

Cairns Post

# More home-based child carers sought

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Meeting up: Family Day Care's chief executive officer Linda Latham visits carer Lucy Capponi at a Cairns day care centre.

**HOME-based child carers are urgently being sought by Family Day Care Australia which needs to at least double its Far Northern network to meet the growing demand.**

The peak organisation's chief executive officer Linda Latham told *The Cairns Post* the region seemed to be defying a national trend in which the "gold rush" of new childcare centres opening in the past two years was starting to cause a glut of care in the major cities.

"(In the south) we're only holding our own in a severely competitive market," Ms Latham said.

But in the Far North, where Family Day Care has a network of about 160 carers, the baby boom and mining jobs had fuelled demand for childcare places the organisation was battling to recruit enough carers to fill.

Ms Latham said the demand was so great, couples were going on to waiting lists as soon as they fell pregnant.

She said parents particularly appreciated the flexibility of home-based carers, who could negotiate what hours were needed, such as overnight or weekend

stays that suited shiftworkers, drop-offs and pick-ups from school and before and after school care.

"There's a revolution happening. It's the individuality we can offer, the personal attention your child will get," Ms Latham said.

At Cairns Central Family Day Care, one of three schemes in Cairns, the 25 carers on its books are all full, and about 100 couples are on its waiting list, mostly wanting care for babies.

"That's a need for 15 to 20 carers right now and that's just one service," Ms Latham said.

Cairns Central Family Day Care senior co-ordinator Sarah Poole said single parents particularly said they felt their carer's family was an extension of their own.

Some parents had become so frustrated waiting for a carer to become available, they had signed up to become carers themselves, with the Federal Government's \$1500 grant an incentive for meeting the strict home safety standards.

Ms Latham said improvements such as extra locks and latches usually only cost a few hundred dollars but there were other costs such as insurance, background checks and licences.

Interested potential carers should call Family Day Care on 1800 621 218.