



Advocating nationally for the right of Australia's children to access quality, not for profit, community owned children's services

ACCS IN ACTION!

February 2017

NATIONAL CONVENOR'S UPDATE

Interesting Times in Canberra

Prue Warrilow, National Convenor

It's interesting times in Canberra. Right now the Government is still wedded to any changes to child care subsidies being linked with welfare reforms. Their argument is that the savings from welfare reforms will pay the additional costs in any Child Care Bill. I don't believe this argument holds weight. The proposed child care reforms will create significant savings in themselves through increased workforce participation, enhanced compliance requirements (to counter the current CCB rorting), and previous savings to Family Tax Benefits over the past few budgets.

The recent Omnibus Bill has been rejected by the crossbenchers in the Senate. It's been interesting to see the Xenophon Party and Senator Jacqui Lambie coming out against the Bill particularly noting their objections to linking child care and welfare reforms. ACCS is in communication with key Senators encouraging them to reject the current Bill.

Who knows what the changing political landscape will bring. The Prime Minister, Treasurer and Minister for Education are still talking up child care reform. At this stage it seems highly unlikely that the Senate will pass any child care Bill unless there is a decoupling of child care and welfare reforms - that is not linked together in the same Bill.

The Government is still very keen to meet its 1 July 2018 deadline to introduce any child care reforms. The Department of Education is certainly working towards this deadline. It will be very challenging, despite best efforts, to meet this target date unless there is a significant shift in positioning child care reforms as a separate Bill.

I have attended several Early Childhood Ministerial Advisory Council meetings. As you know these meetings are confidential however, a communiqué from the most recent meeting is included in this newsletter your information. The Advisory Council will be meeting again towards the end of March and I'm sure you can guess what will be the main discussion areas.

ACCS has also been busy advocating on your behalf in the area of training reform. We still continue to be very concerned about the quality of some of the RTO courses and graduates from these courses who too often don't have appropriate early and middle childhood understandings and experience and sometimes are not employable without complete retraining. Our ACCS representative on the Children's Education and Care Industry Reference Committee (IRC) - Brian Newman - continues to strongly advocate for course content that is directly linked to NQS outcomes (a novel idea I know) and

ways to ensure reputable course content delivery through RTOs.

ACCS took a booth at the ECA national conference in Darwin last October. This was a great way to reach out to our existing members and potential new members. We were able to talk to people about the importance of high quality education and care and use ACECQA Snapshot data to show how not-for-profit ECEC services are leading the way in the quality agenda.

We'll be holding our state representative face-to-face meeting in May this year. During this meeting we will review our policy positions and advocacy planning, of course asking for feedback from our members. We will also build our skills in lobbying and advocacy and gather state/territory issues to inform our national work.

Lastly, I wanted to let you know some very exciting news. ACCS has received funding from the then Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council for the next three waves of our Trends in Community Children's Services Survey (TICCS). This will enable us to continue to track how not-for-profit early and middle childhood services are engaging with and working towards the NQS reforms to 2020. A TICCS survey will be coming out in the second quarter of this calendar year. I encourage all of you to participate and I also ask that you distribute the survey widely amongst your colleagues and friends in early and middle childhood services. The more responses we have the better our analysis and report will be.

Ministerial Advisory Council for Child Care and Early Learning December 2016

Communique

On 13 December 2016, the Ministerial Advisory Council for Child Care and Early Learning held its eighth meeting in Canberra. The Council Co-Chair, Dr Jeff Harmer welcomed Council members to the meeting on behalf of the Minister.

The Council received an update on the progress of key elements of the Jobs for Families Child Care Package. In particular, members were briefed on the outcomes of the recent consultations for the subordinate legislation, the Minister's and Secretary's Rules, which will be made once the Bill has passed. Members were also asked to note the department is currently consulting on the third round of draft Rules, covering an additional 13

topics. The Council was given an update on the Community Child Care Fund (CCCF).

Based on feedback from key stakeholders, including members of MAC, the Minister has recently agreed to changes to the CCCF program design, which will enable the program to better support disadvantaged and vulnerable communities and families, and to support the transition of the Budget Based Funded (BBF) services.

