

Love in a hot climate...
Quality care in a regulated environment"
FDC Kingston, Victoria, Australia

"I love children, especially when they cry, for then someone takes them away" so wrote Nancy Mitford, the author of *Love in a Cold Climate*. As you can see I have taken liberty with her work – and today I'd like to explore Family Day Care in Australia – generally quite a hot climate. In her comment about children, I guess Nancy could have been talking about today's child care environment

Family Day Care, known as Childminding or Family Child Care in other places, is a quality home-based child care service that's been active in Australian families for over 30 years.

The service caters for young babies through to pre-teens and can offer care during standard hours, before/after school, during school holidays and in some circumstances overnight and weekends.

Family day care's unique and important benefit of higher carer to child ratios (1:4 under 5 plus 3 school age children at any given time) enabling children to receive individual attention is the preferred child care choice for the families of over 90,000 children who are enrolled in family day care. And with over 12,000 carers and 320 coordination units (schemes) operating across all states and territories (FDCA, 2009)

Family day care carers (also called careproviders or home-based child care workers) are people whose personal qualities reflect community diversity – of families, values and cultures – empathy, warmth, flexibility, professionalism and maturity. A commitment to nurturing and caring for children a given. Many carers have their own children of varying ages, and all have experience with children. Carers are recruited, trained and resourced by the coordination unit, which also supports and monitors individual carer services. The resourcing and back-up support provided by the coordination unit sets family day care apart from sole carers and nanny services and even long day care.

The key role of the coordination unit is to support and resource the highest standard of family day care for children. They are there to discuss childcare needs, to provide information about child care and to assist parents to find the right carer and environment for their child. They are also there to monitor the child's wellbeing, learning and progress.

The coordination unit works in partnership with carers to uphold organisational values, meet required legislation, National Standards and the formal Family Day Care Quality Assurance system.

Carers are visited regularly by trained fieldworkers who also run play sessions and offer toy library services to ensure that children have a variety of stimulating play experiences.

Many family day care schemes also host websites and offer newsletters for parent and carer communication. If a carer is sick or plans to take leave, the coordination unit can offer a relief care or back up service arrangement with minimal disruption to the child.

Coordination units receive funding from the Australian Government to support the network of carers providing quality child care in different locations within the family day care scheme. Family fee subsidies (Child Care Benefit (CCB) are administered by the coordination unit. Families using family day care may also apply for the Child Care Tax Rebate (CCTR).

As part of the national child care framework, family day care abides by State licensing, National Standards and Family Day Care Quality Assurance (the national child care accreditation system), to assure that the quality of care is of the highest standard.

Quality assurance within family day care is governed by the National Childcare Accreditation Council and each carer must meet national requirements in not only early childhood and child care skills, but also in planning, administration and communications. Having passed a police or criminal history check prior to commencing work in family day care, all carers must be fully insured, have a current first aid certificate and maintain a safe child care environment.

(FDCA, 2009)

Family Day Care in Kingston

The City of Kingston is the local government sponsor of the FDC scheme. It is in the bayside suburbs of Melbourne and has a population of over 140,000.



Here is a snapshot of the scheme:

Number of Careproviders	74
Number of families using FDC	570
Number of children	791
Number of children under 3 years of age	415
Number of children from 4 years to 6 years of age	211
Number of school aged children 6 years to 13 years of age	165
Languages spoken by Careproviders	18
Range of years of experience of Careproviders	3 weeks – 22 yrs
Age range of Careproviders	32 – 70
Number of Fieldworkers (Field officers) – all part time	5
Other Coordination unit staff, Coordinators (Part time job share)	2
Administration Officers	1.6
Management	1

Range of Qualifications

Careproviders

Bachelor of Early Childhood	1
Bachelor of Teaching (Primary)	1
Diploma of Early Childhood	6
Certificate 3 In Children's Services	30
No formal child care qualifications	36

Coordination Unit

Diploma of Early Childhood	6
Certificate of Applied Science	1
Bachelor of Early Childhood	1
Master of Education	1
Diploma of Community Services Management	1
Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment	5

Costs

As of 1/7/09, Careproviders set their fees independently of the Coordination unit/council

