



CASE STUDY

Tarsha Howard

Early childhood educator at the Amata Anangu Preschool, APY Lands South Australia



Tarsha loves living and working in the tight-knit Anangu community, but says the privilege comes with unique cultural challenges.

Graduate early childhood educator Tarsha Howard feels inspired to lead positive change in her community after attending the 2013 Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority’s (ACECQA) National Quality Framework (NQF) Conference in Sydney.

Tarsha was one of 14 early childhood educators who received sponsorship by the Department of Education to attend the ACECQA conference.

The conference confirmed her commitment to empowering the local Anangu community to lead the delivery of childcare in the far north-

west region of South Australia in the remote Anangu Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands, where Tarsha has spent her first year teaching at the Amata Anangu Preschool. It was the first time she had attended a conference of this kind and said the experience “felt like a once in a lifetime opportunity”.

“In the future I’d like to see the birth to five years early childhood programmes and centres to be Anangu led. I have the goal of teaching myself out of a job so that eventually it will be Anangu Educators running the Preschools in the APY Lands” Tarsha said.

“Living and working in a remote community can be isolating at times, so it was great to network with other educators, the NT educator in particular, given that the APY Lands are very close to the NT border. We have kept in contact and share ideas and photos of early childhood indoor and outdoor settings,” said Tarsha.

Tarsha loves living and working in the tight-knit Amata community, but says the privilege comes with unique cultural challenges.



“One of the biggest challenges is attendance. In the APY Lands, families have cultural obligations which may mean that children don’t attend preschool for long periods of time.”

“Children often travel from community to community or even to other states to stay with other families for short or long periods of time. As a result of this, you might even have visiting children in the preschool.”

“No day is ever the same!”

Tarsha and other delegates sponsored to attend the conference participated in practical break-out sessions including seminars on children’s brain development, facilitating positive change in child care centres, and the assessment of centres occurring as part of the NQF.

Tarsha said having the opportunity to have a conversation with assessors after the assessment breakout session was one of the most valuable opportunities she had at the conference.

“The breakout session was very practical and they answered a lot of questions I had about the NQF and assessment visits.”

“I left the session feeling calm and excited about the idea of Amata Anangu Preschool being assessed (under the National Quality Standard).”