The Council was briefed on the department's recent child care compliance and fraud activities. In particular, the Council was advised that, in the September 2016 quarter, the department imposed sanctions and penalties on 40 services, including cancelling the approval to administer child care payments for 17 services and suspending approval for 12 services. Additionally, at the Education Council meeting on 23 September 2016, Ministers directed senior officials, through the Early Childhood Policy Group (ECPG), to develop further options to address fraud and systemic issues in Family Day Care, including awareness of obligations under the National Quality Framework. The Group will report back to the Education Council in early 2017.

The Council was provided with an overview of the planned evaluation of the Jobs for Families Child Care Package. Members were asked to consider, and provide feedback on, the draft program logic. The program logic outlines desired outcomes of the Package and will be a critical foundation document for the evaluation work. Members were also advised that an independent consultant will be engaged from 2017 to help the department with the evaluation of the Package.

The Council was updated on the Review of the National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care. The current Review is being finalised and outcomes will be made public by the Education Council when all governments have considered changes to the National Quality Framework. The focus of governments is on implementing the outcomes of the Review.

The Council was advised that Ministers are considering future funding arrangements for preschool beyond December 2017, following the recent decision by COAG to prioritise early childhood education.

The Council received an update on the transition of BBF services. Over 118 transition reports have

been provided to BBF funding recipients for their review and acceptance as part of this process. The second phase of support for BBF services will commence from February 2017, when services will be supported to implement their individual transition plans. This support could include, for example, assistance in undertaking business planning, staff training, community engagement and IT infrastructure upgrades.

The department thanked members for their contribution to the development and implementation of child care and early learning policy over the past few years. The department also acknowledged the Minister of Education and Training's extension of the Council and its current members until the end of June 2017 while future arrangements are considered.

ACCS AT THE ECA NATIONAL CONFERENCE

ACCS members from around Australia volunteered to staff a stall at the ECA national early childhood conference in Darwin. This was an excellent opportunity to showcase our advocacy, engage potential new members and build relationships between members from across the continent who usually only communicate electronically.



We also conducted a survey on the hot topic of the impact on vulnerable children of the proposed changes to the government's child care support. The ACCS national forum held during the lunchbreak also addressed this deeply concerning issue.

Educational Experience sponsored a prize for a participant in the survey, and the gift voucher was won by Katrina Knapp of the Vickers Road Child Care Centre, Townsville, Queensland.



Prue (NSW), Josique (WA) and Kim (NSW) at the ACCS stall at the ECA conference



Sally (WA), Prue (NSW) and Cat (Vic)

ACCS ADVOCACY

Visit our website to see recent submissions to government and other consultations, speaking out on the best interests of children, families and communities [here](#).

ACCS GUIDES VOCATIONAL TRAINING

ACCS was pleased to renominate Brian Newman (from CCC Vic) to represent us on the Children's Education and Care Industry Reference Committee.

ACCS opposed a proposal to establish a Preferred Provider Scheme for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) as a strategy to improve the quality of training in the sector. Instead we called for strengthening of the regulator, the Australian Skills Qualification Authority (ASQA) in its capacity to monitor and act on poor quality RTOs.

The ACCS response is available [here](#).

ACCS WELCOMES RESULTS OF NQF REVIEW

In our initial analysis, ACCS welcomes many of the outcomes of the review of the National Quality Framework including:

- Requiring services to meet NQS in all areas in order to qualify to apply for a rating of Excellent
- Retaining the overall quality rating
- Maintain the language in relation to children's rights
- Strengthening the language in relation to inclusion
- Nationally consistent ratios for Outside School Hours Care

We will continue to analyse other decisions which may be problematic, such as reduced requirements in relation to management. We will keep members informed of our analysis so you can use it in your advocacy in the best interests of children.

TICCSS IS COMING!

Keep an eye out for the email invitation to participate in the fourth round of the ACCS national survey – Trends in Community Children's Services.

Your voice will showcase how the community sector is rising to the challenge of delivering quality and add power to our advocacy for ALL early childhood education and care services to deliver high quality for all of Australia's children.