Council recommended fee per hour	\$5.25
Range of fees charged by Careproviders per hour	\$5.25 - 6.00
Administration fee paid by families per hour	45
Administration fee paid by Careproviders per week	5.25
Average weekly earnings of Careproviders	\$14 -\$38k

Comparisons

City of Kingston Long Day Care (per day)	\$70
Range of Long Day Care in Kingston (Community/private)	\$62 - \$85
Average gross weekly income for single income families	\$1,116

Quality Care in a regulated environment

Family Day Care in Australia has experienced significant change in the last decade – Quality Assurance, National Standards, licensing, increased number of employed parents seeking child care, higher expectations by families and the community, the introduction of scheme policies and procedures – food and safety, sun smart, sleep, play... and competition from private providers, to name but a few. In Victoria, further changes have been implemented in 2009 bringing Family Day Care under the Children's Services Regulations in line with other Child Care Services such as Long Day Care.

Does this environment enhance Family Day Care or does it create a huge financial, ethical and social impost on careproviders and actually undermines quality practice?

Prior to 2009, Family Day Care Schemes (FDC) followed the National Standards for FDC and adherence to these standards was supported by the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) Earlier this year, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) released the 2009 Children's Services Regulations. A reading of this document reveals that the regulations are very closely aligned to the National Standards. This would suggest that schemes, careproviders and families will be comfortable with the regulations and will not be required to make many changes.

So what are the changes?

1. The major change is that all FDC careproviders must have Certificate 3 in Children's Services by 2014. This is a basic qualification in early childhood. About 50% of Kingston Careproviders have this or a Diploma of Children's Services, which is the next step up. (One careprovider has Bachelor of Early Childhood)
2. A family day carer must not provide care or education for children as a family day carer at a residence other than the carer's primary residence.
3. A family day carer who provides care or education for children as a family day carer at the carer's residence must ensure that the children have regular access to the living areas of the carer's residence.
4. A family day carer must have First Aid and Anaphylaxis Management Training
5. A family day care scheme must ensure that staff responsible for providing training and advice to family day carers and supervising and monitoring family day carers are qualified staff members.
6. The care provider's health does not adversely affect the carer's ability to care for or educate children; and
7. The careprovider is not adversely affected by alcohol, drugs or any other deleterious substances while caring for or educating children.

The National Standards have been in place for a number of years and are well accepted as the measure of quality for family day care. On the whole, the 2009 regulations provide an enforceable tool to ensure the health, safety care and education of children in FDC. Penalties apply for non compliance.

This however, still leaves the question – are regulations good for FDC and do they support quality practice? While critical research exists relating to regulations in Australian centre based care settings (Long Day Care - LDC), there appears to be a less literature relating to Australian FDC standards and regulations

Critical reflection of regulations in early childhood

Much has been written about regulations and their impact on early childhood (EC) care and education (Fenech et al, 2008; Fenech & Sumsion, 2007; Clarke-Stewart et al, 2002). For example, Fenech et al (2008) discuss the impact of regulations on job satisfaction of EC professionals. They conclude that experienced EC professionals have “an ability and freedom to manoeuvre within and around regulatory requirements...in a way that is conducive to optimal care and which uphold the integrity of their vision for EC education” (Fenech, et al, 2008, p12). Job satisfaction is maintained as long as the EC professional has the capacity to be autonomous and is not constrained by the regulatory environment. (Fenech, et al, 2008, p10). It is also suggested that the reverse is true – the less experienced EC professional may experience the structure of a regulatory environment more positively, seeing it more as a safety net.

In a previous article on this subject, Fenech & Sumsion (2007) focus on regulations as “a toll of governmentality, embedded in a performative and risk management discourse” (Fenech & Sumsion (2007 p. 265) They believe that this has a detrimental affect on EC professionals – time constraints and risk management focus – which reduces quality time with children.

An interesting application of this theory in the EC field is that regulations are in place to prevent risk and to reassure parents – your EC teacher may not be significantly trustworthy to care for your child, so the government regulates to ensure your child is safe, (Fenech & Sumsion, 2007).

