

## Central West Fitzroy

# *Creating Successful Learning Environments*

Explore a topic of interest in your service through a collaborative journey where you will **share new ideas** and **stories, listen**, and be **involved with others**.

Action Research is a form of exploration that will ultimately **reduce your workload**, working towards achieving **growth and change**.

In an Action Research project you can look at all the **good work you already do** as a children's services professional and get the tools to do it even better.

What's more, the ongoing learning process involved in Action Research is key to the implementation of the **Early Years Learning Framework** within your service.

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST AND CONTRACT FOR  
THE PSCQ ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

APPLICATIONS CLOSE FRIDAY 4TH JUNE 2010  
USE THIS FORM ONLY

## *What's in it for me?*

Action Research provides services with an opportunity to:

- gain knowledge
- discover solutions
- gain experience
- explore language
- develop practical ideas to implement within services
- become more aware of the changes occurring in the children's services field
- develop management skills to facilitate change

Being involved in the Action Research project will give you and your service the opportunity to follow through and ***reflect on your practice*** while ***making connections with other professionals*** in your region.

As the project continues for a number of months you have the opportunity to ***network, meet like minded people, collaborate, mentor, share ideas*** and also to follow through and reflect on an entire learning cycle.

PSCQ will support you through this process by

- providing a financial contribution to your service
- providing a facilitator and a mentor to help support you through the action research process
- Participants are guided through action research phases (see below) using a 'cyclical process of 'think- do – think' (MacNaughton and Hughes (2009: 1) with the goal of creating positive change through collaboration within their services and improved outcomes for children, families and staff.

All you have to do is ensure that 2 staff (including one leader) from your service attend 8 professional development opportunities throughout the year.



## ***What is Action Research?***

According to MacNaughton and Hughes (2009: 5), action research begins with hopes, dreams and desires: “the hope that we can change the world for the better, the dream of a better world and the desire to make a difference”.

As you explore a question of your choice, a question about practice, a question that you would like to explore you will be supported to go through the following phases:

***1. First of all you have to choose something that you would like to change – and then you have to choose to change it. This is where you ask a question that you might want to explore.***

***2. Next you have to make a plan about how you might change it***

- you plan how and where you will find some answers, get more information and think about the process of information gathering might impact on the people around you (thinking about ethics)
- you will reflect and critically reflect on the information you have gathered and your own thoughts and ideas
- you will make a plan about how practical your ideas are – will they work in your setting?
- you will make sure that you are “keeping the research real”

***3. Now it's time to go about creating the change, you might:***

- gather some data
- try some of your ideas
- observe and document what happened when you tried your ideas
- reflect and critically reflect on the information

***4. By now you have been on a journey with your service, community friends and colleagues, it is time to:***

- draw conclusions from the data you have gathered
- share the lessons with colleagues so that other can also learn from your experiences

***5. Finally you choose a new topic and start again!***

Please read on to find out why Action Research is an effective professional support method



## Background

Children's services practitioners have been involved in Action Research projects around the world and throughout Australia. Individuals and groups **collaboratively inquire** into a topic or idea that they would like to create change about (Wait & Davis, 2006; Borgia & Schuler, 1998). Through collaboration with other participants and the work setting, **practitioner-researchers have the opportunity to think deeply about a topic that they are interested in** and one that is relevant to both their setting and their colleagues (MacNaughton & Hughes, 2009; Ferguson & Coubrough, 2002).

Research conducted in 2008 (Waniganayake et al) identified that directors, managers and coordinators perceived professional development as a process which is associated with both **personal and professional growth**. Action Research fits with both of these perceptions. Participants have the opportunity to acquire new skills and knowledge, learn about their own learning process, listen to the perspectives of others, challenge their own ideas, and pay specific attention to the social and cultural influences of learning and the construction of knowledge (Borgia & Schuler, 1998; Ferguson & Coubrough, 2002; MacNaughton & Hughes, 2009; Wait & Davis, 2006).

Another benefit of Action Research is that the process is ongoing and **the principles can be used in a variety of other settings**, as it may set the foundations for practice improvement through continual learning and progressive problem solving (Wadsworth, 1998). Practitioners develop a deeper understanding of learning process and consequently their role in the education lives of children (Borgia & Schuler, 1998).

Research also demonstrates that when professional development meets the needs of individual practitioners and the centre's overall goals, participants are more likely to develop a sense ownership as they observe changes in practice. Consequently **learning communities are established** (Waniganayake et al, 2008). Action Research supports wider learning throughout a service and the wider community. This in turn allows those involved to develop a sense of ownership, as the research topic and process is grounded in a specific service and tied to the relationships between people and the topic in a service and/or community.

