

Key learnings from co-design sessions with families and providers

Prepared with care for
The WT3 Team

January 2019

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Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which the WT3 initiative is being piloted. We acknowledge the elders from the past, present and into the future.

We would also like to acknowledge the many families who took part in co-design sessions to date. The families time, experience, ideas and energy are at the centre of making WT3 an initiative that supports children to thrive.

Finally, we acknowledge the providers, both of early learning and other services, who took part in the five co-design sessions.

About this document

In this document we share learnings from the five co-design sessions held in December 2018. We learned so much from families and providers about how WT3 can work best for them. This document contains the key learnings, opportunities and ideas that will inform the design of the WT3 initiative.

Images in this document are of families that participated in the co-design sessions and gave consent to share their photos.

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Introduction

"In recognition of the importance of early learning in improving life outcomes for our children, the Tasmanian Government will fund a Working Together for 3 Year Olds (WT3) – targeted pre-school initiative, commencing in 2020.

This initiative will provide the opportunity for eligible three-year-old children to participate in Government-subsidised quality pre-school programs for 10 hours a week (400 hours a year). The program will be delivered by accredited services in the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector, or government schools, where no ECEC facility is available."¹

The Department of Education (DoE) have partnered with the Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TasCOSS) to conduct primary research, consultations with families and develop referral pathways, and The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI) to guide the co-design and pilot process.

The DoE is engaging families, community leaders and organisations and early education providers in five pilot sites - Glenorchy, Derwent Valley, Devonport, Kingborough and Launceston (focusing on the suburbs of Mowbray, Newnham and Rocherlea). These stakeholders will take part in the co-design process throughout 2019, to develop, test and refine the model to be launched state-wide in 2020.

¹ Fact Sheet, Education: Tasmania's future, Working Together for 3 Year Olds

Co-design definition and approach

What is co-design?

Co-design is a mindset and a method for innovation. It's goal is to support people to work together to develop innovative responses to shared challenges in order to influence positive impact.

Co (collaboration, community, connection)

Co-design is underpinned by the mindset that people with lived experience have valid and valuable perspectives, and they should have the opportunity to play an active role in decisions that shape their lives.

Involving people with lived experience as well as people 'across the system' in the identification of challenges and development of solutions dramatically increases the chance of solutions having deeper resonance and impact.

Design

As a method it involves using practices inspired by and adapted from traditional design and systems thinking disciplines. This means the collaboration is intentional, with the goal of taking action to improve outcomes.



How co-design is being applied in the WT3 initiative pilot

In order to deliver an initiative that works best for families and is feasible for providers, the Tasmanian government has committed to using a co-design process to design the WT3 initiative.

That means that in 2018 and now in 2019 the initiative will be co-designed and tested in the five pilot sites before WT3 is scaled across the state in 2020.

The government is working with parents, three year olds, siblings, providers and the community to co-design and test the WT3, so that by 2020 the initiative will be closer to an initiative that works best for everyone. There are three stages of co-design that are being conducted across the five pilot sites:

1. Interviews (September - November 2018)
2. Co-design sessions (December 2018)
3. Pilot delivery (throughout 2019) and pilot prototyping and testing (March-June 2019)

This summary focuses on the second stage - the co-design sessions. The structure of the co-design sessions built on previous research TasCOSS has engaged families in, creating a foundational understanding of what helps and what hinders children thriving.

In co-design sessions with both providers and families, we used participatory methods to identify opportunities and build elements of the WT3 initiative together. We created story books, mapped out family's journey to belonging at WT3 and prioritised key barriers with families. With providers we collated existing successful engagement with eligible families and identified how WT3 can support providers to try something new.



