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Regional Childcare Development Fund Announcement Video Transcript

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Regional Childcare Development Fund Announcement Video Transcript

Jenny Perkins, Director General, Department of Communities:

Good morning everyone, and welcome, I'm Jenny Perkins, Director General of the Department of Communities. Can I acknowledge the Honourable Robyn McSweeney, MLC Minister Community for Services, the Honourable Brendon Grylls, Minister for Regional Development and Lands, the Honourable Mia Davies, Member for the Agriculture Region and the Honourable Wendy Duncan, MLC member for Mining and Pastoral Region.

Welcome everyone and all. It's my pleasure to welcome you all to the official announcement of Western Australia's new Regional Child Care Development Fund. We are honoured to have here this morning, both ministers who's two departments have worked together and are jointly responsible for bringing about this important initiative for child care in the regions. Thank-you to the Honourable Robyn McSweeney, MLC, Minister Community for Services, and the Honourable Brendon Grylls, MLA, Minister for Regional Development and Lands for being here this morning. We also have this morning some special guests. Children from the child care centres who are happily enjoying the playground right now and will be joining us later for morning tea. Ladies and gentlemen, child care services in the region areas face particular challenges and today's announcement of the new Regional Child Care Development Fund for Western Australia is a significant step forward in supporting child care services in our rural and regional areas. This new initiative has been funded from the Royalties for Regions program which falls under the portfolio of the Department for Regional Development and Lands and the Department for Communities which is the lead agency in Western Australia responsible for administering our child care regulatory framework and supporting child care services in this state will be administering this fund. I would now like to hand over to the Minister for Community Services the Honourable Robyn McSweeney, MLC, to say a few words.

Honourable Robyn McSweeney, MLC, Minister Community for Services:

[Personal comment to Brendon Grylls, Minister for Regional Development and Lands.]

Could I acknowledge the Honourable Brendon Grylls, Minister for Regional Development and Lands, the Honourable Wendy Duncan and the Honourable Mia Davies MLC, Jenny Perkins our DG for Communities, Helen Creed our Executive Director of Children Services and Paul Rosair, Director General Department of Regional Development and Lands.

Good morning, our location here today at the Ivy Watson Playground with the sounds of children in the background and I wouldn't have minded if they were all in front of me I absolutely love them and it does provide a beautiful setting for what we are announcing today. Minister Grylls and I are very please to announce funding for the establishment of a Regional Child Care Development Fund for Western Australia. This fund will provide a significant allocation of nine point three million dollars over four years which will assist in boosting and sustaining child care services providers in rural and regional Western Australia. Both Minister Grylls, myself, the Honourable Wendy Duncan and the Honourable Mia Davies we are rural members of parliament through and through. Child care services in the region areas face specific challenges such as attracting and retaining qualified staff. This is often because of the higher living costs, rent, utilities and transport and when you think some of those rents are two thousand dollars a week it flips me out when I think about how much those rents are and I that know we have one of the regional members sitting here who is nodding her head. To give you and example of those higher operating costs a regional service can face, an example is a professional development course costing about two hundred dollars for four staff could cost seven times more, about fifteen hundred dollars for our regional child care services once accommodation, travel and meals are factored in then there's the problem of finding staff to replace them while they are training. Regional child care services must be supported to stay viable. More and more families are depending on child care to balance the demands of a busy life. More than fifty percent of parents in Australia place their children in some form of child care and in Western Australia we have approximately forty six thousand children in some



form of child care and as the Minister I firmly believe we must put in place community structures which support our families, our families are the core. In regional areas access to child care can influence the attraction of families to the area and filling of jobs such as teachers, nurses, doctors in the community. If we want to build strong vibrant communities then we need to make sure families have access to good quality child care. These child care services also need resources to support the important early learning years of our children. There is growing evidence from neurosciences to show that brain development in the early years does influence the development of children for later life. Simply put a positive start in childhood when mental physical and emotional learning is supported by responsive and caring adults has a positive impact. And I know that Minister Grylls with his two little boys and he is a patron of the Wheatbelt organisation for children services, you'd of asked him 5 years ago he probably said no but now he is well entrenched in being a dad he knows all about it and he is certainly committed to the provision of quality childcare. The Regional Child Care Development Fund will be administered by my Department for Communities with government agencies and the community working together in partnership will ensure that quality child care is more easily available for families across Western Australia and so at the end of the day looking after the wellbeing and development of our children is about safeguarding the future for our communities and it is all about being child focused. Thank you.