Participating in Action Research may also **heighten the public recognition** of the role of practitioners in children's services, as participants involved in Action Research projects are increasingly recognised as knowledge generators and researchers in their roles (Borgia & Schuler, 1998).

### References:

- Borgia, E. & Schuler, D. (1998) Action Research in Early Childhood. *Scholastic Early Childhood Today*. 12 (8) 49-51.
- Ferguson, P. & Susan Coubrough. (2002). How can we help classroom teachers produce research from their practice? *Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia Conference 2002*. Retrieved from HERDSA Web site: <http://www.herdsa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/conference/2002/papers/Bruce-Ferguson.pdf>
- MacNaughton, G. & Hughes, P. (1999) *Doing Action Research in Early Childhood Studies*. Berkshire: McGraw-Hill Education, Open University Press.
- Wadsworth, Y. (1998) *What is Participatory Action Research?* Retrieved January 5 2009, from <http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/ari/p-wadsworth98.html>
- Waite, S. & Davis, B. (2006) Collaboration as a catalyst for critical thinking in undergraduate research. *Journal of Further and higher Education*. 40 (4) 405-410)
- Waniganayake, M., Cheeseman, S., Gioia, K., Harrison, L., Burgess, C. & Press, F. (2008) *Practice Potentials: Impact of Participation in Professional Development and Support on Quality Outcomes for Children in Childcare Centres*. Retrieved January 5 from <http://www.pscq.org.au/PDFs/General%20Site%20Docs/PSCARResearch-FinaleditedReportJan09.pdf>

## ***What do I have to be involved in?***

The PSCQ action research model requires services to participate by ensuring that minimum of two staff participate in the Action Research and that one of these staff is the leader of the service. Participants will participate by:

### ***1. Attending Action Research Group days as facilitated by your Action Research group facilitator***

- 6 action research group days over 12 months ( this is less than one per month)
- One sharing day and one core learning day over the 12 months

### ***2. Continuing the learning process***

- Carrying out planned research and action activities between the bi monthly meetings (these may be as simple as typing your topic into the Google search engine!)
- Contacting the mentor for support when you need to
- Participants will be asked to document the action research cycle

### ***3. Buddying with a peer***

- Buddying up with one other Action Research group participant from another service and contacting them between each meeting.

### ***4. Attending one core learning day during the twelve-month period***

- These days are facilitated by your Action Research project facilitator – you get to choose the content of the day!
- You will get to share your learning with other services in the region (invite your friends) as these days are open to the whole sector.

### ***5. Sharing the lessons***

- This involves sharing your journey with others after the twelve-month process is complete
- This also involves allowing PSCQ to use any (unidentified) documentation of a service's Action Research journey in an evaluation cycle



## *How will PSCQ support us?*

1. PSCQ will provide each service with a sum of \$1000 at the beginning of the project once a signed contract is returned. This money is for services to spend in a way that will allow the service to participate fully in the Action Research project. On completion of the project another lump sum of \$1000 will be provided to services. Payment can only be made directly to a service or organisation, not an individual.
2. Further money will be provided for those services who have to travel more than 100km round trip in order to access the Action Research group days in their region, as per PSCQ's travel policy available at: [www.pscq.org.au](http://www.pscq.org.au) Please note this subsidy will only be available per service, **not** per individual.
3. You are not alone — each Action Research group will be supported by a mentor and facilitator throughout the process. The mentor will support services between the large Action Research group days. The mentor will talk to you about your ideas and find extra information if you need it.
4. The facilitator will facilitate the Action Research groups in which all practitioner-researchers come together every 8 weeks – this provides an opportunity and space for practitioners-researchers to analyse their work, to share their work and engage in further investigation with the support of the facilitator.
5. The facilitator will help find, research and talk about your topics. The facilitator will help you stay on track and sometimes ask questions that make you think.

## *Who can participate?*

Target children's services in Queensland.

*(Child care services receiving CCB and Budget based services are considered target.)*

## *Eligibility*

For the purposes of the Action Research Project, children's services must both:

- Be considered a **target** service by PSCQ; and
- Have current, financial membership with PSCQ.

Applications will only be considered from target services.