ACCS BRANCH UPDATES

WA ACCS branch

Sally Griffith, Carewest member (ACCS WA branch);
ACCS National Treasurer

Carewest is currently working in collaboration with a number of services and Local Government with regards to the community based sector that is effected by the WA Government's decision to withdraw maintenance and lease support. With the appointment of a new minister Hon Paul Miles MLA, new relationships are being formed to ensure the best possible outcome is achieved with the best interest of children in mind.

The current community based model is in excess of 30 years old. Carewest is currently exploring options of revamping the model for a more sustainable future. A sub-committee is in the process of gathering quotes to apply for funding to create this model. The expectation is that an 'Administration Hub' could be created to provide support at multiple levels dependent on service requirements.

We are hoping that such a model will ensure future success and stability for the community based sector in Western Australia.

Victorian ACCS branch

Lynn Turner, Community Child Care Association

Following our written submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Jobs for Families Child Care Package Bill, CCC was pleased to be one of the organisations invited to appear as a witness at the public hearings at the end of year. Well done to Leanne (our ED) and Linda (Deputy Chairperson) for attending at very short notice and discussing our key concerns about the Jobs for Families Package:

- It should not be linked to the Senate passing cuts to Family Tax Benefit - increased investment in early education and care should not come at the expense of cuts to low income families
- By treating child care only as a means to support and increase parents' workforce participation, it fails to recognise the right of all children to access high quality early education and care
- The proposed activity test will take away universal access to subsidised education and care – we need to maintain existing 24 hours of means tested subsidy

- We disagree with proposed changes to Budget Base Funded Services. It is essential that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are able to access integrated quality early learning and family support services. The Bill should include long term flexible funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander services including existing Budget Base Funded Services.

With the recent announcement of the *Social Services Legislation Amendment (Omnibus Savings and Child Care Reform) Bill 2017*, CCC has written to all Victorian Senators urging them not pass legislation that links increased child care subsidies with cuts to low income families. See our Media Release [here](#)

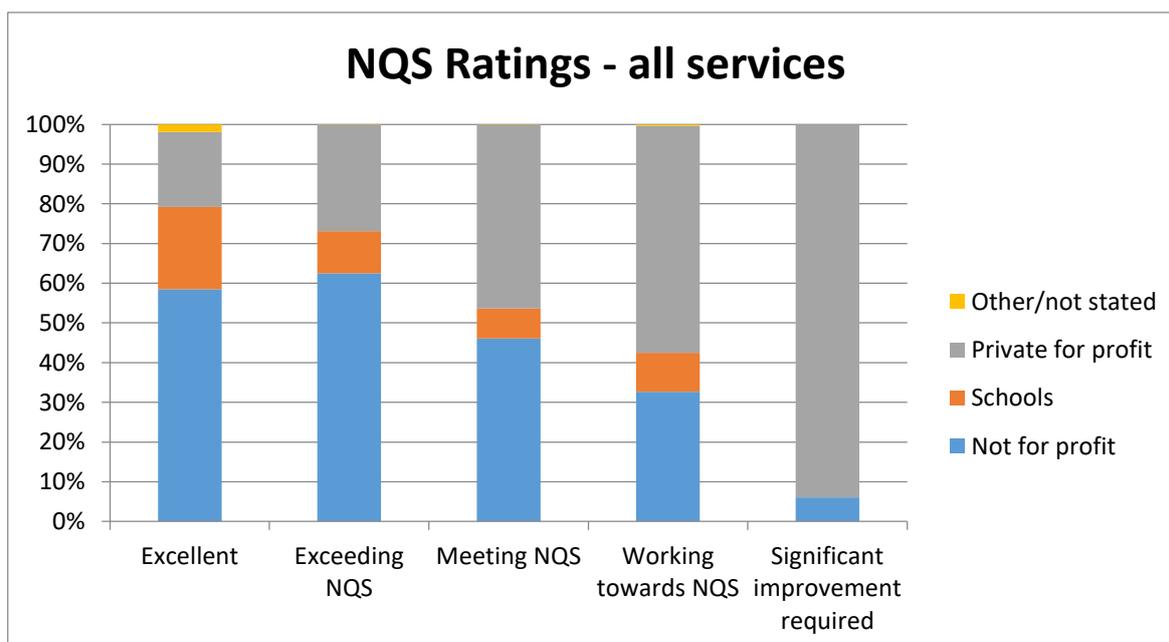
CCC continues to advocate for the provision of quality training for the education and care sector. Our recent activities include a submission to the SkillsIQ industry consultation on *Improving Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care Training*. Quality of RTOs, determined and consistent course duration, and adequate assessment practices are 3 key factors CCC believes are integral to a quality training system. CCC is also an invited member of the recently formed Community Services and Health Industry Advisory Group, facilitated by the Victorian Skills Commissioner, Neil Coulson. CCC's sector knowledge and advocacy at the meetings will help inform a new Industry Engagement Framework to ensure training aligns with Victoria's market requirements.

