

9th April 2024

A Smart Start Great Southern

PO Box 871 Katanning WA 6317

Attn: Ms Karen Callaghan, CEO, Shire of Broomehill-Tambellup

Dear Karen,

I am writing to ask for your ongoing commitment and contribution of **\$4300** to A Smart Start Great Southern. There are currently 534 registered ASSGS children. ASSGS is asking for an investment of a minimum of \$20 for each child registered.

ASSGS delivered resources and birthday books to all registered children aged 0 to 4 in 2023/24 from the Shire of Broomehill-Tambellup. Information sessions were held for parents and children in both Broomehill and Tambellup on First Aid Awareness for Babies and Toddlers, free dental clinic visits and a Nature-Based Messy Play session.

ASSGS commends the Shire of Broomehill-Tambellup for their vision and support of this community driven early years' initiative and look forward to your continuing investment in the children of your Shire.

Shire financial and in-kind support is vital to the continuation ASSGS Initiative. Unfortunately, ASSGS cannot be offered in Shires without this commitment. The reasons for this being:

- It is critical for local government (LGA) to be key community partners in supporting early years development.
- LGA's financial contribution will demonstrate to the Early Years Initiative partners (Minderoo Foundation, Telethon Kids Institute and Western Australian Government) that there is a strong commitment to invest in the early years.
- The contribution to local delivery will reduce the burden on the local working parties for sessions
- The local investment clearly demonstrates to other potential funding bodies that the LGAs see the need and value in supporting their children. (See the attachment for greater detail)

The combined Shires contribution is approximately 16% of the total cost of the investment required to deliver ASSGS in the 6 participating Shires in the Great Southern. While the long-term aim would be to increase the percentage of LGA contributions, it is important to maintain the percentage at the current level, for the reasons outlined above. Thank you for your ongoing support.

Yours Sincerely,



Camilla O'Shea

A Smart Start Great Southern (Chair)

Why support - A Smart Start Great Southern (ASSGS)



1. **Every child deserves the best possible start to life.**
2. Evidence has demonstrated **the period from pre- birth to 3 years is the vital period for a child's development.** This period lays the foundations of the child's future and lifelong impact on the child's development, health, education, job opportunities, social inclusion and wellbeing
3. **The child's environment, experience and relationships in first 1000 days of a child's life lays the foundations for life.** Parents and the home environment affect the child's development, health and wellbeing. Parents, especially first-time parents often feel isolated and unsure in their new role.
4. **If a child is behind at school entry, the child is more likely to stay behind.**
5. **Children who are developmentally vulnerable at the start of their schooling are likely to continue a life trajectory of poor life outcomes.**
6. **22% of children start school developmentally vulnerable**
7. **Contributing to the early years is an investment in our future, not a cost**
8. **Every dollar invested in quality early childhood development for disadvantaged children produces 7% - 10% return per child per year.**

The overall objective of A Smart Start is to:

Empower families of a 0 – 4-year-old to be their child's first teacher in providing an optimal learning environment that nurtures and encourages their child to reach their potential.

ASSGS facilitates, connects and supports.

It is to support parents to provide with the necessary skills required to nurture the 0 to 4-year-old children in their learning, social interaction, physical and mental well-being in preparation for life.

The 'A Smart Start' initiative was developed in the Great Southern region to meet locally identified needs. Having been successfully delivered for 24 years, it is a model for community-driven early childhood intervention. The initiative aims to provide all families with children from birth to four years old with ongoing support, resources, information and access to services which empower parents and assist them in providing an optimal learning environment for their children and to seek assistance if and when required.

'A Smart Start' is a universally inclusive, bottom-up initiative, with a focus on providing parents with access to support networks and the information they want. The initiative is cross-sectoral and supports networks and links at all levels in the community. It involves parents and care-givers, local shires, schools, libraries, community groups, non-government and government agencies. ASSGS facilitates the building of partnerships and working collaboratively to develop a community that supports its children and their families through the child's formative years.

Key elements of the initiative include;

- Personalised contact by the child health nurse and local volunteers.
- Connecting families with community groups and local early childhood professionals to create a support network.
- Facilitating local information and play sessions as requested by the community.

- Seven information packs covering the periods birth-3 months, 3-6 months, 6-12 months, 12-18 months, 18-24 months, 2-3 years & 3-4 years.
- Books given to children at birth and birthdays until 4 years old.

All communities and families are unique and it is important to be responsive and flexible and to be able to meet the needs of the families. ASSGS offers this flexibility as it is community owned and driven.

It is important to provide support that promotes access, equity and inclusion. If a child is behind at school entry, the child is more likely to stay behind. 20% of children starting school are developmentally vulnerable ASSGS aims to reduce that by:

- developing the parents understanding of what their child should be able to do at what age
- helping parents connect with the services required,
- advocating to bring services closer to the families and working collaboratively to provide those services.

In the last few years, there has been an increase in support agencies offering their services in the Shire. ASSGS helps to facilitate the agencies working in collaboration to ensure what is provided is targeted and meaningful for the families.

Early childhood care and education should be seen as an investment (not a cost). Studies have shown a strong return, with a variety of studies indicating participation in early childhood shows a benefit of 2 to 4 times the costs or produces 7% to 10% return per child per year. This improves school readiness, and broader than that, helps to build skills the children need for jobs in the future.

Funding

ASSGS has a contract with Amity Health to ensure ASSGS can be provided to the communities of the 6 participating Shires. Considerable in-kind support is also provided by WACHS GS who supplies the office facility for the ASSGS coordinator. ASSGS continues to work towards developing partnerships with new funding and support partners however, Shire financial and in-kind support is vital to the continuation ASSGS Initiative. Unfortunately, ASSGS cannot be offered in Shires without this commitment.

Following the reestablishment local ownership and governance, the number of registrations has steadily increased and it is envisaged will further increase in 2024 – 2025 with our priority focus on reaching vulnerable families.

Shires have an enormous potential to influence a community that values and supports children in their early years. As a Shire you already play an important role in providing and /or supporting play groups, day-cares, children's recreation places and library services.

References: Telethon Kids Institute, www.telethon.kids.org.au

Lifting our Game Report of the Review to achieve education excellence in Australian Schools through early childhood intervention – Susan Pascoe AM and Professor Deborah Brennan December 2017

Local Government & Early Years Networks, Working in Partnership Resource: WACOSS, WALGA, DLGC, Local Government professionals