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Taking Action on Universal Access

Prue Warrilow, National Convenor

It's been a very busy quarter for ACCS. The National Executive, along with State/Territory representatives have been planning our face to face meeting which was held on 22-23 May 2009 in Adelaide. We had representatives from every State and Territory except Northern Territory. And thanks to South Australian ACCS representatives for providing such as great venue and catering for the two days.

The national meeting had a strong focus on where to from here for ACCS, internally and externally. Internally we reviewed how each branch operated, goals and future directions and support required to help branches grow and remain a strong voice for community-owned children's services in their respective States and Territories. We also looked at where we want ACCS to be in 5 year times.

Externally, we looked at ACCS policies and positions regarding the rapidly changing national children's services environment. One of the biggest issues we talked about was how Universal Access to Early Childhood Education may (or may not be) implemented in each State and Territory; given the incredible existing diversity of delivery ACCS thinks it is unlikely that Universal Access as it is currently proposed will do what it actually sets out to achieve. We will be doing more work on this with each State

and Territory documenting possible outcomes, and we'll be meeting with Federal Ministers to discuss our concerns. Our goal is to ensure that implementation has central to its vision what is good for children as citizens in their own right, entitled to good quality early childhood education and care.

We'll be sharing this along with the agreed strategic plan with you all once it is completed. We'll also be reporting back on our achievements in relation to the strategic plan so you can see what ACCS does for you - its members. The strategic plan will help inform each State and Territory branch about what we are doing and help branches develop their own plans of action to ensure that children continue to get access to good quality community-owned children's services.

Last, but not least, I want to remind you of my call to action in the special edition of ACCS In Action for National Sorry Day. What are you and I doing differently each day to take responsibility for reconciliation? What have you contributed to making a difference for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families? It would be really great to hear what you are doing. Let us know and we'll publish it in ACCS In Action; sharing what you are doing may prompt someone else to do something.

National Secretariat Report

Barbara Romeril, National Secretary

The last quarter has been extremely busy and productive for ACCS, with our Annual General Meeting, a face-to-face national meeting to thrash out key policy positions and participation in a number of forums and consultations on crucial issues facing children, families and communities.

At the ACCS AGM the national executive was re-elected for another term, with Prue Warrilow (NSW) continuing as National Convenor, Kerry Fitzroy (ACT) as Deputy National Convenor, myself (Vic) as National Secretary and Frances Snedden (Qld)

as Treasurer. The AGM paid tribute to the 12 year contribution of our former national convenor Lynne Wannan.

At the national face-to-face meeting in Adelaide in May we finalised ACCS policy on a number of key issues

including:

- Funding models
- Children's hubs – models of integrated early childhood centres
- Community children's services in commercial premises
- Parental leave
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues
- CCMS implementation
- National Child Protection Framework

We produced a special edition of ACCS In Action newsletter for distribution on Sorry Day to mark the first anniversary of the National Apology to the Stolen Generation.

The ACCS national executive attended the National Children's Services Forum in March; the meeting had some useful outcomes including a commitment from each peak body and the Department to regularly report on what we are doing differently since the National Apology to the Stolen Generation. The meeting also developed a plan for a national lobby day in August and a full day of cultural awareness training for national peak body representatives in November.

SNAICC gave a presentation on the impact over the last 12 months of the National Apology to the Stolen Generations; he invited the national peak bodies to consider supporting the SNAICC position opposing the Government's suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act for the purposes of the NT Intervention – ACCS is now supporting SNAICC in its advocacy on this issue.

Forum members discussed the federal government's election commitment to universal access to 15 hours of early childhood education and collectively acknowledged the need for diversity in the delivery to ensure access for children in rural and remote areas and to retain the full range of service types.

Parliamentary Secretary Maxine McKew met with the forum again and spoke about recent successes in increasing enrolments in TAFE and university early childhood studies; she praised the work of Gowrie NSW in working with training institutions to ensure the course content is relevant and the work of ECA in bringing together unions to resolve industrial barriers. She acknowledged that the collapse of ABC Learning has influenced the development of new national standards but stated that the implementation will go ahead on 1 July with a transition period after that.

[ACCS has a new website!](#)

You can find out information about your national peak body and the work ACCS does by visiting

www.ausccs.org.au

The forum nominated representatives for a reference group to advise DEEWR on the Regulatory Impact assessment of the proposed improved national standards, Prue Warrilow will represent ACCS on this group.

