

# Logan Aboriginal Child and Family Centre

QUEENSLAND

## Logan Aboriginal Child and Family Centre (ACFC) provides an invaluable range of services to Indigenous children aged 0-8 and their families.

Support begins early, with Logan staff paying hospital visits to families with newborns to share an information package on the ACFC and other support services. This connects families into an integrated service system from the outset. Partnering with Queensland Department of Health, the ACFC is a referral point for baby health checks – conducted through home visits or at the centre. Partnerships with Health and the Logan City Council enable the ACFC to run a health clinic and immunisation program. A speech pathologist is also provided by the Centre itself.

Logan manages the operations of nearby kindergarten *Burrakah* to deliver an educational program to 23 children daily. The ACFC also hosts a playgroup, in which 182 parents participate annually, and a Baby Playgroup. This runs alongside the nurse clinic to enable mums to join in whilst they wait for the nurse.

An extensive array of family support programs are provided:

- With a high number of children cared for by grandparents, Logan ACFC's Grandparents Program provides invaluable respite care and support, offering weekly sessions for which transport is provided. A partnership with Foodbank Queensland has enabled a thriving community kitchen, supported by a nutritionist. The kitchen provides food parcels to community members in need, and has produced a cookbook and fact sheets on nutritious meals and lunch box ideas. The Kitchen also hosts cooking programs for Elders and young mothers, and runs popular community cook-offs!

- The *Deadly Dads* program is facilitated by a passionate local man and focuses on fathers' attachment and family relationships. The program has been an incredible success with up to 27 men attending the group weekly. Some fathers are referred in via parole officers or through family violence programs. Collaborating with local service providers the program ensures that fathers are receiving the support they need. The group recently initiated a father's day function which attracted over 100 male participants from across the region, and hosted a cook-up for mother's day, decorating the centre's walls with messages about the importance of mothers.
- Annually up to 60 parents participate in programs such as *Circles of Security*, *Incredible Years*, *1-2-3 Magic* and the *Abecedarian approach*, with staff upskilled to support program delivery.
- A successful school holiday program sees 3,500 Indigenous children participate annually, with the Centre providing program staff, a bus and meals. Centre Director Karen Dawson describes how this program is vital to take the pressure off families during what can be a stressful time.

Last year alone Logan worked with 560 children at risk of entering the child protection system. The Centre is not funded to carry out child protection work, but focus on supporting families at risk of entering, or who have voluntarily entered child protection services, as well as family reunification. The newborn visiting program is key to this preventative approach, with a number of child protection interventions still taking place on the maternity ward.

Additionally, Logan sees approximately 110 weekly crisis walk-ins, coordinating these through an efficient intake process and a quick response from the Family Support Team. Karen highlights that their link to parent organisation Ganyjuu Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation is vital, as it provides a one-stop shop for holistic family wellbeing, with access to a range of services from court support to family mental health programs.

A large Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff team (27 workers or 95% of the total team) ensures that the centre is deeply connected to culture and community, which Karen feels are core strengths. Many families come from contexts of high intergenerational trauma, and won't access mainstream services where they don't feel culturally safe. Logan is often the first service of its kind that they have accessed. Karen believes that this soft entry point is vital, highlighting "We often have the children in first, and then the parents start to slowly engage."

Logan ACFC is focusing on collective community impact through a partnership approach to deliver streamlined, holistic services. The high levels of community engagement, and their ability to innovate and respond to the emerging needs of their families, are key success elements. Karen describes the simple truth that genuine outcomes only emerge when you directly respond to community needs.

Yet despite their innovative and successful approach, Logan faces an uncertain future – with no funding beyond June 2015. The first signs of budget cuts are already being felt – with the bus service threatened. Without this, many children will not be able to attend. Whilst Logan has received some money under the Indigenous Advancement Scheme to fund an 'outside the school gates' program, this program will, ironically, not be possible unless the ACFC remains open.

Logan ACFC is not merely a child and family centre, it is an invaluable support framework for Indigenous children and their families. As Karen shared, "If the centre wasn't there we would not have a safe place for our children and families to come to."



Creating an environment which is culturally safe is the first step to close the gap.