In what appears to be an increasing litigious society, regulations seems to be in place to reduce the potential for legal action. The process to support this view is provided by the (DEECD) in the form of Children's Services Advisors (CSA's) who have the power to breach a service for regulation non-compliance. Fines and legal action can follow. Fenech & Sumsion (2007) believe this creates an environment of external control and distrust. A further example of this power discourse can be seen in the linkage of the QIAS to Child Care Benefit (CCB) - failure to achieve accreditation in the QIAS system leads to parent ineligibility for fee subsidies and tax breaks through the Australian Government.

Standards and regulations in Family Day Care

The issues alluded to in the previous paragraphs are very real for FDC careproviders. FDC has long been the poor cousin of Long Day Care – unqualified workers, poor work standards in homes, lack of resources and lack of supervision. However, the National Standards for FDC have changed this considerably. Careproviders are required to provide a safe and healthy home environment; they need to plan and evaluate the experiences they provide for children; they must undertake regular legislated training as well as evidence of professional development around current practices. Local Government FDC Schemes are funded to support careproviders with policies, training, equipment and regular visits from fieldworkers.

One of the major disincentives for FDC careproviders is the high start up costs - safety audits, fences, equipment, shade.(Daff, 2008) Combine this with the National Standards and regulations, careproviders may be reluctant to join or continue in the scheme. This however, does not seem to be the case. The majority of careproviders in the Kingston FDC scheme are committed to providing a quality services for children and their families. In the past year, 25 percent of careproviders completed, at their own cost, a Certificate III in Children's Services. This has raised the standard of care in the scheme and given careproviders a sense of professionalism and job satisfaction. In a recent risk management exercise, the scheme's policies and practices, based on the National Standards, demonstrated a high level of compliance – all stakeholders were considered and the level of safety far above what was expected.

So, does a regulatory environment enhance Family Day Care or does it create a huge financial, ethical and social impost on careproviders and actually undermines quality practice?

In an attempt to unpack this statement, a small study of careproviders in Kingston was undertaken. The careproviders were chosen for their length of time with the scheme as there needed to be an opportunity for comparisons to be made; ethnicity and geographical difference were also considered. Kingston has careproviders across the social and economic range – high advantage to significantly disadvantage.

The settings for the interviews changed according to the needs of each careprovider – one in a coffee shop, others in their homes when the children slept.

Research Questions

The research question asks:

Does the current quality and regulatory environment enhance Family Day Care or does it create a huge financial, ethical and social impost on careproviders and actually undermines quality practice?

The questions used with the careproviders and fieldworkers in the study follow:

Past, present future

- How was Family Day Care when you first started?
- How is Family Day Care now?
- How would you like Family Day Care to be in the future?

Research Design

Data for this small research study came from interviews with a number of careproviders and fieldworkers in the City of Kingston FDC scheme. They were interviewed about their observations and experience of FDC and the changes they've experienced in their years as careproviders. All had between five and twenty two years of experience in FDC and responded to a request in the FDC Newsletter for careproviders to volunteer.

Careproviders

Liz. started in FDC in 1989. Left in 1999 and returned in 2007

Ingrid started in 1987 and has worked in FDC for 22 years

Elaine started in 1998 and has worked for 9 years

Elena started in 2004 and has worked for 5 years

Fieldworker

Roxanne started in 1987 and has worked as a fieldworker in FDC for 22 years

Data

See interviews in Appendix 1

Analysis

The overwhelming view of this small study is that Family Day Care has changed considerably and while much of that is positive – safety, QA, qualifications, the loss of the spontaneity and family like environment is mourned. During the 2000's Family Day Care Coordination units have had a great role in supervision and surveillance of careproviders. However, it is this particular practice that careproviders find most offensive. They strongly believe that the majority of careproviders provide high quality care in safe, stimulating environments, but because a few careproviders do not comply, all are impacted by a high level of surveillance – fieldworker visits, QA and now regulations.

The views of Liz, Ingrid, Elaine and Elena highlight concerns expressed by other careers (in other contexts such as careprovider meetings) that high levels of scrutiny undermines careprovider confidence, autonomy and judgement (Fenech & Sumsion, 2007, p 237).