Key learnings from co-design sessions with families

The co-design sessions with families were designed to hear from families how they would like WT3 to support children to have a great start in life through quality early learning. The sessions built on findings from interviews previously conducted with families in the five sites by TasCOSS². This research named some of the biggest barriers for families in accessing early education for their three year old as:

- Cost of participation (or fear of cost)
- Transport (cost, flexibility, family friendliness)
- Lack of knowledge about service availability
- Social anxiety, isolation, lack of confidence and depression
- Poor previous experience (with other care centres)
- Lack of time
- Judgement from staff or other families
- Concern about their child getting the support they need

Taking this on board, the session was designed to hear from families about three big topics:

1. Creating a place of belonging
How might we make sure children and families of different shapes, sizes and cultures feel they belong at WT3?
2. Fitting in with families
How might WT3 work best with the lives of families?
3. What happens at WT3
How might families most benefit from what happens at WT3?

We learned from families about different elements that will inform the design of WT3. We have included some 'How might we?' questions to guide the design and testing of the WT3 initiative throughout the pilot, and help the WT3 team reflect as they undertake communication and enrolment work.

What is shared below are the key learnings - things that we heard and observed across the five pilot sites that came across repeatedly, passionately or really stood

² **Working Together for 3 Year Olds:** Analysis of Stage 1 Consultations with Parents, TasCoss

out, and have implications for the design of the WT3 pilot experience for families. The key learnings have been clustered into the below sections, including:

- Key Values
- Finding out about WT3
- Enrolling in WT3
- Every day experiences for families and children at WT3
- Staff practice and ways of working

Key values

For WT3 to work for them, families want the experience to be:

- Non-judgemental
- Friendly
- Physically, emotionally and culturally safe
- Celebrating of culture and diversity
- Flexible
- A place of belonging for both children and close family
- Building connection
- Founded in equality, respect and trust
- An equal partnership between families and professionals
- Delivering and building pathways to positive education experiences



Finding out about WT3

Peer referrals

Many families talked about word of mouth being the best way to find supports. Referrals from friends are trusted and minimise power imbalances between professionals and families. Some parents want to bring a friend or trusted person with them for support when they start attending WT3.

How might we encourage word of mouth and create opportunities for peer support?

Soft referrals to WT3

Families also told us they would like to hear about WT3 from a trusted professional or organisation and have an idea of the service before committing. Some parents want to meet staff at a cafe before they join.

How might we leverage trusted organisations and existing relationships to identify and connect 'hard-to-engage' families?

Clear understanding of benefits and commitments

Families want a clear idea of what taking part in WT3 would mean for them, including it's value and what's required of them. Families were also attracted to the idea that the WT3 centres might be connected with, or even endorsed by, community providers they know and trust.

How might we articulate and demonstrate value to families that's exciting and in family language?



2-way Orientation

Families see participation in early learning as a mutual agreement between providers and families. They have the idea of reflecting this in an orientation of families to WT3, as well as opportunities for families to orient WT3 to them.

How might we support families to play an active role in orientation, and for providers to be responsive to each family and their needs?

Language and accessible information

In the co-design sessions we made sure to make activities accessible to families and in family language. Families were able to easily engage with the activities, and this approach should be applied to all family-facing touchpoints in the initiative. Families liked language that their children could also use, with one family suggesting that 'Play place' might be a good name for an early learning centre.

How might we communicate with families in a way they can easily access and relate to?

Communication channels that work for families

Many families communicate via facebook, messaging and text. Knowing the power of word of mouth, communication needs to be convenient for families to share with each other. With anxiety being raised as a major barrier in earlier interviews with families, messaging options are often considered less stressful by families.

How might we leverage preferred communication channels to connect with families?

Enrolling in WT3

Holding the tension between needing enrollment information and building trust with families

The enrolment stage of WT3 is one of the first impressions families have of WT3, and could set families up to be really excited about the initiative, or feel it's not for them. However, we know there are certain data requirements to create safe and appropriate environments for children and this balance must be held.

How might we have a staged enrolment process that builds trust and supports families to share important and sensitive information in a safe way?

Sensitivity around eligibility criteria

In one session, a family had a negative reaction to a question in the paperwork about engagement with Child Safety (an eligibility criteria). It is important that the enrolment process is non-judgemental and creates a place for families to share information when they are comfortable.

