

# BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES THROUGH CHILDCARE

## STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES THROUGH FAIR AND INCLUSIVE TRANSITION PLANNING

Reliable childcare is essential for regional communities. It helps parents work, supports local businesses and keeps families connected to the places they call home.

Childcare in rural Queensland faces challenges not seen in the cities. Higher costs, workforce shortages and limited housing make it harder for centres to stay stable. When childcare struggles, the whole community feels it. This is not just a service. It is the backbone of our towns.

Families choose to live and work in regional Australia based on access to essential services, and childcare is at the top of that list.

### THE CHALLENGE

Regional childcare centres are under pressure from:

#### WORKFORCE SHORTAGES

Attracting and keeping qualified early childhood educators in small towns is difficult.

#### HIGHER OPERATING COSTS

Utilities, housing, recruitment and compliance cost more in regional areas.

#### LACK OF SCALE

Smaller centres cannot absorb unexpected staffing or operational pressures.

#### COMMUNITY IMPACTS

When families cannot secure childcare, they cannot work. When they cannot work, they leave. Every school, business and club feels that change.

#### ISAAC'S COMMITMENT

Isaac Regional Council continues to invest in early learning because it supports the stability and growth of our communities.

Council currently supports childcare through:

- Around \$455,000 each year in concessions for centres operating from council facilities.
- Investment of \$1.6 million to upgrade council owned childcare spaces.
- Funding of \$400,000 over four years to support the recruitment of early learning educators.

This investment helps families remain in Isaac and gives employers confidence to attract and keep workers. Local government is doing its part. Regional Australia now needs support that reflects the scale of the challenge.

### WHAT WE'RE ADVOCATING FOR

To keep childcare available and stable in regional communities, we are seeking:

1. **A dedicated and ongoing funding stream** for local governments operating childcare services due to market failure in rural and remote communities.
2. **Improved access to the Community Child Care Fund** through greater allocation, more flexible thresholds and eligibility settings that reflect the needs of rural and remote centres, including smaller community and council run services.
3. **Recognition of councils** as key delivery partners in regional childcare.

### WHY IT MATTERS

When childcare is stable, families stay.

When families stay, communities grow.

Schools, health services, local businesses and community clubs all benefit. This is about more than early learning. It is about keeping towns strong, connected and confident about the future. A modest investment in childcare prevents a much greater loss to population, workforce and community identity.

### WORKING TOGETHER

Isaac Regional Council is committed to partnering with government, childcare operators and industry to secure strong and reliable early learning services across the region. With the right support, we can ensure childcare remains available for families and continues to strengthen every community in Isaac.