Power, (1994,1997,2004) in Fenech & Sumsion (2007) notes the “rise of the ‘audit society’ ...and maintains that accountability systems attempt to manage risk through technologies of performativity” and that this produces a climate that uses checking in place of trusting. These Kingston careproviders clearly feel they are not trusted to adequately care for children. An example is the Safety Check attached.

Financial, ethical and social implications

Financial

The financial considerations have already been discussed and while the costs seem quite high \$1500 -\$2000 (850 to 1140 Euros) to set up their FDC business. Careproviders can apply for a Government funded start up payment of up to \$1500 (E 850) which eases the cost significantly. However, when compared with other occupations, (professions and trades) the cost is quite low.

In the City of Kingston a number of costs are undertaken by council:

- All training – legislated and practice based (about \$1500/E 850) per year
- Equipment – Car seats, cots, pushers
- Playgroup management and resources

The average wage of careproviders in Kingston is \$24, 600.00 (E14,254) so the start up cost are not a considerable impost for most careproviders, although many careproviders would attest to it being a burden.

Working With Children Check: \$70	Safety locks: \$50
Police Check: \$29	Family Police Checks: \$15 pp
Window safety Film: \$300 or	Office supplies: \$40
Window glazing: \$800	Consumables: \$30
Car seat belt check & anchor points: \$80	Toys & Books: \$ 50—\$500
Car Safety Harness Kit: \$100	Storage: \$50
FDC Insurance & membership: \$500	Sand: \$30
Fire extinguisher /blanket & First Aid Kit: \$150	First Aid Course: \$90
Safety gates (Internal & external): \$200	Fences 1.5 metres: \$1000

Ethical Implications

This is a more complex area but not one that was considered extensively by the careproviders in this study. For the purpose of this study, ethical standards are those considered to be the principles of right and wrong that govern the conduct of the early childhood profession. In Australia this is seen in the Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics. The code, which has been widely adopted by many organisations, focuses on a range of issues including the impact of media, technology, health issues and differing family contexts. "The new code reflects life in the new millennium. It positions children as active citizens with entitlements and rights, living in a global community," (Parletta, 2007)

The City of Kingston Children's Services Philosophy is the underpinning document for all council children's services in the municipality – Family Day Care, Long Day Care, School Age Care and Occasional Care. Both documents, The Code of Practice and the Philosophy shape the professional environment that Family Day Care is moving towards and also shares links with both the current National Standards for FDC and the new Regulations.

The careproviders in this study appear to see their own ethical standards compromised because of the imposition of government initiated standards. The sense that careproviders are trusted to provide safe, healthy and caring environments is damaged by the increasing surveillance both through regulations and the required unannounced fieldworker visits.

Careproviders also cite similar issues to the early childhood practitioners in Centre Based Care. That is, low pay (for some), heavy workloads (up to 7 children – 4 under 5; 3 school age), lack of time to complete paperwork and the increasingly "onerous administrative duties and low professional status" (Fenech et al, 2006, p2), which for some careproviders leads to dissatisfaction and antagonism towards the coordination unit and regulatory bodies. Questions of the ethical underpinning of standards and regulations and their alignment with personal values require further investigation so may not be able to be answered here. However, Fenech et al (2007) suggest that the more qualified the early childhood practitioner is the more they have "an ability and freedom to manoeuvre with and around regulatory requirements in a way that is conducive to optional care.

Elena provided some insight into the ethical debate. She is one of the scheme's Russian speaking careproviders and her program is designed specifically for other Russian speaking families. It is a very structured and didactic program which meets the educative values and needs of her families. Elena has an ethical dilemma when the standards/regulations place a high emphasis on children's choice. In her culture, this is not appropriate nor is it respected.

On the other hand, Elaine runs an open-ended program based on the children's interests. It is free flowing and far more spontaneous than Elena's.... Although, Elaine complains of the lack of spontaneity within her program....it's all comparative.