Maxine McKew clearly stated that the commitment to the 260 new early learning centres remains; the locations are subject to review because of the collapse of ABC but they will go ahead.

We met Anthony Parsons, the new Group Manager Early Childhood Programs Group in DEEWR who is keen to lift the efficiency of the bureaucracy and asked for examples of problems with CCMS. He is interested in the impact of government intervention in the market. ACCS is arranging for children's services in ACT to host visits from Anthony to brief him on the issues facing the sector.

ACCS convened the regular breakfast meeting of peak bodies representing the non-profit sector and discussed promoting awareness of mobile services and preventing the spread of commercial outside school hours care operators.

ACCS Executive met with Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young and congratulated her on the Senate Inquiry into Child Care Provision which she initiated; she will ensure that ACCS has the opportunity to give verbal evidence and invited us to submit a supplementary submission as the deadline has been extended. We also met with an advisor to Julia Gillard and discussed government policy to prevent a future corporate collapse including 'creeping acquisitions' review.

ACCS position on the suspension of the *Racial Discrimination Act (1975)* for the Commonwealth Intervention in the Northern Territory

The Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (RDA) was suspended by the Howard government in 2007 in order to introduce the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) legislation. ACCS adopted a position in opposition of the suspension of the RDA in May.

The ACCS position calls on the Commonwealth Government to act immediately to introduce amendments to the NTER to ensure it complies with the RDA.

ACCS does not believe that continuing a paternalistic intervention under which the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are suspended is a means towards the end of 'Closing the Gap' between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and non-Indigenous Australians. You can read the position on the ACCS website www.ausccs.org.au

Productivity Commission Inquiry into the Contribution of the Not for Profit Sector

ACCS has contributed to a consultation to assist with the ACOSS submission to the Inquiry into the Contribution of the Not-for-Profit Sector. The submission refers to the unique contribution of the not for profit sector in terms of social capital and the need for the Productivity Commission to consider that the contribution made by not for profit groups is largely qualitative rather than quantitative. A draft paper for further consultation and invitation for a second round of submissions is expected to be released by the Productivity Commission in September.

Outcomes of ABC2 Tender Process

As at 1 June 2009

ABC Learning controlled 1,100 childcare centres (one in five Australian childcare centres), employed 16,000 staff and cared for more than 100,000 children before being forced into voluntary administration in November 2008 with debts of \$1.5 billion.

In December, 55 centres closed. Another 241 centres were deemed unviable under the ABC business model, and were placed under a court appointed receiver as ABC2. These receivers called for tenders from commercial and community child care providers to buy these businesses. The Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard went on the public record stating that the Australian Government wants a diversity of ownership including local government and community providers.

As at 1 June 2009 the receivers have confirmed the following outcomes:

- 216 ABC2 centres have new operators
- 4 are in jeopardy of closing
- 17 closures confirmed

[Note: These figures equate to 237 centres. Further research is currently being undertaken to identify the status of the other four centres.]

There are a total of 65 different buyers for the 216 centres with new operators. It was expected that new owners would be in place by 15 May but work continues to settle contracts, arrange licenses and transition the centres to new ownership.

Approximately 20% of staff will lose their jobs.

Only one not for profit organisation emerged as a successful bidder - Mission Australia will run 29 centres across Australia; the largest of the for-profit providers Kids in Care will run 26 centres.

The pitting of non-profit and for-profit organisations against

each other resulted in many non-profit organisations withdrawing from the final binding bid stages because of:

- High rents
- A lack of information about the centres
- A lack of financial and time resources to undertake a comprehensive due diligence process
- Strict confidentiality rules inhibiting collaboration between organisations

Receivers McGrathNicol continue to manage 720 profitable ABC centres which are expected to be sold at the end of 2009.

ACCS will continue to advocate for the 260 promised new child care centres to service unmet demand predominantly in areas of disadvantage that were put on hold after the collapse of ABC Learning.

Reports from ACCS Representatives

Meeting of Families Australia

Dr Anne Kennedy, Victorian ACCS delegate

This meeting was attended by representatives of a range of Melbourne-based peak organisations who are members of Families of Australia, including Grandparents Victoria, Seniors Victoria, YMCA, Child Protection, Step-parents, ACCS, Carers Australia and staff from the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

The meeting had two main purposes:

1. The FA CEO, Brian Babington provided an update on the work of FA and presented a written report on his examination of multi-jurisdiction child protection systems in the UK, Ireland, Canada and the USA undertaken as a Churchill fellow on 2008-9.
2. To discuss the issue of forward planning for the 2010 election.