How might we minimise triggers and create a non-judgemental environment from the first point of contact with WT3?

The value WT3 brings to families

Families were excited about

- Free early learning for three-year-olds
- Early assessments (such as early development checks) and intervention (connection to other supports) for children
- Meeting other families, learning from their experiences (such as meal planning) and making friends
- Preparing families for and transitioning to Kindergarten
- Friendly connection to other helpful supports in the area for children and parents (health, employment, education, cultural etc)

Families were also excited about some things that quality early learning would bring including children learning about other cultures, socialising with other children and adults, building independence, identity and confidence as well as parents having time for other things.

How might we maximise the elements of WT3 that families are excited about?

Meeting families where they are

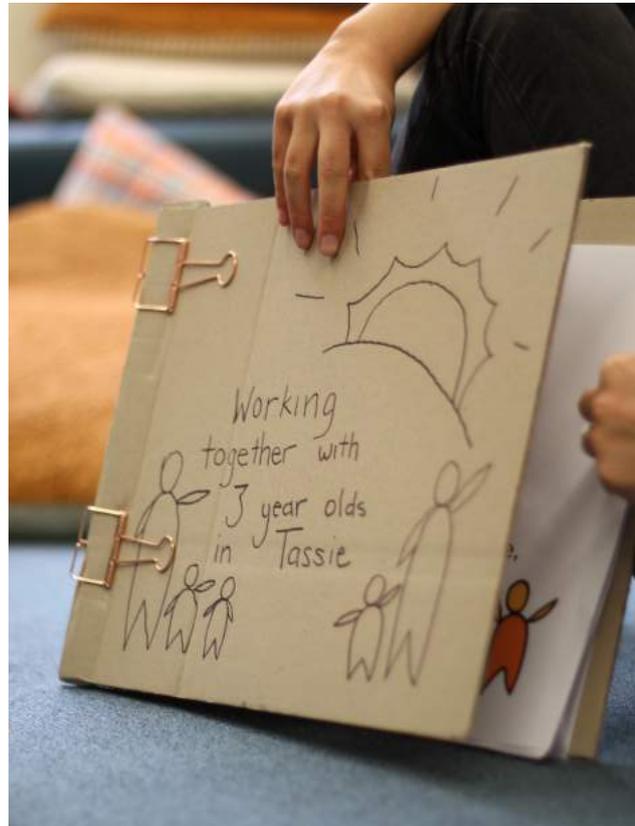
Families named judgement and anxiety as key barriers to accessing early learning programs. Families told us that meeting providers in a place that they choose or are comfortable with (e.g. a favourite cafe or park), where they can also be with people they already know and trust might help to overcome these challenges (e.g. a friend or trusted professional).

How might we create a family friendly, flexible enrolment process while gathering the mandatory information?

Every day experiences for families and children at WT3

Cultural safety

Families were keen to have cultural diversity represented in images, activities and celebrations. Not only did families want to see their own culture represented, but they also wanted to see other cultures. Families would like to have cultural training for their whole family. Families told us that “fostering acceptance, and communities understanding on culture, is key”. Food came up often as a way to increase cultural inclusion, for example providing halal snacks. One family mentioned they wouldn’t bring in their national dishes if they were sharing with other children - creating opportunities to invite and celebrate diverse foods might minimise this fear of judgement. *How might we create safe opportunities to share and celebrate cultural diversity and foster belonging?*



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety and wellbeing

One family shared that they were going on a journey of discovering their own Aboriginal identity, and wanted all families to build their understanding of Aboriginal culture. However they and another Aboriginal family wanted this to be the norm for all families, not especially about them. Another family spoke about the importance of their children connecting to their culture at daycare, and is really happy with the outdoor and cultural play environments created at certain centres. *How might we foster Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural connection for three-year-olds, and cultural safety for the whole family?*

Knowing children are safe

Parents wanted to have tangible ways of knowing their children are safe, such as pin entry, air-lock or sign in sheets. Families mentioned these as they are mechanisms that they are familiar with - there may be other ways to create safety. *How might we give families tangible safety mechanisms and keep children safe?*

Parental presence that works for the family

Parents had a variety of perspectives on the presence they would like to have with their children at WT3. They wanted the flexibility to stay a bit later to help their children settle, or simply watch and sooth their own anxiety about leaving their children. They also wanted to be able to leave and build their children's independence, get things done, or simply have some 'me' time! Parents wanted the option to sit, talk, rest, work or watch their children at the centre. Families thought spaces like this would help conversations with staff be more informal and allow for incidental connection with other families and staff.