NOT FOR PROFIT SERVICES LEAD THE WAY IN QUALITY

Prue Warrilow and Brian Newman

As of 31 December 2016 more than 13,000 early childhood education and care services in Australia have been rated under the National Quality Standards (the vast majority – 86% - of services in Australia). The *Ratings Snapshots* from ACECQA consistently show that not for profit children's services have higher quality ratings than for profit operators.

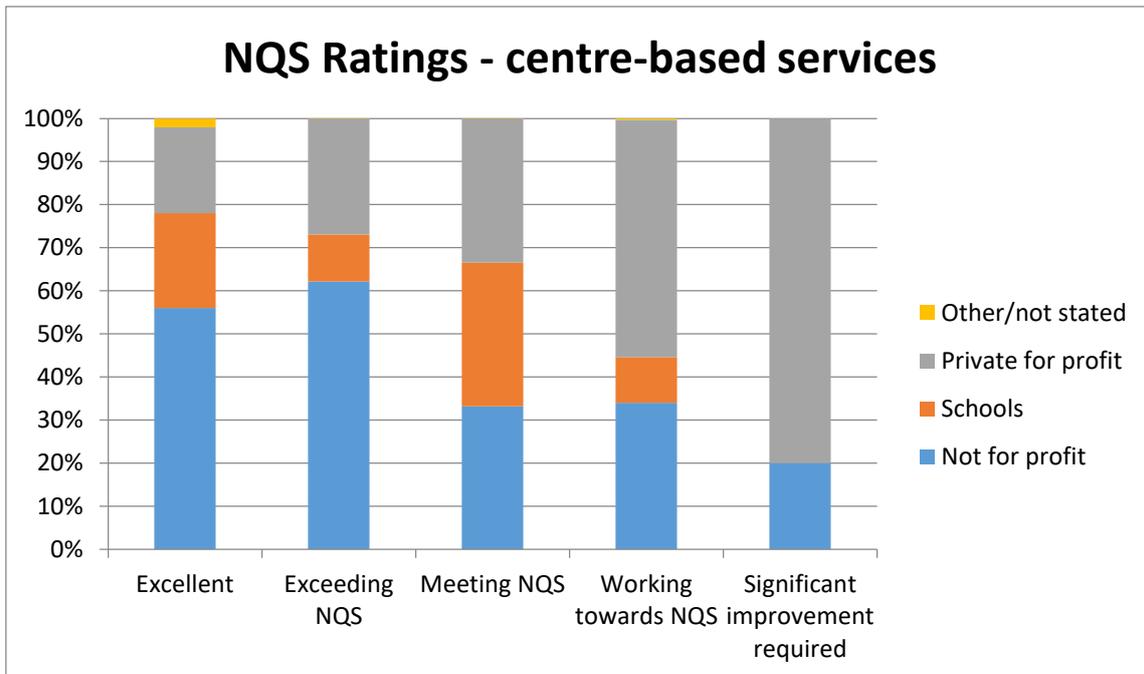
- More than three quarters of the services that are rated as Excellent quality are not-for-profit (including schools) - only around 25% are for-profit
- 31 of the 33 services rated as needing significant improvement are for-profit



Source: Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority National Quality Standard Data, as at 31 December 2016, released on 9 February 2017