This small snapshot into the difference between the two careprovider programs indicates an underlying set of values in the standards and the regulations that is not cognisance of other cultural values. So in this way, the ethical considerations, that is the principles of right and wrong that govern the conduct of the early childhood profession, have a different perspective when considered in the cultural context of the careprovider and the families. This view is supported by the work of Armenia (2009) in a study of the motivations of careproviders for entering home based care. The initial assumption was that the predominantly female workforce were motivated by the need to be "stay at home mums" while being able to earn additional income to support the main breadwinner and having their own business. The study recognised that this was the case for some careproviders, mainly the white cohort; however, it was clearly not the case for many others. "The largest group, which I refer to as multi-role providers, combines concerns for their own family's care with workplace issues (working at home, earning money and being their own boss) and a desire to give back to the community" (Armenia, 2009, p 571). This raises a question for Australian regulation and standards: how much consideration is given to the larger community need, specifically the existing and emerging ethics communities?

The National Standards have a strong focus on culture – family, community, and ethnicity; the current regulations do not appear to have the same focus. So there are some ethical implications for FDC.

Social Implications

A significant issue for Family Day Care is the increase in the need for formal care and the subsequent shortage of care places. Where once, Family Day Care was seen as a good employment opportunity for mainly women, this is no longer the case. People considering a career in this field are confronted by the initial high cost of becoming a care provider – compliance costs related to their home and training requirements. Other barriers include the need to adhere to health and safety policies and procedures; the understanding and implementation of ethical financial systems and the awareness of care and education practices. And since July 2009, the need to have a qualification. Families expect high quality care which is demonstrated by strong policies and procedures and evident in care providers who are knowledgeable about current theories and practices in early childhood.

In the final section of this paper, consideration will be given to the social impact of regulations and standards

Quality, standards, monitoring, reporting, regulations, enforcement...these are the words circulating the early childhood field in Australia. Each service sector is required to demonstrate quality in their service delivery, and this is implemented and measured in different ways, in different Australian States. In a study of the Victorian context compared and critiqued against their equivalent services in England, Wales and in New Zealand Daff (2009) wrote:

Threads of connectivity can be seen in all three contexts Child care, whether it be centre or home based, is seen as a panacea for societal ills, children of single parents a priority (FaHSCIA, 2009, Penn, 2007, May 2002); it is in the economic interest of each county and the business models of quality assurance and regulation are implemented. A positive attribute in UK, NZ and Australia is the Early Childhood is on the agenda and home based care is coming out of the closet.

One of the major differences between the three communities discussed is the long standing Australian Model of administration where careproviders must have an agreement with a Family Day Care Scheme, which is funded to provide support, training, supervision and administer funding. Fieldworkers within schemes build relationships with careproviders, so all aspects of home based care can be addressed.

Home based care, childminding or Family Day Care does not feature significantly in any of the discourse on early childhood, but the impact of the political and societal changes continue to impact on this sector. Jones and Osgood (2007) describe home based care as the “Cinderella Service”. They believe that, home based care does not receive the professional recognition it deserves, yet must still comply with the quality, training, standards, monitoring, reporting, regulations, and enforcement that are the characteristics of the current child care market. Is this good for the sector or does it create an unacceptable burden on home based care providers?

Many in Australia argue that it is not (Jones & Osgood 2007; Fenech, Sumsion, Robertson & Goodfellow 2008; Fenech & Sumsion, 2007)

The careproviders in this study gave a clear message that the administrative weight imposed on them diminishes the time spent with children, makes them more like centred based care without the support and devalues Family Day Care... it is no longer care that is “home like” – spontaneous, flexible, responsive.

Where to now?

Doherty et al have identified a number of factors which contribute to high quality family child care and also high quality, career orientated careproviders:

Intentionality in careproviders:

- Seek opportunities to learn about child care and children’s development – to Diploma or Bachelor standard
- Network with other careproviders which positively impacts on job satisfaction stress and turnover
- Intentionally plan experiences for children
- Describe family day care as their chosen occupation and
- Identify family day care as a long term career rather than a temporary occupation

Kingston Family Day Care has moved in a number of directions to try to balance the need for health and safety with the desire for home like experiences:

Careproviders have opportunities to:

- Complete Certificate 3 in Children’s Services (basic qualification) and Advanced Diploma on site
- Training in the theories and practices of an emergent curriculum – child initiated interest based learning and reflective journals
- Piloting a program of mentoring for new careproviders – fieldworkers visit intensely for a month and create a mentoring group with other careproviders
- Independent Fee Setting has given careproviders a greater sense of ownership of their business and the confidence to see FDC as a viable career.