How might we create opportunities for parents to spend time at the centre where it is in the family's best interest?

Transport support

Many families were really excited about making drop-off and pick-up easier. Families and providers talked about having buses, taxi or petrol vouchers, sharing the load with other families and more. Families were particularly interested in having a private bus with appropriate safety equipment for three-year-olds. Some parents said they were able to do drop-off and pick-up themselves and preferred that option.

How might we have creative ways of minimising the obstacle transport creates for families?

Integration between WT3 children and other children in the early learning group

Families put huge importance on WT3 being in a non-judgemental environment and having a strong sense of belonging. Some families suggested a hat that all the children wear could help create a sense of unity.

How might we build a sense of unity amongst of children in the early learning group at the center?

Building up to new routines

Families wanted to have a transition period building up to 15 hour weekly participation, so that they and their children could adjust to the new routine. Most families wanted to have a structured routine with fixed days so they can plan their family around that.

How might we create a transition period to help families become comfortable with WT3 routines?

Flexibility in drop-off and pick-up

Parents talked about providers needing to be flexible to the nature of families, where sometimes later starts or early pick ups might be necessary. Some families suggested a 30 minute flexible start and finish time. Most families wanted the hours to fit in with school hours (usually after 9.30am and before 2pm).

How might we have flexibility in start and finish times?

Staff practice and ways of working

Working with families

Families wanted providers and staff to work with them as partners and to be on the same page as them.

How might we support partnership between staff and families, to include families in the decisions that affect them and deliver responsive services?

Leveraging structures families are already familiar with

Families in one site mentioned replicated a 'child care plan' that they were quite familiar with to create a family equivalent. Leveraging structures like these can make referrals, goal setting etc. more accessible.

How might we minimise the adjustment for families by using existing templates/models that families are familiar with and fit well with the initiative?

Celebrating diversity and respecting privacy

Families talked about wanting staff who are equipped for, and other families who are understanding of, the diversities of families, including cultures, abilities, socio-economic backgrounds etc. However, families want the focus to be on the child, not these factors. In keeping with this families preferred early learning staff to be training in disability support, for example, rather than having a specialist with their child in the room.

How might we create inclusive experiences for all families, not just for those with diverse needs?



Opportunities and ideas to prototype

The families had lots of ideas about WT3 in the sessions, and further ideas came from what they created or shared. These ideas are great opportunities for testing in the pilot. For example, we could try to:

- Use messaging apps to communicate with families
- Have spaces in the centres for families to make a cup of tea and connect while their child settles
- At the front of the centre and in communications, have images clearly communicating what happens in the centres and the diversity of people participating
- Have Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations deliver regular culturally safe play sessions, teach provider staff how to support this or work toward more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff on the early learning team
- Expect children to attend the full 15 hours of early learning only after 4 weeks
- Create informal and formal opportunities for parents to get to know each other
- Celebrate the culture of key migrant groups in the area with family lunches
- Fund taxi vouchers for families to leave and/or arrive at the centre
- Have clear messages (visual, verbal, audio) that encourage non-judgement
- Have a 30 minute pick-up and drop-off window



Key learnings from co-design sessions with service providers

The co-design sessions with service providers focused on testing initial ideas of the initiative that will help shape the 2019 pilot. We also explored what a collaborative approach could look like and gathered feedback on the initiative constraints. The session with the service providers was particularly helpful to understand the readiness of providers in the 5 sites to deliver WT3 initiative.

