoing investment to ensure ongoing support for and retention of the workforce:

- **Higher costs for more experienced and qualified staff** or to attract teachers and educators, because of high levels of demand and rates of attrition across the sector.
- **Higher agency costs to meet staff shortages** to maintain ratios and manage staff shortages.
- **Needing to staff over-ratio** to support children who have experienced trauma or who need extra support to regulate their emotions and behaviour, additional inclusion-focused educators where children fall outside of funding guidelines, paying above award salaries, additional roles for outreach, and expanded scope and requirements for leaders.
- **Ensuring adequate staff support and attractive workplace conditions to reduce turnover**, including additional time for reflection and coaching (including opportunities for collaboration to ensure shared approaches to working with children who require additional support), wellbeing initiatives, clinical supervision for staff working with children and families experiencing trauma, and additional support for staff who may themselves have experienced trauma or mental health complexities.

Review of regulatory arrangements is only appropriate for reducing workforce pressures and rates of attrition if:

- **Children's learning and development, health, wellbeing, and safety are kept at the centre** of any review of existing regulatory frameworks. Any considerations of existing regulatory frameworks must maintain existing adult-to-child ratio and qualification requirements and be oriented around achieving the best outcomes for children. Our experience demonstrates the increasing complexity in meeting children's learning and development needs, and the importance of staffing our centres with suitably qualified and experienced staff who have the skills and capabilities needed to respond to children's needs. Relaxing regulatory requirements for ratios or qualifications will increase the pressures on the workforce, and further exacerbate staffing shortages.
- **There is consideration of reasonable and proportionate administration and documentation requirements** as there is a need to ensure that the administration and documentation required to safeguard quality is upheld. At the same time, consideration needs to be made as to whether expectations from Authorised Officers are consistent, reasonable, and proportionate to the relevant impact of the requirements on children's health, safety, and learning and development outcomes.

Draft recommendation 5

The Australian Government should consider maintaining and expanding supply-side support options for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations that provide childcare and additional support services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, parents and guardians.

Gowrie Australia supports the ACCC's recommendation to consider maintaining and expanding supply-side support options for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCO) that provide childcare and additional support services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, parents and guardians, where this is welcomed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

ACCO services provide holistic, wrap-around and culturally safe services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, parents and guardians. ACCO models break down many of the barriers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities experience in accessing ECEC, and bolster opportunities for access, participation, and meaningful engagement. We understand that demand-driven funding models do not work in many communities, particularly in remote communities with a high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Gowrie Australia strongly supports maintaining and expanding supply-side support options so that ACCOs can continue to provide and grow services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, parents, and guardians. We also support continued partnership and opportunities to strengthen organisations already working successfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia.

We acknowledge the ongoing dialogue with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and organisations, in the development and implementation of policy and funding settings for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Consideration of supply-side support options for ACCOs should also be based on co-design with the relevant communities and take into account place-based options.

Draft recommendation 6

A market stewardship role should be considered for both Australian and state and territory governments, in identifying under-served areas and vulnerable cohorts, along with intervention, whether through public or private provision. A competitive tender process is one tool that could be used by governments to facilitate delivery in these areas.

Gowrie Australia supports the ACCC's recommendation for governments to consider taking on a market stewardship role in identifying under-served areas and vulnerable cohorts. Through our work in these communities, we know firsthand that provision of ECEC services in complex contexts is vitally important and possible without compromising on quality. However, this is only possible through Gowrie's purpose-driven commitment and ability to cross-subsidise – which isn't scalable without the support of governments taking on a market stewardship role that prioritises equity.

In considering taking on a market stewardship role, governments should use the full range of levers available to them to influence how the system and market operate, in order to deliver the desired outcomes. In shaping its stewardship approach, and considering interventions in thin markets, government should reflect on:

- **Service models** – A market stewardship role should include considerations for the types of service models that would be best suited to under-served areas and vulnerable cohorts, such as integrated hubs which can provide holistic, wrap-around services and 'warm' referral points for programs including allied health, parenting programs and health initiatives.
- **Sophisticated commissioning to recognise provider expertise and objectives** – Any commissioning processes considered by governments to facilitate delivery in these areas should take into account providers with demonstrated experience in providing high-quality services in diverse and challenging environments. Such providers must have objectives that align with the aims of supporting equity in communities experiencing vulnerability. Contemporary approaches to commissioning take into account community need and a wider range of objectives and outcomes beyond lowest cost delivery. Not-for-profit organisations such as Gowrie have a strong track record of high-quality service provision in complex contexts, and a market stewardship role should focus on growing and sustaining the not-for-profit sector to deliver equitable outcomes for all children.
- **Cost of delivering quality and equity** – The funding model needs to take into account the cost of delivery in diverse communities. This includes:
 - **Higher operational costs** – including where there are higher rents, higher staffing costs and/or the need to provide additional attraction / retention investments, higher consumable costs, etc.
 - **The cost of delivering quality and equity** – additional investments in staffing over ratio, training, wellbeing, and other resources for supporting and engaging families.
 - **Lower occupancy** – in thin markets, it will not always be feasible to sustain break-even occupancy. In some contexts, demand is likely to build slowly over time (particularly in communities that have not traditionally had sufficient or trusted ECEC provision).