Conclusion

Yes, there is a significant financial, ethical and social impost on careproviders, but is it worth it? It certainly is. The National Standards and the 2009 regulations set the minimum bar. In the experience of the Kingston FDC scheme, many careproviders will seek to exceed these basic tenets; others may not, and this then becomes one of the challenges for scheme. The other challenge is to be part of the discourse that seeks to place standards and regulations in a more critical framework.

According to Fenech et al:

We believe that regulation can do much to promote and safeguard quality standards and practices. However, we also believe that regulation cannot fulfil its potential to do so while entwined in risk discourses, and whilst it is not grounded in the comprehensive policy approach that addresses what research has highlighted as significant contextual barriers to quality.,,, The challenge remains for early childhood advocates to reclaim their support for regulation by couching regulatory accountability in alternative discourse.....

Fenech, Sumsion, Robertson & Goodfellow, 2008, p. 45

As Roxanne, long serving Kingston fieldworker commented....“It’s like we’ve grown up – we can reminisce about the old days, but we can’t go back” (Roxanne Kooter, 2009)

And our response to Nancy Mitford: “I love children, especially when they cry, for then someone takes them away” to Family Day Care – the best home care away from home....

Appendix 1 Responses

How was Family Day Care when you first started?

Liz

- It feels like the careprovider is guilty until proven – especially when the fieldworker's visits are unannounced. It seem like they want to catch you out
- Government seems to have knee jerk reactions – having to have safety glass in windows
- Costs associated with FDC – safety glass, insurance, fences,

Ingrid

- You used to treat the children like your own – it's not like that now
- Not so much flexibility – 20 years ago you were much freer and could do what you liked by just asking the parents. Now you can't do "spur of the moment" things
- Children could see family life – see what mum's do, like washing, shopping. Can't do that any more...it's not family orientated
- Today there is more paperwork; the children have to wait while you write up observations
- It feels like the careprovider has to take that parent role to the extreme – the parent doesn't wear a sun hat, but the careproviders have to wear one
- The careproviders are told they are small businesses, but the have to do more and more because of QA (Quality Assurance)
- Reactionary Regulations – one person in Australia has an accident and FDC has a new regulation (pram straps; bird bath; safety film on a glass cabinet above children's height)

Elaine

- It used to be more like baby sitting – few rules and regulations; some careproviders just stuck the children in front of TV
- No restrictions on numbers of children in care – some had 13 children
- And we went to the beach! You could be more spontaneous
- When we started tree fieldworkers came out to interview me – they all had to agree that you were suitable
- Careproviders visited each other more often but it tended to be very gossipy

Elena

- It's good to think you now have to have qualifications – although my parents don't care about my degree as long as I work 6.00am – 6.00 pm

Roxanne (Fieldworker)

- In the 1980's the coordination unit staff weren't even early childhood qualified; this changed with local government amalgamations in the 1990's
- Home visit records did not exist
- Safety checks were very basic. The Kingston scheme did a pilot study with the Royal Children's Hospital Safety Centre and developed a safety check form which is what most schemes now use
- Careproviders had the fieldworkers home phone numbers – no mobiles back then
- Relocation care – careproviders just called each other, not the coordination unit.
- Playgroups were drop in style between 9.00 -2.30. Careproviders could stay all day – children slept at playgroup
- Fieldworkers know the careproviders and their families personally
- No Child Care Benefit; coordination unit decided who got subsidised care
- No computers – everything was done manually
- Careproviders could do anything they wanted to – go to the beach for the whole day; play netball and leave all the children in a crèche at the venues
- Careproviders left children alone, but weren't terminated!
- Fieldworkers choose careproviders on gut instinct
- No council cars
- Careproviders know where you lived

How is Family Day Care now?