The discussion about the 2010 Federal election raised the following questions:

- How do we keep families and children high on the Government's agenda and as an important election issue when the focus is likely to be on global economic and sustainability matters?
- What could be some key election messages that FA could promote on behalf of the member organisations?
- What could we argue for powerfully and eloquently?
- What has happened to the Family Impact statements that the Government promised in response to Senator Fielding's efforts?

The brainstorming on these questions was diverse and included:

- Economic downturn has a direct impact on families and children

- Child care is critical to the productivity and social participation agendas
- Child care workforce reform is important to ensure staff are qualified to undertake the challenge of working with increasing numbers of families and children with complex needs and lives
- Mental health issues for adults, young people and children are rising and are a major challenge to overall wellbeing and the ability to cope with difficult circumstances
- Child care is a front line early support service for families and children
- OSHC services and funding especially for secondary students needs to be addressed
- Regulation needs to be enacted to prevent another ABC type collapse for both child care and aged care sector (creeping acquisition legislation)
- Need to promote a definition of families that encompasses the diversity of Australian families (structure, lifestyles, life chances, etc)
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is a good platform for child advocacy as it includes child protection (abuse, neglect, exploitation), prevention (health matters), participation (right to be consulted and heard), and provision (access to services, education etc). The Australian Government has to report to the UN on how it is meeting its obligations as a signatory to the convention
- OECD reports have also showed that Australia ranks well below 'like' countries in child expenditure
- Need a family/child 'template' or lens to examine all legislative proposals (as in Nordic countries)
- Important to target marginal seats in election campaign
- There is strength in advocacy which brings diverse groups together to fight for a small number of key issues—need to form new alliances or coalitions
- Tax breaks may be more helpful than payments (Grandparents as carers)
- Expenditure spent in early years is investment for the future

Families Australia undertook to collate the ideas generated at the meeting for distribution and a follow-up meeting in Melbourne, possibly in June.

Federal Budget ACOSS pre-Budget Briefing 2009

Kerry Fitzroy, Deputy National Convenor ACCS

I attended the ACOSS pre-budget sector briefing and there were some items raised that are of interest for ACCS.

The announcement of a Government commitment to Paid Parental Leave for 2011 was important and ACCS supports this initiative.

There was some concern over income support, and the speculation that sole parents will most probably miss out on income support increases. If this occurs it is a missed opportunity to support some of the most vulnerable families in any community.

There was also some concern over the uncertainty or recurrent funding for programs in community organisations that provide interventions for disadvantaged and vulnerable families.

ACCS In the Media

Child-care rebate ineffective

Adele Horin, Sydney Morning Herald, April 2, 09

Government child-care subsidies that lower the cost of formal child care have no influence on married women's decision to work, controversial new research shows.

The research found that the Child Care Tax Rebate, the Federal Government subsidy that most benefits well-off women, has no impact on employment decisions of married mothers.

"Conventional wisdom says cost is a factor but our data is consistent in showing child-care costs don't have any impact on the labour market behaviour of married women," Dr Stephen Whelan, a lecturer in economics at the University of Sydney, said.

The results, though preliminary, will feed into demands from business groups and others for the Federal Government to review "middle class" welfare in the May budget. The Business Council of Australia yesterday called for the Government to examine non-means tested benefits, including family payments and child care and other programs that do not support growth. The results, though preliminary, will feed into demands from business groups and others for the Federal Government to review "middle class" welfare in the May budget. The Business Council of Australia yesterday called for the Government to examine non-means tested benefits, including family payments and child care and other programs that do not support growth.

It is widely argued that the high cost of child care is a major barrier to women returning to work or extending their work hours, and that government child-care subsidies will help boost the female labour supply.

But the study, which examined the impact of the child care tax rebate between 2001 and 2006 on maternal employment and child care use, has so far found no evidence it had made any difference.

Dr Whelan, who presented the research at a recent seminar on the economics of child care at the Australian National University, said the study supported earlier findings that changing child-care costs did not influence women's workforce decisions.

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He said factors other than child care cost may have more influence on the return-to-work decisions of married mothers. These included child care availability, access to paid maternity leave, and the Family Tax Benefit paid to the stay-at-home parents in households with incomes up to \$150,000.

