

ACCS In Action May 2014

National Convenor Report

As ever it's a busy time for ACCS. In my role as National Convenor the focus for the start of the year has been to work on the ACCS submission to the Productivity Commission Childcare and Early Childhood Learning Inquiry (thanks to Lynn Turner from Community Child Care, the Victorian Branch of ACCS, for all her hard work developing and coordinating the ACCS response). National representations that I have taken part in include National Children's Services Forum (NCSF) 17/18 March and attendance at Families Australia *Child Aware Approaches Conference* 31 March/1 April in Melbourne as the ACCS representative on the Families Australia Board.

The NCSF was a productive two days with much more interaction and high level debate and discussion from participants. We had a number of representatives from national groups present to the Forum including ACECQA, the Department of Education, Assistant Minister Ley and the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), which Kim Bertino will be reporting on a bit further on.

The Minister talked to:

- rural and remote children services issues
- concerns around access and affordability for parents using children's services wanting to look at the best value to the dollars spent by the government

- how employers could be more actively involved in children's services including reservation of child places in services.

Minister Ley conveyed that she was keen to have a continuing dialogue with the groups who attend the Forum, but this may not be in the same format.

The Department of Education representative talked about:

- the role of the Advisory Council, highlighting that this Council would form the apex that would flow on to other forums;
- the NQF National Partnership goes through until at least 2020, with funding committed to the current financial year. The 2014 review of the NQS will include funding arrangements to 2016 and beyond; and
- the Standing Council recommendations, which have since been released in the public domain, including possible legislative and regulatory changes to the NQF and the timing of these. The Victorian Government introduced the National Law which then was adopted by other states and territories. Any changes need to be made by the Victorian Government before other states and territories can adopt these. Any significant changes to the NQF that require legislation change are most unlikely to occur in 2014. This is because of timing related to the Victorian election in November this year and the time it takes to write legislation and have this pass through the appropriate processes.

I came away from the NCSF meeting feeling pretty despondent about the future of children's services. Children's services, along with many other social services, are most likely to experience significant funding changes through the Australian Government Budget processes, and for children's services, most certainly through the findings and recommendations from the Productivity Commission into Childcare and Early Childhood Learning. Changes resulting from the Commission of Audit have already been flagged recently in the media, and I anticipate we will see some of these in the 2014 Budget.

We know the Assistant Minister has a strongly held view about the NQF and has perceptions around it having overly onerous paperwork. She has commented that assessment is about being able to *“feel it, you can see it, you can - you know, you might have to measure some things but you don't need to get carried away with too much red tape, documenting up to fifty pages, assessing against over fifty quality areas.”* (Assistant Minister Ley, E&OE TRANSCRIPT, 720 ABC Perth – John McGlue, Date: 11 March 2014). The NQF sets the bar high, and so it should. The NQF is not about ‘the vibe’; it is about ensuring an evidence-based, robust, quality assessment that enhances education and care outcomes for all Australian children attending children's services.

ACCS needs your commitment and your voice through active membership to make sure Australia's children's services stay strong, are affordable, are of high quality, and continue to work in active partnerships with children and families, and other educators, to deliver the best possible evidence-based outcomes through a robust NQF.

If we don't care, who will?

Prue Warrilow, National Convenor

Trends in Community Children's Services Survey, 3rd Wave

ACCS invites you to participate in the 3rd Wave of the [Trends in Community Children's Services Survey](#)

Have your say on

- The National Quality Framework
- Staff qualifications recruitment and training
- Ratios
- Fees and services
- Vulnerable children and families

Your voices and opinions are a vital ingredient for effective advocacy for community owned children's services around Australia.

Just like in the previous ACCS surveys, this is an opportunity to share your services' experiences so that we can feed these into our advocacy with state and federal governments and regulators. The Productivity Commission Inquiry into Childcare and Early Childhood Learning is currently looking at how education and care is funded, delivered and regulated in Australia. The information you share will be used to respond to the Inquiry's recommendations and to further inform politicians and government.

The [survey](#) will only take about 10-15 minutes and is confidential.

Please forward this email on to your networks and friends to invite them to participate as well!

If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact Lynn Turner or Leanne Giardina at ausccs@cccinc.org.au.

Universal Access to 15 hours of kindergarten

The National Partnership on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education between the Commonwealth and States and Territories expires in December 2014. This partnership has provided millions of dollars to States

and Territories towards the delivery of funded preschool (referred to as kindergarten in some States). There are significant concerns that this funding will not be renewed.

Click to read [Universal access to early childhood education: a quick guide](#). This Research Paper by Marilyn Harrington, published by the Department of Parliamentary Services, provides an overview of the national policy framework for the provision of universal access to early childhood education in Australia.