Liz

- Didn't have to plan – everything was spontaneous.
- Paperwork – when the local laws dog came to playgroup we had to get the parents to sign all the forms to say “Yes, my child can see the dog”
- Some policies are silly – why do you have to wash a baby's hands after a nappy change; the baby can't touch it's bottom
- Fieldworkers come unannounced but at the same time...sleep time, so they only see one aspect of care...would prefer visits to be more planned
- Paperwork – it is daunting; too much time thinking about what needs to be written down. There's too much pressure to be like Long Day Care – all the same paperwork without the support of someone else in the room (like in LDC)
- Expectation of training – even thought its Certificate 3 for FDC is based on LDC
- FDC has lost that real family feel

Ingrid

- The standards are good – makes some careproviders “lift their game”
- Council provides good in-services – not just First Aid and legislated one, but things like music
- We use more natural and recycled materials...not plastic toys
- First Aid, safety
- Having QA and an outside person makes the decision – it's not biased, it's open minded
- Children get individual attention
- Relationships are forged over a long time – Ingrid still keeps in touch with families from 10-20 years ago
- Careprovider can be at home
- Friendships with other careproviders – strong network and interaction

Elaine

- Workshops/In-services are great
- Independent Fee Setting
- Flexibility – can do things for you own children
- QA is good – it's stepped it all up
- We are seen as professionals - you need QA and qualifications to do that
- Doing Certificate 3 has opened up new ideas
- Great bonus – your own children good better parenting education – they see their mum with other children and also see what other families do
- I live near the beach, so not being allowed to go there is really frustrating
- There are regulations about animals, so the children can't touch or pat them. It takes away that family feel.
- Elaine finds restrictions hard – she's a wanderer

Elena

- You can be with your own children – minding children at home is better than a crèche and it's more money
- Loves Independent Fee Setting
- Paperwork
- Teaching children in Russian (She only works with Russian families)

Roxanne (Fieldworker)

- New coordinators brought innovative practices, forms, mentoring program for careproviders
- Much more professional – but not as warm and friendly
- The scheme provides equipment – car seats, cots, pushers. In the past careproviders supplied their own – they could be second-hand
- Annual car restraint checks (didn't do them at all in the past)
- It's very community focussed now

- We were just a small local scheme, then the local governments amalgamated and we became part of a large scheme – lost that personal touch and it is geographically larger so takes more time to get to careproviders
- QA has meant the quality of care has gone up, but the family seem to be out of the equation
- We used to market FDC as “just like home”. But it’s not like that anymore
- Spontaneity has gone; careproviders are restricted with what they can do
- Different values within the coordination unit effects how careproviders are seen. Fieldworker values impact on careproviders
- Coordination Unit is now very middle aged... what will happen when we all start to retire?
- Child Care Benefit – is a much fairer system; administered externally to the scheme; more equitable
- Fieldworker visits are unannounced

How would you like FDC to be in the future?

Liz

- We need careproviders who just do holiday care
- More flexibility – if you need to go to the doctor, another careprovider could take your children (short time care)
- Have fieldworkers book visits – this is more respectful of careproviders
- Involve the children in the plan for the day. It is more immediate and interesting – better than planning two weeks ahead.

Ingrid

- Less paper work – no one read it anyway!
- Have fieldworkers spend more time interacting with the children instead of just doing paperwork – forms
- More unstructured spontaneous experiences

Elaine

- Let careproviders go to the beach!
- Less paperwork
- Change policies – if I have fewer children I could go to the beach; but I can’t because the paperwork hasn’t been signed by the parent. Could we get permission by text message and then have the paperwork signed later

Elena

- All the paperwork – its stupid!
- Observations are pointless – children do what they need to do when they’re ready; parents don’t read the observations anyway.
- Elena wants to be able to charge ahead, so if a parent leaves without paying, she has some recompense
- Wants a debtors database for the region – if a parent defaults in one region then comes to us, we should know
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Roxanne (Fieldworker)

- Have a minimum list of toys
- Develop a mentoring system for new careproviders

“It’s like we’ve grown up – we can reminisce about the old days, but we can’t go back”
(Roxanne Kooter, 2009)

Appendix 2

National Standards – www.ncac.gov.au
Scheme documents

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