However, Guyonne Kalb, a principal research fellow at the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, said her studies show the cost of child care was a particular barrier to low-income single parents.

"If wages are low a child care subsidy can be quite important in helping increase labour force participation," she said.

Juliet Bourke, the former chairwoman of the Task Force on Care Costs, said child-care subsidies should not be considered to be middle class welfare. "We've reached a point of enabling more women to participate in the workforce and it would be such a shame to lose that through a knee-jerk reaction."

However, the Government has been under pressure to review the tax rebate, even from sectors of the child-care industry, because it favours higher-earning women.

The rebate pays 50 per cent of out-of-pocket child care and is worth up to \$7500 a child. Because better-off women receive little of the Government's other subsidy - the Child Care Benefit - it leaves them with higher out-of-pocket costs, and eligible for more tax rebate.

Barbara Romeril, the secretary of Australian Community Children's Services, said the tax rebate was regressive and poor policy.

"We would support a revamp to focus the dollar on low and middle income women rather than spreading it across all income levels," she said.

Child-care centres to shut soon

Dan Harrison, The Age, April 15, 09

ALMOST 300 Victorian families will have to move their children into other care when their ABC Learning Centres close next month.

Court-appointed receivers for 240 unviable centres yesterday announced that eight Victorian centres, caring for about 295 children, are among 19 centres that will shut by May 15...

PPB said it had found new operators for 210 ABC centres, securing the care of more than 12,000 children.

Another eight centres, including four in Victoria which cared for about 230 children, were in doubt because no viable bids were made for them.

Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard said because alternative care was not readily available near these

centres, the Government had asked the receivers to continue trying to find ways to keep the centres open. An announcement about their future is expected in two months.

The centres to stay open will be run by more than 65 new operators. About 15 per cent of centres will be run by non-profit organisations.

The non-profit Mission Australia will run 29 centres, including seven in Victoria. The largest of the for-profit providers, Kids in Care, will run 26 centres.

Mission Australia will operate centres in poorer areas or where it already runs programs such as welfare and employment services. Spokesman Paul Andrews said Mission Australia was confident the centres could be self-sustaining within 18 months.

The national convener of Australian Community Children's Services, Prue Warrilow, said she was disappointed that more centres would not be operated by community organisations.

Keeping an eye on commercial child care

Look at what the commercial sector is advocating for! Wage stay or Reduction

The Australian Childcare Alliance submitted a letter to the Australian Fair Pay Commission's 2009 Minimum Wage Review asking them to 'exercise restraint in its function of reviewing and setting minimum wages'.

The letter went on to state that the 'pressures on child care centre affordability are feeding into ever increasing vacancies in the large majority of locations around the country'.

The letter concluded with a suggestion to the Commission 'that on this occasion minimum wage levels should remain unchanged (if not reduced) or at the very least that whatever reasonable amount the Commission sees fit to award, be phased in over a period of three years'.

Buyers found for 210 ABC Learning childcare centres

Siobhain Ryan, The Australian, April 15, 09

ABOUT 685 children will have to move childcare centres after receivers to the debt-ridden ABC Learning announced today 19 of the original list of 241 "unviable" centres would close.

The fate of a further eight centres remains in limbo, with court-appointed receiver PPB attracting no buyers for the businesses and finding no alternative childcare providers nearby to take the children now cared for in those operations.

But Steve Parbery from PPB declared the protracted sale process for the remnants of the former ABC Learning empire a success, pointing to the 210 centres that had found buyers.

He also assured parents from the 19 centres set to close that vacancies had been identified at nearby childcare centres and promised unions that more than 80 per cent of existing staff would be kept on after the sale transfer.

"Through close cooperation with the Australian Government this promises to deliver sustainable, quality child care for over 12,000 children and secure employment for more than 1800 child care staff. All this has been achieved in less than five months," Mr Parbery said...

Will child care profit from ABC lesson?

Dan Harrison, *The Age*, April 17, 09

THE Federal Government has been accused of missing an opportunity to transform the nation's child-care industry by allowing most of the unviable ABC Learning centres to be transferred to private operators.

Court-appointed receivers yesterday announced they had found new operators for 210 centres. Of these, 33 will go to non-profit providers, with 29 centres to be operated by Mission Australia.

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http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/everyday_learning_series/special_offer_for_services.html.

