

## From the ACCS National Convenor ...

As we come to the end of 2013, I reflect on the number of changes that have occurred for children's services over this past year. The most dramatic of these has been a change of government at the Federal level with a different view and understanding of early and middle childhood services.

The Productivity Commission Childcare and Early Childhood Learning Public Inquiry is now underway. ACCS is fully supportive of a Productivity Commission review, as we know that children's services funding is complex, not always transparent, and sometimes difficult for both services and parents to navigate. It would have been great to see a little more weight given to considering the rights and needs of children in the terms of reference. At least we have point 1(b) to strongly articulate that children are entitled in their own right to the best quality early and middle childhood education and care that can be provided for them. The 2014 changes in the National Quality Framework, at this stage, look like they are going ahead. Assistance Minister Ley has been attempting to negotiate with individual state and territory ministers to change their regulatory frameworks to slow down these changes. I guess five years notice is not enough time for services to have developed alternate business plans and have commenced implementation towards the 1 January 2014 start date. I would have assumed that those in the know would already be considering their business plans for the 1 January 2016 changes if they go ahead. All transitions can be challenging, and managing increased staff child ratios and qualifications can have a bottom line impact. However, good

planning with a long lead in time enables staggered approaches and thoughtful consideration to child and family needs for each service. I encourage you to be considering the 2016 changes now and have a plan in place, even though the Productivity Commission review may impact on this.

I hope you all have a happy festive season, and if you manage to have a break, come back fully refreshed for 2014; and the first children's services deadline - an initial response to the Productivity Commission is due Monday, 3 February 2014. Have a look at <http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/childcare> for more information.

## Lessons to be learned from NQS assessment and ratings results in Victoria?

*ACCS Victoria Representative, Brian Newman*

Whilst ACECQA's NQF Snapshots provide a big picture of National Quality Standard (NQS) ratings, useful information can be gleaned from looking more closely at the data.

After unpacking results for Victoria up until 30 September 2013, it is clear that community based services do better across the board than for-profit commercial services, across all service types. 39% of community based services that have been assessed achieved a rating of 'Exceeding NQS', compared to just 16% of for-profit services. Those reaching 'Meeting NQS' are similar, but then 32% of assessed for-profit services were assessed as 'Working towards NQS' compared with just 20% for community based.

*Read the full article [here](#).*

## Keeping an eye on corporate child care ....

Affinity Education recently listed on the stock exchange raising \$75.5 million – the funds will be used to buy 57 child centres and manage 11 others. Tim Boreham in the Business section of The Australian suggested ‘*While ABC (and others) made a hash of it .... We punt on Affinity learning others’ mistakes with a buy call*’ (The Australian 10/12/13). As we head into a time of review of the way education and care services are delivered and funded in Australia it is astounding to read that as a nation we seem prepared to allow the share market to take risks with the education and care of our children....

## The Federal Election Result: What does it mean for education and care services?

*Dr Anne Kennedy, ACCS National Secretary*

The recent election of a Liberal-National Coalition government brings new challenges and opportunities for education and care services in this country.

- Do improved ratios of adults to children make a positive difference for children and educators?
- Do further study and/or quality professional learning generally improve educators’ understanding, skills and their practice?
- Should every child in Australia be able to access affordable, quality education and care services?
- Is it reassuring for families to know that there are national quality standards that apply to **all** funded services (LDC, FDC, OSHC, Preschool, Occasional care)?
- Should educators’ salaries and conditions be commensurate with or match the importance of their work with children, families and communities?

If you answered **YES** to each of the above questions then you need to cast off any sense of complacency or

any sense that someone else will take up the fight and join with ACCS and other organisations to let the Coalition government know we won’t be taken backwards to a cottage industry and we will fight to retain the reform agenda and more for children, families, communities and our profession.

Read more [here](#)

## Productivity Commission Inquiry into Childcare and Early Childhood Learning

Let’s ask families and staff to make it their New Year’s resolution to stand up for quality, not for profit education and care!

The Productivity Commission has released:

- An [Issues Paper](#)
- A [short circular for families](#) seeking their views on options for delivering childcare and early childhood learning

This inquiry is broad ranging and has the scope to change the entire landscape of education and care in Australia for better or for worse! ACCS is concerned that what is best for children and the need for greater recognition and increased professional wages for educators barely rates a mention in these papers which focus on flexibility and affordability for working families.

The Commission is interested in evidence and data including specific examples and case studies about the benefits and costs of current regulations – so let’s tell them our stories of how high ratios and a qualified staff team make a difference to the lives of families.

Some ways you can participate include:

- Read the Issues Papers and let ACCS know what you would like us to highlight in the ACCS submission or if you would like us to use your service as a case study, [ausccs@cccinc.org.au](mailto:ausccs@cccinc.org.au)
- Use newsletters and email updates to families asking them to write to the Productivity

Commission and tell their story about how accessing quality community based education and care has supported their family and their participation in the workforce

- Ask your families why they choose to use your service – collate their responses and use as data to send to the Inquiry.
- Commit to making a submission on behalf of your service – we know it is a really bad time of year for any extras (how surprising that these things are announced during the busiest time of the year!) but it doesn't have to be lengthy, you can pick one or two of the questions in the Issues Paper and just address these
- Community Child Care Co-operative NSW have created useful tools to make it easy for families to make a submission <http://ccccnsw.org.au/programs/advocacy-peak/act-now> and a great [animation](#) to help get us thinking about these issues – why not set it up to play in your staff room or lobby to encourage educators and families to get involved?

Submissions are due on 3 February and may take the form of a simple letter addressing one topic or a comprehensive document addressing a range of issues or anything in between.