- **Infrastructure** – There is an important stewardship role for government in incentivising appropriate infrastructure in addressing undersupply in thin markets. This is for several reasons, including: to realise the potential benefits of ECEC as the backbone of a more integrated early years system, to enable building of services that are the right size for the community (as commercial rental options are often too big to be viable in smaller communities), and to address barriers to growth and expansion experienced in the not-for-profit sector.
 - Although some not-for-profit services have historically benefited from subsidised property costs, land ownership and support from local councils, this is increasingly less common, unlikely to continue into the future and are increasingly exposed to commercial rental rates that in time are likely to create significant challenges and constraints in maintaining investments in staffing, inclusion and quality. There is scope for government to play a role in ensuring investment into ECEC benefits children rather than landlords.
 - We would welcome further investigation into the ECEC property development market and the impact this plays in driving the costs of service delivery, as well as further consideration of the range of stewardship levers available to governments to drive more efficient and effective investment in infrastructure for the early years, including better use of planning levers and investments that support the growth of known quality providers.

Case Study – Lady Gowrie Tasmania

Lady Gowrie Tasmania (LGT) operates several education and care services in buildings that are owned by institutions, including Local Government Authorities, tertiary education providers and schools. Previously, these institutions directly operated ECEC services, but have since outsourced service provision due to increasing regulations in the sector, financial pressures and workforce considerations.

One such example is a small, 38-place centre in an outlying suburb of Greater Hobart, previously owned and operated by the local council, and in the last decade operations outsourced to LGT. In this service:

- The council owned building is approximately 30 years old and requires significant upgrades and maintenance.
- The current lease agreement is a peppercorn arrangement (\$10,000 per year) renewed for short-term periods. This means that capital expenditure by LGT is limited due to the impact of depreciation on short leases and the service budget, in an already marginal centre.
- Local council, as regulators for environmental health, issued a non-compliance on the commercial kitchen requiring a \$50,000 upgrade. This cost falls to LGT as per the lease agreement, with local council having no budget to contribute to the upgrade.

Discussion regarding a potential purchase of the building commenced, but ultimately council determined that they would not sell to LGT off market. At the same time, council indicated to LGT that they would be moving to a commercial lease arrangement, at a market rate of \$75,000 per annum – which would make the service non-viable.

This is not an isolated incident; we have experienced multiple instances of a similar nature over the past two years. In the context of unfavourable economic conditions, our relationship with these institutions has shifted from one of community partner, to one of a commercial partner so the council, university, or school's commercial interests can be met – regardless of our not-for-profit status.

For LGT to continue to deliver in thin markets, on behalf of institutions like these, cost sharing arrangements or rent subsidies need to be considered to ensure the sustainability and long-term viability of high-quality ECEC services in these communities. These services mostly operate in areas of unmet demand so a decision to close would impact children and families in the area significantly.

Draft recommendation 7

The ACCC supports further consideration of supply-side subsidies and direct price controls. Some changes to the policy settings are likely to reduce the impact of the hourly rate cap as an indirect price control, and may warrant a shift to direct price controls supported by operating grants for regulated childcare providers.

Gowrie Australia supports the recommendation of further consideration of supply-side subsidies and direct price controls. However, in considering the appropriateness and feasibility of these approaches, priority must be given to considering the diversity of contexts and costs across the country, and building equity and inclusion into the design of the funding model. Although the ACCC's interim report found a relatively consistent cost base across the country, this is not consistent with our experience operating services from inner city Melbourne to Thursday Island in remote Queensland. We suggest the ACCC's analysis is at too aggregate a level to detect the variation we experience in practice.

Consistent with our publicly available submission to the Productivity Commission on the Inquiry into the ECEC sector in Australia, the key considerations are:

- **Designing a model with experience and needs of children and families at the centre** – including prioritising a system that supports high-quality provision, is easy to understand, where entitlements are not opaque, and services can be accessed in a timely way.
- **Appropriately taking into account the diversity of operating contexts and costs across the country** – Consideration of supply-side subsidies needs to account for diverse context of service provision and the communities in which providers operate – including remote and regional contexts and communities with high proportions of children experiencing vulnerability. Our experience across diverse communities throughout Australia demonstrates the highly varied needs of different communities and contexts, and the importance of tailoring our services to best meet these needs in culturally responsive, respectful approaches. Supply-side subsidies must recognise the need for differentiated services across diverse contexts. Supply-side subsidies must reflect the cost of delivery in different contexts – based on disaggregated data that accurately captures differences in costs between different service contexts. Any blunt cost assumptions are likely to create unintended policy consequences, including challenges for service viability, equity and quality.
- **Covering the costs of quality and equity** – Supply-side subsidies must holistically reflect all components of the real costs of delivery, and be indexed over time. As noted previously, this includes effective support for the workforce (professional learning, quality improvement, wellbeing support, and workplace conditions that support retention and growth), reflect the costs of inclusion and equity (additional staffing and resources), organisational support structures (teams that support quality practice, compliance, leadership development, administration) and the additional operating costs incurred in high cost communities (higher rents, higher staffing costs, increased costs of general supplies, emergency accommodation for staff).