Jenny Perkins, Director General, Department of Communities:

Thank-you Minister McSweeney. The continuous improvement in child care services in Western Australia and supporting early years learning for children are certainly propriety areas for the Department for Communities. And the Regional Child Care Development Fund is funded from the Royalties for Regions program and I would now like to invite the Honourable Brendon Grylls, MLA, Minister for Regional Development and Lands to say a few words.

Honourable Brendon Grylls, MLA, Minister for Regional Development and Lands:

Thank-you everyone. I take a lot of stuff through cabinet and Royalties for Regional is a big program, my colleague Terry Waldron lent over to me when this project was going through cabinet and said this is the best we've done so far. We know how important this is to you. We know how important it is for those volunteer committees that have spent hours and hours and hours trying to wade their way through Commonwealth and State regulations trying to get the numbers to make the centre work, trying to cajole the mum to become the secretary or the treasurer of the committee knowing that they are already busy running their own business or their own farm and by the way why don't you take on the Commonwealth Department of Child Care Administration to try to make that work. We are very, very proud that this program will help you to do that better and we hope it allows you to run your business, or your farm, or your life without the constant impediment of trying to run a child care centre as well. We were very, very disappointed when we saw the demise of ABC child care and we saw hundreds of millions of dollars of tax payers money that had gone into for profit child care go down the drain while organisations like yours worked your hearts out just to try and keep yours open. That was unfair, it wasn't good enough, the Child Care Benefit payment still isn't perfect in the way that you have to set your centre up to try to access the Commonwealth money and we are very determined to make sure we can boost you, help you define how your service can work so we can access that Child Care Benefit whether you have five children in the centre or fifty or five hundred and that is really, really important. So four or five year ago we held a teleconference where we got all the child care centres from across the state together, basically to say lets get organised and start to put out complains into a format that can deliver something. Hopefully you now feel that was worth coming to and that those concerns are acted on and we can get on with doing it. Thank-you to Robyn who is very committed and passionate about this area and doing a great job. To Wendy and Mia and my colleagues, thank you for their work, Don Punch at the South West Development Commission took the lead on this and help to drive it but we love the fact that now if you're a small child care centre in country areas you can apply for a grant to support the inclusion of children with disabilities in your child care centre. A little thing, something that might not effect a vast majority of families but pretty damn important if you've got little guy with a disability and you need the opportunity to work a couple days a week to make that work, really important initiative. Really excited that you might be able to employ someone help do your books and do the



management of the sector that is really important and something that was called for. Hopefully our equipment and infrastructure grants allow you to get those wash basins and toilets at the right level and on the right wall of your centres we know how that's done your head in over many, many days and weeks this is a good thing and we also know that we are a State Government and we are about what's in it for us as well we know that making it easier for you to access child care puts extremely talented young mums back into the workforce and those young mums are the ones that are driving some of the innovation and opportunity in regional communities and in regional development . It's to our benefit to give you the opportunity to move back into the workforce and hopefully these programs allows more young mums mostly, some young dads, to move back into the workforce and make their contribution to their local communities because we can not afford to not take the opportunity of utilising the vast range of high quality skills that young mums bring to regional communities. That to me is the main crux of what this is about, recognising the wonderful talent that you bring to your communities and helping you be able to share that much wider than maybe just managing a child care centre. So, well done, we are very happy about this and thanks to Robyn for shepherding it through the system and administering it, this is going to be a really good thing and I too, am very, very excited about what this might mean for you and thank-you to all those people that got involved in WOCS, a wonderful little community organisation that I hope it shows than rather than just being angry and disappointed, get organised, come up with a plan, come up with a policy and governments actually find it pretty hard to not work with organisations like yours that know what they are talking about and have got a real plan. Well done to you all it's a fantastic day.