Below are listed the **key barriers** that were surfaced on the co-design sessions.

Qualified Early Learning Teachers are in short supply

Providers emphasised the shortage of early childhood teachers (ECTs) and the difficulty of delivering every component of WT3 by an ECT. As a temporary solution, throughout the 2019 pilot, Early Learning will be delivered either by an ECT or education leader (EL).

We also heard about the challenges of backfilling roles.

Outreach and community engagement is a new skill for many providers

While many providers pride themselves on their connection to the community around them and the families not attending their centre, many providers have not had the need to connect beyond their doors. Some of the service providers referred into external services for outreach service to occur. WT3 is asking all providers to 'meet families where they are' both physically and metaphorically to build strong, healthy relationships and connect them to the right supports at the right time in order to give children the best start in life. A formal collaborative approach between services with more flexibility around outreach and transport, may need to be agreed on. This will mean supporting providers to developed new mindsets, skills and practice through the pilot.

Transitioning to delivering against the Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing (TCYW) framework

The WT3 initiative asks providers to approach child wellbeing more holistically and look to help children work toward better outcomes in the areas listed in the TCYW

framework, in addition to the Early Years Learning framework. This includes supporting the family to work toward these outcomes too. While some providers already apply the TCYW framework, others will need to familiarise themselves with it and build it into their practice.

Cultural safety and connection gaps

We observed that some providers were confident that they delivered accessible, culturally safe services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and Culturally And Linguistically Diverse (CALD) families, however struggled to share examples demonstrating this, or described delivering the same service to all families. We know working toward equity requires a deep understanding of the needs of different communities and an approach that responds to those needs. Many providers may need to undertake reflection, training, work toward a more diverse staff team and/or partner with organisations who successfully deliver culturally safe services.

Providers also demonstrated to have **key strengths** we can leverage on when working together through the 2019 pilot period.

Providers are creative and flexible in response to challenges and ideas

We heard from many providers that they are already tackling some of the key barriers that were identified in the TasCOSS consultation, in regard to families accessing and engaging in programs. Providers told us they are approaching the barriers families face in creative ways and are open to trying new things.