Appendix A – Gowrie Australia

About Gowrie Australia

Gowrie Australia represents six member organisations who have been providing the highest quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) services for children and families for over 80 years.

Gowrie's vision is to ensure that all children participating in our ECEC services are provided with the best possible start in life and that we support the communities where they belong. We do this by delivering quality ECEC services for children in diverse communities to support their rights, demonstrate what's possible and support the wider sector and system with what we know and learn.

Our member organisations are committed to providing a safe, inclusive and nurturing environment for all children attending our services, actively encouraging children to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights and promoting connection between children.

Our history

Gowrie services were established in low socio-economic communities in each state capital in 1939/1940, as an initiative championed by the wife of the Governor General, Lady Gowrie. They were intended to be demonstration services, showcasing the highest quality early learning combined with maternal and child health services and acting as a beacon for other services.

Over the years, each Gowrie organisation has continued to grow and evolve in response to changing social and economic conditions, while retaining this core commitment to modelling the highest quality early learning and to innovation. Today, the collective organisations operate a range of ECEC services, including long day care, family day care, outside school hours care, training and professional development programs for early childhood educators and parenting programs.

While each state-based Gowrie entity is governed by a voluntary Board of Directors, we work together under the banner of Gowrie Australia to collaborate and share best practices, with a focus on improving the quality of education, training, and professional development in the early childhood sector.

Drawing on our shared values and foundational principles, Gowrie Australia has a steadfast commitment to providing high-quality, accessible, safe, and affordable ECEC services to families throughout Australia. We are also dedicated to advocating for the rights and needs of young children and their families and are actively engaged in shaping policy and practice in the early childhood education and care field.

Gowrie Australia members and services offered

Gowrie Australia currently operate over 70 not-for-profit early learning centres and kindergartens across the country. All Gowrie member organisations are not-for-profit, with any surplus reinvested directly into staff, programs and infrastructure for children and families. Gowrie Australia member organisations include:

- **Lady Gowrie Queensland** – Lady Gowrie Queensland has provided universal programs for early childhood education and care in Queensland, serving 9500 families through branch services and affiliate kindergartens state-wide. They prioritise excellence, innovation, and respectful relationships to promote the best possible outcomes. Acknowledging their presence on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lands, Lady Gowrie promotes socially-just, sustainable, and culturally safe relationships, practices, and environments that celebrate childhood and promote play as a meaningful context for learning and development.
- **Gowrie Victoria** – Gowrie Victoria champions quality early learning. They run six early learning services across Melbourne and draw on this experience in their professional development programs, accredited training, mentoring that supports workforce strategies and improving the quality of early learning across Victoria.
- **Gowrie New South Wales** – Gowrie NSW provides early and middle childhood education, family support, and professional development across NSW and ACT. They offer services like Early Education and Care, Outside of School Hours and Vacation Care, and Early Learning Centres for migrant families. Gowrie NSW promotes inclusive practices through professional learning and is part of the NSW/ACT Inclusion Agency. They are committed to reconciliation and acknowledge the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia.
- **Gowrie South Australia** – Gowrie SA provides innovative services for children and families through long day care and kindergarten programs, professional learning, inclusion support, and parenting support programs. The non-profit organisation emphasises relational pedagogy, wellbeing and learning for all children, families, and educators, based on evidence-based research, internal inquiry-based practices and principles of reconciliation. Gowrie SA is governed by a Board of voluntary directors and remains committed to their founding values.
- **Lady Gowrie Tasmania** – Lady Gowrie Tasmania provides a range of services prioritising quality education and care for children and families, with a focus on ‘Children First’. They are a non-profit community-owned organisation, committed to the best outcomes for children in early education, as well as reconciliation and building an inclusive workplace for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through a structured Reconciliation Action Plan. Lady Gowrie Tasmania also provides adult learning through an RTO, Inclusion Support Agency, in home care and a range of other government contracts in workforce development and early childhood education and care.
- **Gowrie Western Australia** – Gowrie WA operates three early childhood centres and one family and community centre that incorporate multifaceted, and inclusive services and programs for children, families, and community. They are dedicated to providing high-quality education and care and building secure, trusting and strong relationships with children and families. Their strategic plan emphasises quality, childhood, lifelong learning, relationships and responsiveness.