Go to the Productivity Commission website for information about how to lodge your submission [here](#). You can bet nanny agencies and the commercial sector are busy drafting their input so let's make sure the voice of the community not for profit sector is heard!

### **Early Years Quality Fund axed by Coalition Government**

Earlier this year the Labour government announced the \$300 million Early Years Quality Fund to support wage increases for early childhood educators. Whilst ACCS has consistently commented that the EYQF was poor policy and was divisive and inequitable,

ACCS did acknowledge this as the first time any Australian Government has recognised their responsibility to help lift wages in the children's services sector.

It was announced last week that only 16 providers who had signed contracts will receive the EYQF funding and the many other services with conditional offers will not receive the funds promised. When the new federal government was elected, ACCS wrote to Prime Minister Abbott and Assistant Minister Ley urging them to honour the EYQF contracts and conditional letters of offer. ACCS is disappointed that this government will not be honouring the conditional letters of offer that many of our members had received. For a short moment in time, it looked as though at least 30 000 educators across the country would receive the remuneration recognition they deserve, for their complex and valuable role in children's and families lives.

In an interview about this decision Assistant Minister Sussan Ley expressed her belief that the Federal Government is not responsible for the wages of early childhood educators, or any sector outside federal government employees. Interestingly she chose to illustrate her point by stating *"I don't suddenly take an interest in the wages of the bar staff at my local pub even though I probably would like to"*.

### **Your Peak Body in Action, August – December 2013**

#### **Federal Election Campaign**

August was busy for ACCS with an active federal election campaign that saw engagement from all the major parties with the ACCS Election Demands, and ACCS first email campaign tool in action. The ACCS Election Demands, responses from major parties, policy scorecards and media releases from this campaign are available on the [ACCS website](#).

#### **Response to the Federal Government's *Better Child Care and Early Learning Policy***

ACCS has written to the new Prime Minister Tony Abbott and Assistant Minister for Education Sussan Ley outlining its response to their policy which was

launched less than 48 hours before the election.  
You can read the letter to Prime Minister Abbott [here](#)  
You can read the letter to the Assistant Minister for Education [here](#)

### **Launch of Trends In Children's Community Services 2<sup>nd</sup> wave National Report**

ACCS was pleased to launch the second of its National reports that tracks the experience of the community sector since the introduction of the National Quality Framework. The report demonstrates that community children's services have been integrating the National Quality Framework (NQF) into their services to the benefit of Australian families and children. Community children's services are all working at the new NQF ratios, with 83% of long day care services already operating at the ratio requirements due to be introduced in 2016. ACCS will be drawing on this data in its submission to the *Productivity Commission Inquiry into Childcare and Early Childhood Learning*.

Read the full report [here](#)

- Key drivers will be 'flexibility, affordability and accessibility'
- Implementing the National Quality Framework in a "smarter and more streamlined way"
- Reducing red tape that does not reduce quality
- Establishment of an Advisory Council that will be co-chaired the Assistant Minister and an industry expert.

### **Budget Based Funding Program Review Stakeholder Reference Group and Early Years Quality Fund Advisory Board**

*ACCS Representative, Prue Warrilow, National Convenor*

### **SNAICC Steering Committee - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander integrated early childhood and family support service funding**

*ACCS Victoria Representative, Rhiannon Williams*

### **Hunter Institute of Mental Health Reference Group - Mental Health and Wellbeing Resource for the Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Project**

*ACCS NSW Representative, Amanda Holt*

### **ACNC Social Services Reporting Duplication Working Party**

*ACCS NSW Representative Debra Clarke*

Click [here](#) for ACNC update

If you would like more information about ACCS participation in these groups and forums, please contact ACCS National Secretariat

[acuscc@cccinc.org.au](mailto:acuscc@cccinc.org.au)



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### **ACCS National Participation in Reference Groups and Forums**

#### **National Children's Services Forum**

National Convenor, Prue Warrilow, represented ACCS at this 2 day meeting in Canberra on 21 and 22 October. The NCFS brings together national sector-specific peak organisations. NCFS recognises that advocacy is strengthened when the sector as a whole works collaboratively towards this end. Assistant Minister for Education Sussan Ley attended this and outlined the government's agenda for education care. Her comments included:

## Branch Updates

Read the latest [ACCS South Australia](#) Branch Update

Read latest [ACCS NSW](#) Branch Update

Read the latest [ACCS Western Australia](#) Update

## Siblings Australia

Siblings Australia is the only organisation in Australia to focus on the needs of siblings of children with a disability or chronic illness. For over 14 years it has been fighting to raise awareness about this overlooked group, with scarce funding, and in that time has developed a national and international reputation for its work.

Read more about [Siblings Australia here](#)

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## ACCS National Executive

**National Convenor**  
Prue Warrilow ACCS NSW Branch

**Deputy National Convenor**  
Josique Lynch ACCS WA Branch

**National Secretary**  
Anne Kennedy ACCS Victoria Branch

**National Treasurer**  
Linda Davison ACCS Victoria Branch

## ACCS Branch Delegates

**Western Australia (Carewest)**  
Josique Lynch, Sally Griffiths, Alisha Berry

**South Australia**  
Verity Bierenboim, Robyn Geisler

**Queensland**  
Bev Book, Marisa Phillips

**Tasmania**  
Zoe Manning

**New South Wales**  
Prue Warrilow, Lisa Bryant

**Victoria (CCC)**  
Anne Kennedy, Linda Davison

**ACCS Contact Person for the ACT and the Northern Territory:**  
ACT, Liam McNicholas  
Northern Territory, Cheryl Anderson

*To contact ACCS National Executive and Branch Delegates email the ACCS National Secretariat [Here](#)*