Leveraging specialist providers to deliver the best support

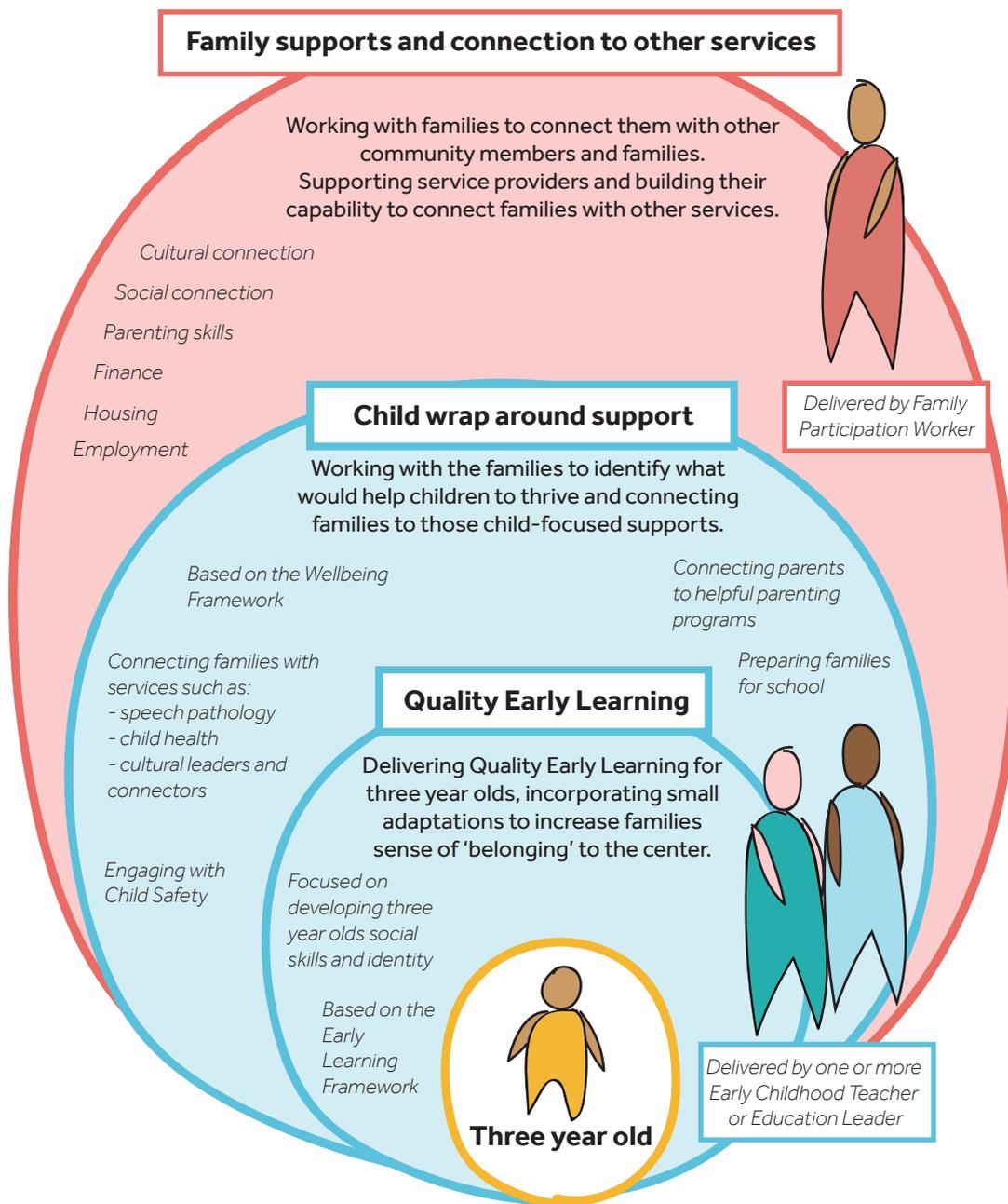
One provider identified that they had little experience in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Islander families and would seek advice and support from Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to improve their supports.

Every provider is different

Each community in the five pilot sites was unique, and so were the providers delivering services there. While we are designing an initiative to be delivered in five pilot sites and to be scaled across the state, providers will leverage their different strengths, fill different gaps, work with different business models and achieve the outcomes in ways that are best for the families they serve.

WT3 initiative design as informed by co-design

The co-design sessions helped refine the structure of the WT3 initiative and clarify delivery activities and roles. The WT3 initiative concept is represented below



The session with the service providers helped iterate and refine the **key tasks and roles** that WT3 providers will be delivering through the 2019 pilot. WT3 providers and Family Participation Workers will deliver different components of WT3.

