

**MID-WEST GASCOYNE AND MURCHISON PARENT SUPPORT PROJECT, GERALDTON, WA**

*The project setting*

We provide a family support service to children, families and communities in the Midwest Gascoyne and Murchison regions of Western Australia. The region is made up of towns and communities based on fishing, farming, horticulture, mining, pastoralism as well as Aboriginal communities. Geraldton is a small regional city, with most towns being small rural and remote communities.

We travel throughout the region, providing a universal service. We

childcare services and playgroups, so we aim to provide a seamless service to families. We have also established strong links with other community and government agencies so work in partnership to provide more co-ordinated, comprehensive services.

*Why is the project needed?*

This is a very large region geographically, but with relatively small populations. Many families are very isolated and access to services can be limited. By travelling to communities we can help identify needs and provide support and advice and help families access other early intervention services. Children and families are provided with opportunities to share experiences often not readily

agencies. We provide an outreach service with a focus on early intervention. We are trying to improve access for families to family-strengthening and culturally appropriate activities. We share information and skills on parenting, inclusion, child development and early intervention. We also hope to connect people with the community and the resources available within it, as well as to develop resources that can remain in communities to strengthen families with an emphasis on early childhood and parenting.

*How are you going about it?*

Our vision is to be responsive, flexible and innovative to meet the needs of families and communities. Therefore the services we provide in communities varies significantly. Project activities may consist of some or all of these:

- workshops, presentations, chats;
- visits to playgroups;
- conducting innovative types of playgroups and family sessions;
- Mobile Play and Support Service visits – play sessions for families, including verbal and written provision of information and advice;
- work with other agencies to provide information, advice and support;
- sharing resources;
- using action research methods (in collaboration with the Australian Institute of Family Studies) to plan, act, observe and reflect, with a focus on sharing this information with those we work with; and
- developing resources such as story books, scrapbooks, banners and posters promoting family strengths and community achievements.



Rural playgroup support service July to December 2002 - Stepping stones playgroup.

promote our services throughout the entire region, then respond to requests for support for parenting information and advice. This can include telephone support, the provision of written information, workshops and/or family play sessions where we may model interactions and/or chat to parents about parenting issues. We have recently commenced a mobile service to enable us to more readily set up play activities for families.

The Rural Children's Support Network has other funding to support

available to them and to develop social networks.

Professionals who live in some of the communities we visit are also often extremely isolated and can be called upon to "do it all". They need support in their roles, as well as to be kept up to date with developments and research in the area of child development and parenting.

*What are you trying to do in this project?*

Our aim is to help build family strength by developing partnerships with families, communities and other



Rural playgroup support service July to December 2002 - PALS playgroup.