Collette Tayler, the chair of early childhood education and care at the University of Melbourne, said the identification of new operators for the centres, which would have otherwise closed, would minimise disruption to families...

Professor Tayler...said the Commonwealth should have provided funding to enable more non-profit operators to take over centres.

"If there is a serious interest in rebalancing what is said to be a mixed market in early childhood education and care — and yet it's at least 70 per cent private for-profit — then the Government is the only place that will provide that capital, and that opportunity was missed," she said.

Education Minister Julia Gillard said this week that the process had led to a diversification of the child-care sector, but ruled out any new subsidies...

ABC Learning forum draws parent anger

Kerry-Anne Walsh *Political Correspondent, Sydney Morning Herald*, April 19, 2009

A NEW website launched by the embattled child-care provider ABC Learning to help restore its battered image has been swamped with complaints from parents.

When the site opened for business on Friday, a string of unfavourable comments about fee structures at the child-care centres dominated the early posts...

ABC Learning, which is behind the biggest collapse of child-care centres in Australia, launched the 'Childcare Chat website to open a dialogue about its services, the group's national operations manager, Nikki Miers, said. "You can consider this forum the first step in opening our doors and sharing an honest conversation with you..."

The ABC group, formerly owned by disgraced businessman Eddie Groves, went into receivership in November with debts of \$1.5 billion. The Government's \$58 million intervention in the failed group has resulted in 77 closures, with eight centres still under review...

More than 700 centres remain in business while they are prepared for sale.

In a video on the Childcare Chat website, Ms Miers said any suggestions, videos or ideas posted on the site would be "uninfluenced" by the company.

Two videos posted on Friday were full of praise for ABC Learning. In one, a South Australian woman called Natalie referred to notes she clutched in one hand.

Childcare centres close their doors

Natasha Bita *The Australian* May 14 2009

Dozens more childcare centres are closing in the wake of industry giant ABC Learning's collapse.

Fifteen ABC centres are set to shut tomorrow, the deadline for the sale or shutdown of 241 centres dubbed "unviable" by the receivers, McGrathNicol and PPB. Rival childcare chain CFK has shut nearly half of its 39 centres.

CFK receiver Ferrier Hodgson revealed yesterday that centres in the Sydney suburbs of Balgowlah and Westmead were due to close at the end of this month, after the recent closure of 19 others. Sixteen have been sold, and two are under negotiation with potential buyers.

The revelation comes as former federal Nationals MP and now lobbyist Larry Anthony quit as a director of ABC Learning.

"I voluntarily stepped down," Mr Anthony told *The Australian*. "I felt as if my role had come to an end and there was nothing more I could contribute."

Mr Anthony earned more than \$235,000 from ABC Learning in consultancy fees to lobby governments on its behalf, on top of director's fees of up to \$65,000 a year. He said his departure from the ABC Learning board on April 1 had been "quite amicable".

"I wish them well," he said.

Mr Anthony, a Howard government minister in charge of childcare, engineered the Coalition's free-market approach that fuelled the growth of corporations such as ABC Learning, which owns one in five Australian childcare centres. He joined the ABC Learning board in 2005, just six months after losing his Byron Bay-based seat of Richmond in NSW.

ABC Learning fell into receivership last November with \$1.6 billion in debts. Taxpayers have spent \$56 million keeping ABC's 1020 centres running...

Workers 'forced to sign away conditions'

Sydney Morning Herald, May 15, 09

Childcare workers at defence department-owned centres are being forced to sign away their unfair dismissal protection, the childcare workers' union says.

The Brisbane-based B4Kids group won government contracts in April to take over defence's 21 childcare centres following the collapse of the industry giant ABC Learning.

One of these facilities, at Williamstown, north of Newcastle, has also sacked two women on maternity leave...

B4Kids managing director Leanne Beasant told News Limited a "small number of the centres were overstaffed and therefore to ensure their ongoing viability a number of positions were, unfortunately, not required".

"B4Kids has offered employment to employees based solely on the operational requirements of each centre. The fact that an employee may or may not have been on maternity leave is irrelevant," she said.

Meanwhile, about 150 workers at 15 unviable ABC Learning Centres will finish up at their jobs on Friday...

ABC Centre closes

Kate Bonsack, *Williamstown, Altona, Laverton Star*, 19 May 09

THE Altona North ABC Learning Centre was closed on Friday after negotiations with the company looking to buy the centre fell through.