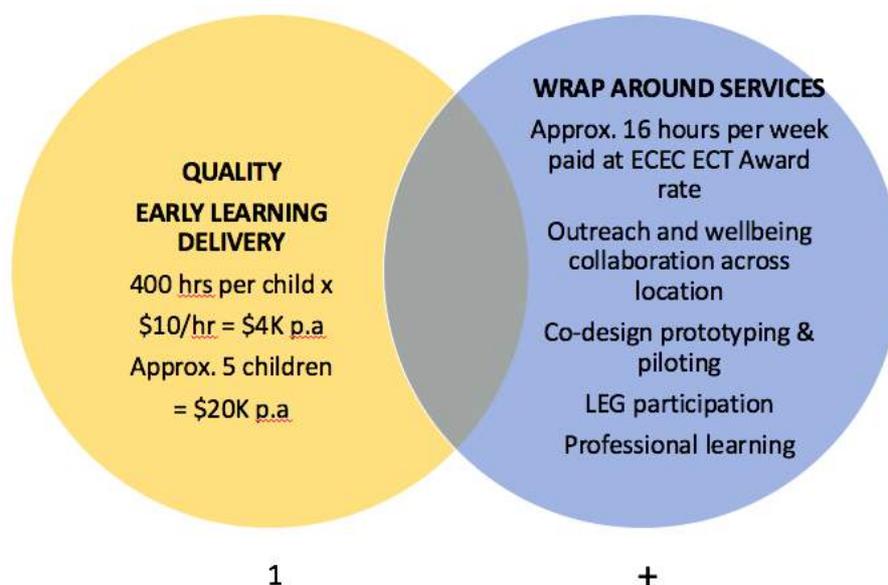
WT3 Providers

There are four clear tasks that WT3 providers must deliver for the pilot. These are:

- Continue delivering early learning according to the Early Years Learning Framework to eligible three-year-olds (with small adaptations to increasing families sense of 'belonging' to the centre)
- Building wrap around supports for the child, doing outreach and facilitating wellbeing collaboration across location
- Participating in co-design prototyping and piloting
- Participating in Local Enabling Groups
- Participating in training and professional development such as, the Family partnership model, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety training (e.g. Gumnuts and Buttons), CALD family engagement training, trauma informed approach (e.g. Circle of Security), disability awareness and support training.

These tasks are funded under the draft WT3 funding model below. The yellow circle indicates funding for existing early learning initiative delivery (or 'purchase of spaces' in the) and the blue circle indicates new tasks funded in WT3, some of which are for the pilot only.

Draft of WT3 funding model



The preference is that all tasks are delivered by a single ECT. The intention is to create strong relationships between the educator, families and children while delivering a high standard of early learning. However, providers at the co-design sessions emphasised that qualified ECT are in short supply. Therefore during the 2019 pilot providers may consider WT3 tasks to be delivered by one or more ECTs and/or EL.

Family Participation Worker

In addition to the WT3 providers, Family Participation Workers are an external role (five staff across the pilot sites) which will supporting the provider's engagement with families, and wrapping supports around the whole family.

The tasks of the family participation worker are:

- Work with providers to develop an inclusion action plan
- Work with providers to undertake outreach to build and maintain engagement of eligible families throughout the pilot (including soft referrals)
- Building provider capability to engage with whole families
- Building provider capability to network with other providers and community
- Support referrals
- Work with families to build wrap-around supports not directly related to the child but supporting parents and family to raise thriving children

The co-design sessions helped inform what the role should look like. This was described as a person with the skills to engaging whole families including parents, siblings and/or kin and working collaboratively with communities and service providers. The person is ideally well connected and understands services, such as those responding to domestic violence, alcohol and other drug use and service systems including housing, employment, cultural and migration, health, Centrelink, NDIS. We recognise that these skills align with a variety of different qualifications and experiences including:

- Social workers
- Experienced inclusion or community connection workers
- Highly connected families who know how to navigate complex systems

This could translate into one Senior Social worker Band 6 based in Glenorchy (could be existing social worker) and four people based at sites, Band 4 (could include existing inclusion workers from CFCs).

Next steps

TACSI team is currently working on translating these key learnings from families and service providers into the below assets:

- **WT3 initiative Service Blueprint:** The service blueprint guides people involved in delivering the initiative (e.g. early childhood teacher and the family participation worker) to create a positive experience for children and families that works toward better outcomes. It will support WT3 team identify and design the processes, tools and details that go into initiative delivery. It is a tool that describes the key stages of the initiative and interactions in enough detail to guide the implementation.
- **WT3 initiative Theory of Change:** a visual that represents the broad challenge WT3 is addressing, and the key actions that will lead the WT3 team towards creating positive outcomes for three year olds by piloting the initiative in five sites in 2019 and by ultimately rolling out the initiative across Tasmania in 2020. This is a tool that can be used to guide decision making and in monitoring and evaluation against intended outcomes.
- **WT3 initiative Principles:** a set of values that the WT3 initiative should embody. It will guide WT3 service providers in aligning with WT3 intentions and can be used to support decision making about the initiative.

TACSI will share these the week of the 21st January 2019.

January 2019

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