



Bright future for Family Day Care

Castlereagh Family Day Care is looking to a bright future with a new management structure and new staff.

"When we moved Family Day Care and Connect Five into the new premises at 14 Robertson Street, that was previously Coonabarabran Preschool, council took the opportunity to maximise efficiency by operating the two services as one with the new name of Family Support Services," explained Rebecca Ryan, Director of Community Services.

"Under the new structure, carers and parents will receive more support from the Co-ordination Unit. There will be someone in the office every day from 8.30 am to 4.30 pm and there will be more house calls and play sessions as well."

Carol Pickette is now full time in the role of administration officer, servicing both Family Day Care and Connect Five. Carol has simply changed hats, as she previously worked out of the same location in the office administration role for Coonabarabran Preschool.

Meredith Shannon was recently appointed to the full time position of Family Day Care co-ordinator.

Meredith returned to Coonabarabran at the end of 2008 after nearly 10 years in the Riverina district where she gained experience as the director of the Hay Preschool and the farm-based child care, Hay Mobile Children's Services. Up until now,

Meredith spent this year in the role of room leader with the preschool aged children at Yuluwirri Kids.

"I am still finding my feet," said Meredith after her first week in the new position.

"I am focusing on providing some child development support to our established carers and promoting the service for prospective carers.

"We are currently processing new carers in Baradine, Mendooran, Coolah and Gilgandra, and we are hoping that there

will be a renewed interest in Coonabarabran since there is currently no shortage of parents requiring Family Day Care for their children."

Manager, Jane Nelson-Hauer, said Family Day carers operate their own business from their own homes under the guidance and support of the co-ordination unit.

"It needs to be approached in a professional manner but it can be very rewarding both personally and financially," she said.

"For first-time carers there's a start-up grant of \$1,500 (\$5,000 for remote and very remote) available from the Commonwealth

Government to help with expenses.

"Many of our carers start because they have a toddler. Becoming a carer gives them the opportunity to earn an income whilst raising their own family at home.

"Grandparents, too, make wonderful carers.

"It usually doesn't take too much work to make a home that is set up for children suitable for Family Day Care," concluded Jane Nelson-Hauer.

Anyone interested in becoming a Family Day carer should phone 6849 2222.



Carol Pickette and Meredith Shannon, part of the Castlereagh Family Day Care team.