Children from the centre have been offered places at eight neighbouring childcare centres.

PPB, the company that took over the centre in December with scope to find a buyer for it, will help eight of the nine staff to find other employment.

The company's spokesman said some staff would go to other ABC centres and others would go to childcare centres.

"The ninth person, who was a part time cook for the centre, had already found other employment," he said.

In April, the centre was looking at being secured after PPB announced it had found a buyer and it was in negotiations with them.

PPB's spokesman said the buyer pulled out at the last moment and no secondary party could be pulled in.

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Branch Reports

ACCS NSW Branch Report

The last ACCS NSW branch meeting in May was our AGM. Executive Elections were held for the coming twelve months, and a Convenor's Report and Treasurer's report were received. The Guest Speaker for the evening was Sandra Cheeseman, Lecturer, Institute of Early Childhood Macquarie University, Vice President ECA NSW. Her topic was "*Education or medication – the subtleties of parent and child centre governance.*"

In NSW we have also had a year of change.

- We celebrated victory with the NSW Minister's decision to change the ratios for babies to 1:4. After 5 years of campaigning, ACCS and other advocacy groups in NSW were overjoyed by the announcement by Linda Burney, NSW Minister for Community Services that all centre based and mobile services will be required by law to have one carer for every four children under two, compared to the current legal requirement of one carer for every five. NACBCS NSW played a large role in the ratios campaign.
- We are in the midst of a Regulation review that looks as if it will bring real quality improvements to our centres.
- We have survived the introduction of a new method of funding services by the NSW State Government which has meant a freeze on funding for many community based services.
- We have seen the launch of the NSW Government funded Preschool Growth Program which will work on growing places and ensuring ongoing viability of funds to community based preschools in the future.

Nationally we have also had changes and proposed changes.

Changes such as:

- The National Quality Framework
- The Early Years Learning Framework
- Universal Access

Over the last 12 months, ACCS NSW has:

- Made submissions
- Held forums
- Informed our members
- Advocated for the sector
- Represented our members

We will continue to do this during the next 12 months.

ACCS QLD Branch Report

Megan Kirkby, Qld Branch President

We look forward to an exciting year in Queensland Branch, and celebrate the diversity of Service types that are represented in our Branch. Unfortunately, our membership numbers seem to have dropped this year, however, we are extremely fortunate to have amongst our group, some

of the most knowledgeable and passionate people with whom I have ever had the pleasure of working.

In March of this year, we conducted our Annual General Meeting, at which Jane Carter stepped down from her role as Branch President, and Kerrie Wilson stepped down from the Treasurers role. I would like to thank both of these extraordinary professionals for the work that they have done whilst engaged in these roles over the last couple of years.

In April of this year, the Qld Dept of Health released the "Healthy Minds, Healthy Bodies" initiative, which includes a project designed specifically to monitor and includes a project designed specifically to monitor and enhance the social and emotional well being of not only children in our Services, but for staff and families as well

Qld Branch was involved in the development of this particular aspect of the Qld Health initiative, which has led to the development of resources and documentation in the process of being issued to all child care services in Qld.

Moving forward, the Early Years Learning Framework has generated much discussion amongst our members, particularly in relation to universal access for children in all service types. Our members have expressed their interest in the role that Qld Branch can play in ensuring that the Framework will be flexible and able to be rolled out equitably amongst all service types. We look forward to monitoring the development of the Framework, and involving ourselves wherever possible, to achieve the desired outcome of equity for all our children in care.

Thank you to all our Qld Branch members for your dedication, and passion for your work, and for your willingness to share your beliefs and ideas.

ACCS VIC Branch Report

Barbara Romeril, CCC Victoria Executive Director

The new Children's Services Regulations are finally here and still there are some worrying aspects such as exemption from new minimum training requirements for people with many years of experience, and OSHC services being able to sign out children without an adult. But there are also some very exciting aspects of the new regulations, including 1:4 ratio of carers to babies.

The State Budget is disappointing – it contained no significant initiatives for the children's services sector. But we are not allowing this disappointing Budget to dampen our commitment to innovation. CCC has formed a partnership with the Children's Protection Society to campaign for models of early childhood education and care that are effective in serving children at risk of abuse and neglect. We provided a letter of support for the CPS advocacy for a specially resourced 'Priority of Access' children's service for children experiencing abuse and neglect. We are now working together to organise a round table meeting for the welfare sector and the early childhood sector.