**REGIONAL EARLY EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT INC**

**Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is recognised internationally as having a critical role in children’s development and important economic and social benefits for families and communities. Good quality ECEC services are important for children's development, their families, and for the economic and social fabric of communities in the Wheatbelt region, which is a key driver of agricultural production and food security. For a decade, the sustainability of ECEC services in the Wheatbelt region of West Australia has been a challenge, notwithstanding Commonwealth, State and Local Government financial support.**

**The Wheatbelt Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Sustainability Project was funded by the WA State Government and Lotterywest to find a way to ensure that ECEC/child care services:**

* **continue to be provided across the Wheatbelt Region for the benefit of children and their families, communities and the economy,**
* **are sustainable and deliver high quality programs which contribute to children’s development in their critical early years.**

Development and testing of the regional model has been a rigorous process and has been supported by an independent Community Benefit Study. The Community Benefit Assessment Study undertaken in 2016 by independent consultants RPS identified the risks of making no change to the way services are currently governed and managed, risks which included closure of childcare centres, increased government funding requirements at a time of declining government resources, structural population decline, low workforce participation, increased workforce attraction challenges and the negative impact on child development with long term consequences.

Agreement was reached with service providers across the region that Narrogin Regional Child Care Services Inc. (NRCCS) would be transformed into a regional entity, Regional Early Education and Development Inc. Services will be organised into three clusters and local input maintained through advisory groups without legal or fiduciary responsibilities. WA State Government and Lotterywest funding will support the salaries of the central organisation for two years, establish service clusters, develop management processes and facilitate the *merger of some 21 services into the single organisation*.

The launch on Friday 16th March comes after 2 years of research and consultation and marks the official transition of Narrogin Regional Child Care Services to Regional Early Education and Development Inc. After the launch, the new Board of nine independent members chaired by Helen Creed will meet for the first time.