Click [here](#) to read the letter ACCS has written to Assistant Minister Ley expressing support for an extension to the partnership and requesting that the Commonwealth commit to ongoing investment in early childhood education.

Click [here](#) to read Lisa Bryant's (Convenor, ACCS NSW Branch) article *Sussan Ley's early learnings unlikely to save preschool funding published in the Canberra Times (23/4/14)*

If you are concerned about what impact the loss of this funding would have on children's access to preschool or kindergarten [email Assistant Minister Ley](#) now!

Productivity Commission Childcare and Early Childhood Learning Inquiry

Are there areas currently regulated that would be better left to sector self – regulatory codes of practice or accreditation schemes?

This question was just one of the questions raised in the Productivity Commission's Childcare and Early Childhood Learning Issues Paper that rang alarm bells for advocates of quality education and care when it was released in December 2013. The ACCS submission to this Inquiry strongly rejects the notion of self-regulation and expresses strong support for the implementation of the National Quality Framework. Other submissions however, express support for the extension of government subsidies to unregulated

models of service delivery such as nannies and express the opinion that quality reforms are too costly.

Thank you to the many ACCS members across Australia who contributed to the National ACCS submission. The ACCS submission can be read [here](#) ACCS Branches in NSW, Western Australia and Victoria also made submissions which included State based issues – check them out!

[ACCS NSW](#)

[Community Child Care \(Victoria\)](#)

[Carewest \(Western Australia\)](#)

It is still not too late to have your say. The Productivity Commission is accepting brief comments or submissions from anyone with an interest including families, educators, service providers and other stakeholders. The process for making a brief comment is simple with the use of an online form - [Productivity Commission website](#)

A draft report is expected to be released for comment in July, followed by public hearings before the Productivity Commission makes its final report to Government in October 2014.

Small Business Roundtable

In March, ACCS National Treasurer, Linda Davison, represented ACCS at a Small Business Roundtable hosted by the recently appointed Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO), Natalie James, in coordination with the Fair Work Commission (FWC) and Fair Work Building and Construction (FWBC). Their stated intention was to use this forum to gain greater understanding of the ways in which small business navigates the workplace relations framework and interacts with the Fair Work institutions.

Click [here](#) to read Linda's summary of this event

Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) Strategic Review of Training for Childcare and Early Childhood Learning

Following on from the Productivity Commission's 2011

research report "Early Childhood Workforce" that commented adversely on the quality of training being offered to persons preparing to work in the early childhood sector, ASQA is undertaking a review. It will include audits of Registered Training Organisations (RTO's) offering training in childcare and early childhood learning; and consultation with and surveying of stakeholders. ACCS was requested to participate on this Management Committee, and Kim Bertino, Deputy Convenor ACCS NSW has been appointed to the role. Click [here](#) to read an update from Kim.

Corporate Child Care - The shaky business of childcare and past lessons

'Publicly listed companies' first mandated responsibility is to increase shareholder value - this can be in conflict with the provision of high-quality childcare. But even ignoring the ethical question of who should be providing childcare, the similarities between the new corporate providers and ABC Learning should be ringing warning bells. Could possible inflated share prices, questionable quality and shareholder pressure to grow cause similar results?' (Lisa Bryant Canberra Times 13/3/14)

Click [here](#) to read Lisa's full article

ACCS South Australia Branch Update

Click [here](#) to read a Branch update from Verity Bierenboim which includes a summary of how the National Partnership on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education is delivered in South Australia

ACCS NSW Branch Update

Click [here](#) to read a Branch update from Lisa Bryant which includes a summary of the main issues facing community based services in NSW

Community Child Care (ACCS Victoria)

CCC recently joined with other early childhood and

family support community organisations to let Assistant Minister Ley know that there is strong support in Victoria for the National Quality Framework. Click [here](#) to read more

ACCS National Executive

The following ACCS Delegates were elected to the ACCS National Executive Council at the ACCS AGM on 28 March 2014

National Convenor
Prue Warrilow, ACCS NSW Branch

Deputy National Convenor
Verity Bierenboim, ACCS SA Branch

National Secretary
Anne Kennedy, ACCS Victoria Branch

National Treasurer
Linda Davison, ACCS Victoria Branch

ACCS Branch Delegates

Western Australia
Josique Lynch, Sally Griffiths, Alisha Berry

South Australia
Verity Bierenboim, Robyn Geisler

Queensland
Bev Book, Marisa Phillips

Tasmania
Zoe Manning

NSW
Prue Warrilow, Lisa Bryant

Victoria
Anne Kennedy, Linda Davison

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