## *What PSCQ requires from services*

### **Criteria for participation:**

1. A service commits to ensuring that the same attendees (minimum of 2 or maximum of 3) staff attend the 8 compulsory learning days: 6 Action Learning Group days facilitated by an external consultant, one core learning day which are whole-day workshops with the external consultants as above and one sharing day at the end of 2010.
2. Services must commit to bringing the whole service including families along the action research process through making efforts to involve and inspire their children's services community along the way.
3. Services commit to identifying and inducting a new research participant if either of the initial research participants should leave the service before the twelve-month period is complete.
4. Participants must be willing to buddy with a practitioner-researcher from another service and commit to making regular contact to find out how everything is going.
5. Commit to do 'homework' or tasks and to communicate with facilitator and mentor.

The Signing Authority is responsible for all accountability requirements of the project. These can be found in the terms and conditions. Please read these below:

### **Service participation terms and conditions:**

1. The service commits to ensuring the director/coordinator of the service attends 8 compulsory days throughout the Action Research project
2. The service commits to ensuring that the second staff member attends 8 compulsory days throughout the action research project.
3. In the event that one out of the two staff members cannot attend for any of the reasons listed below the service commits to informing the facilitator as soon as possible and providing written documentation to PSCQ
4. If a service misses more than 2 compulsory days throughout the action research project, the service commits to reimbursing PSCQ monies which were spent in facilitating their attendance. Time missed will be calculated as a percentage of the whole attendance, and the service will reimburse PSCQ the same percentage of the whole dollar amount

### **For example:**

- If your service attended 2 out of the 9 compulsory sessions and didn't attend any more, your service would have attended 22 percent of the required attendance. Your service received \$2000 to attend 100 percent of the sessions; if you only attended 22 percent of the sessions you will be required to pay back 78 percent of the funds which is equal to \$1560

## *What PSCQ requires from services*

(continued)

5. A service commits to identifying and inducting a new staff member into the Action Research project if the current Action Research participant should leave the organisation.
6. The service agrees that any documentation can be accessed by PSCQ evaluation teams and understands that this will be used in an evaluation process without any identification of individuals.
7. The Service agrees to participate in evaluative focus groups at the end Action Research project and contribute to the evaluations at the end of each Action Research group session.
8. Reasons for not attending:
  - Unexpected Validation or licensing visit
  - Illness of individuals who are directly involved in the action research process (not other staff being ill)
  - Unavoidable emergency situation at a service

**If the Signing Authority of the service changes** after the submission of the application and before Action Research project has begun, **PSCQ must be notified in writing.**

Successful applicants will be notified by email no later than 10 days after the closing date for applications. **ALL** applications are considered pending until they have been formally approved in writing. PSCQ will determine based on numbers of applications if Action Research groups will commence in a region

All email enquiries to: [pscq@workforce.org.au](mailto:pscq@workforce.org.au)



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<b>Service Name</b>									
<b>Contact Person Name</b>									
<b>Postal Address</b>									
								<b>Suburb Post Code</b>	
<b>Service Type (PLEASE CIRCLE)</b>									
Long Day Care		OSHC		FDC		In-home care		Occasional care	
ISA		Other							
<b>Telephone Number</b>									
0	7								
<b>Facsimile Number</b>									
0	7								
<b>E-mail Address</b>									
<b>Eligibility</b>									
Is your service a <b>target</b> service? (Circle Answer)									
<b>NOTE: Target Services are those receiving Child Care Benefit</b>								YES	NO
Is your service a current member of PSCQ ?(Circle Answer)									
								YES	NO
<b>PSCQ Membership Number</b>									
<b>PSCQ region (Circle answer)</b>									
Brisbane North (1N)					South West Darling Downs (7)				
Brisbane South (1S)					Wide Bay Burnett (8)				
Gold Coast (2)					Central West Fitzroy (9)				
Logan Redlands (3)					Mackay (10)				
Ipswich (4)					North Queensland (11)				
Moreton Bay (5)					North West Queensland (12)				
Sunshine Coast (6)					Far North Queensland (13)				
<b>Do you have any dietary, disability or other requirements?</b> (this information assists with planning meetings and activities)									





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Signing Authority	
I, _____, as Signing Authority of the above-mentioned, have read, understood and agree to the terms and conditions of the funding for participation in the action research project. I verify the information relating to the eligibility of the service and the information listed in this application.	
Signature:	Sign here
Date:	

Participant 1	
Name:	
Role:	Director / Coordinator
I, _____, as Director/Coordinator of the above-mentioned, have read and understood the terms and conditions of the funding and agree that I would like to personally participate PSCQ's action research project as a representative of my organisation.	
Signature:	Sign here
Date:	

Participant 2	
Name:	
Role:	
I, _____, as an employee of the above-mentioned, have read and understood the terms and conditions of the funding and agree that I would like to personally participate in PSCQ's action research project as a representative of my organisation.	
Signature:	Sign here
Date:	