

MEDIA RELEASE 15/08/13

Community based child care thriving under the National Quality Framework

Despite a lot of commentary from the commercial child care sector and the Coalition that the reforms being rolled out as part of the National Quality Framework are putting too much pressure on the viability of long day care centres, many community based child care centres are thriving under the new system. The reforms which began in 2009 with the introduction of a national Early Years Learning Framework have included improved staff: child ratios and a new assessment and ratings system. Australian Community Children's Services (ACCS) has released its Election Demands and support for the ongoing roll out of the National Quality Framework is high on the list. National Convenor Prue Warrilow says that not-for-profit children's services across the country have successfully taken up the challenge of implementing these reforms

Flemington Child Care Co-operative, a 30 place parent managed service is one example of a centre doing just this. The centre started preparing for these reforms in 2009 and staff at this centre believe that the quality of children's daily experiences at their centre has been going from strength to strength. The biggest change for this centre was the need to go from 5 full time educators to 7 fulltime educators. Staff and families have really appreciated the difference this has made. Educators have more time to interact with children and implementing the Early Years Learning Framework has influenced how educators work to deliver a meaningful play based educational program on many levels. Employing extra staff did mean that fees needed to go up. Daniela Kavoukas, Director of the centre said that families were provided with plenty of information along the way about the changes to the centre and the need for some fee increases. These increases were implemented progressively from 2009 onwards so that the impact for families was spread over time.

"Families have already experienced the benefits for their children and have been really supportive. The impact of fee increases has been offset to a degree by the increased Child Care Rebate that families are eligible for. Our centre has experienced no issues with viability and we have maintained utilisation rates. The government set out to improve things for children and it's working".

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Flemington Child Care Co-operative has recently been through the new assessment and ratings process which rates centres against 7 National Quality Standards and they are expecting a good result. Ms Kavoukas said that

“Meeting the National Quality Standards is not a red tape exercise and doesn’t require excessive paperwork it is about ensuring that the centre works professionally in all areas and is a welcoming inclusive place for families”

ACCS believes that the last few years of record investment in early and middle childhood education and care has made a significant difference to children, families and services however challenges still remain. Other election demands presented by ACCS to the major parties include

- Increased affordability measures
- Improved access to children’s services for vulnerable families and children
- Greater investment in the education and care workforce
- Greater investment in funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services