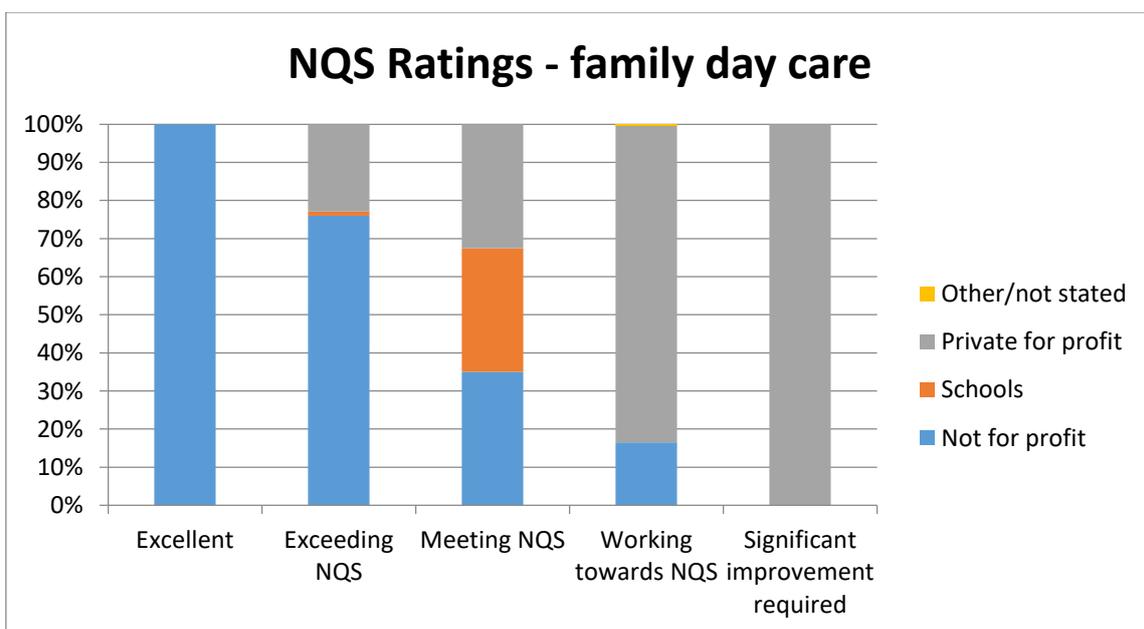
Looking at centre-based services (defined by ACECQA to include long day care, preschool/kindergarten and out of school hours services) a similar picture emerges. 40% of not for profit and 36% of school centre-based services have been rated as Exceeding NQS, in contrast to 20% of for profit centre-based services. 'Not for profit' includes services operated by local and state government as well as the range of community organisations and cooperatives.

We know that there are some very average not for profit children's services and some very good for profit services; however, the ratings show a clear picture that not for profit children's services are twice as likely to achieve a rating of Exceeding NQS as for profit services. Conversely, for profit services are much more likely to be rated as Working Towards NQS and Significant Improvement Required than not for profit services - Working Towards 34% in contrast to 19% and Significant Improvement Required 0.15% in contrast to 0.03%.



Source: Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority National Quality Standard Data, as at 31 December 2016, released on 9 February 2017

Sadly, in family day care the contrast is much more stark, with only 6% of private family day care services receiving an Exceeding rating and 65% receiving Working Towards NQS.



Source: Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority National Quality Standard Data, as at 31 December 2016, released on 9 February 2017

We are able to get a much better picture of quality outcomes by service type from ACECQA data following lobbying from ACCS - we asked that quality rating be reported by service type. It would be great to get similar data for OSHC services. OSHC services provide a unique blend of leisure and educational activities that are very different to long day care and family day care. Lumping OSHC into the centre-based category makes it challenging to really understand what's going on in quality by service type.

EARLY NOTIFICATION - ACCS NATIONAL MEETING

The ACCS National Executive is planning to call a face-to-face meeting of the ACCS National Council in May to conduct the annual general meeting and refine our strategies to advocate for the best interests of children, families and communities.

We have also invited Educational Experience to speak with us at this meeting to build our strategic relationship. So keep an eye out for details and hope to see all members of the ACCS National Council at the meeting.



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