



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

ACCS IN ACTION! May 2019

NATIONAL CONVENOR'S UPDATE

A STRONG CONSENSUS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD POLICY

Prue Warrilow, National Convenor

ACCS is excited to see strong commonalities in the many campaigns currently under way around Australia to help shape policy for the future of early childhood education and care.

We can see an unprecedented consensus among peak bodies representing diverse interests, including community owned early childhood education and care services, families of young children, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and even the commercial child care sector.

As you will see from the brief summaries of these campaigns contained in this special edition of *ACCS In Action!* there is a strong common voice calling on the next Australian Government to deliver the following:

- Continuation of the National Quality Framework for all early childhood services
- Funding to subsidise access to early childhood education delivered by qualified early childhood teachers in the two years before school
- Additional support for children and families experiencing vulnerability to ensure their access to quality programs
- Investment in a skilled early childhood workforce

ACCS is building strong relationships with key ECEC stakeholder groups including Goodstart, Early Learning And Care Council of Australia (ELACCA large providers group) and Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA commercial child care peak body) and leveraging these relationships to do joint advocacy and lobbying where we have common positions. It's exciting to be in collaboration with unlikely partners; this type of collaboration would not have been possible some years ago. Finding common ground with the commercial child care peak body is a first for ACCS and promises an even stronger combined voice for good policies for early childhood education and care in the future.

ACCS continues to have regular meetings with ACECQA executive sharing issues and opportunities around the National Quality Framework. We also maintain our active involvement in the vocational training agenda with ACCS members - Brian Newman and Kim Bertino - participating in the children's services industry reference group and other related groups. See inside this newsletter for news of the consideration of a new Certificate II qualification in early childhood.

ACCS has had regular contact with the Chief of Staff for Amanda Rishworth, Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education and Development providing direct feedback on proposed ECEC policies.

The TICCS Survey continues to track the impact of the NQF on community-based children's services. The fifth wave research is completed and the report is underway. It is the only longitudinal research on the NQF.

CURRENT ECEC ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS

ACCS Federal Election Policy Platform

1. The National Partnership for the National Quality Framework is extended and adequately funded beyond 2020
2. Building a skilled and professional early and middle childhood workforce – pay equity for educators; subsidised fees for upskilling to diploma and degree early childhood qualifications; stronger controls for early childhood courses and quality assurance of providers
3. Children and families experiencing vulnerability have two days per week of subsidised access - all children, including those of non-working parents, are eligible for subsidised early childhood education and care for at least 2 days per week – from a minimum of 18 hours up to 24 hours per week reflecting the operating hours of the service

ACCS also advocates for:

- All government policy to recognise that learning starts at birth, particularly noting the first 1,000 days from conception to 2 years of age as the most important period of child development
- Universal Access to early childhood education and care is to be extended to all 3 year old children in Australia and funding to be consolidated for 15 hours per week for 4 year olds, in all settings (long day care, family day care, preschool/kindergarten)
- No children and their families in detention in Australia or off-shore
- Implementation of Priority of Access criteria to ensure access for families experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage
- Continuation of the full implementation of National Quality Framework to 2020
- Reintroduction of planning controls for new early childhood education and care services

Early Learning Everyone Benefits – ECA and 27 partner organisations

www.everyonebenefits.org.au/about

The campaign calls on all political parties to adopt these policy measures:

1. Develop a cross portfolio 'Early Years Strategy' to recognise the importance of early childhood development and early learning across home, community and early childhood settings.
2. Children have the right to access at least two days per week of quality early childhood education, irrespective of their parents' workforce participation or other activity.
3. Provide a long-term funding commitment for universal access to quality early childhood education and care (kindergarten / preschool programs) in the year before school.
4. Extend universal access to two years before school.
5. Commit to strategies to increase access to quality early learning programs for children at risk of educational disadvantage – with particular attention to the need for appropriate service models for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and rural/remote communities.
6. Commit to quality improvement through ongoing funding of the National Quality Framework.
7. Commit funding to workforce development strategies to address capacity and quality issues.

Launch Into Learning – Early Learning and Care Council of Australia (ELACCA)

launchintolearning.com.au

Two years of play-based learning will launch our children into their learning journey.

To ensure every child has access to 2 years of quality, play-based early learning, we're asking our leaders to commit to 5 key things:

- Significant new investment in all children to ensure they attend two years of high quality early learning in the vital years before they begin primary school
- Better support for children experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability by ensuring they attend 600 hours of quality preschool programs

- Fixing the Child Care Subsidy so that it supports all children's access to preschool programs
- A strategy to ensure Australia has sufficient numbers of highly trained early childhood teachers and educators – who are well paid and well respected
- On-going commitment to the National Quality Framework, which helps ensure all preschool programs are of high quality

Working Together to Ensure Equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children in the Early Years - SNAICC

<http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/SNAICC-ECA-Early-Years-Position-Paper-.pdf>

All children should be empowered to realise their potential and determine their own futures. We are passionate about ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children get equal opportunities in Australia, thrive, and be recognised and supported within their cultures. We are committed to working with families, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations, services and governments to drive the holistic and comprehensive strategy necessary to support First Nations children in achieving equality in the early years.

Two key strategies for improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the early years:

1. Integrated, family-focused support programs that impact the home learning environment.
2. High-quality early education.

Two years of preschool – we won't stop asking until we've got it - The Parenthood

http://www.theparenthood.org.au/two_years_of_preschool

We want children to have the best chance to flourish. That means, we must properly fund two years of preschool for all Australian children.

Let's Give Our Children the Best Start in Life – Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA)

beststartinlife.org.au

What is ACA asking for?

- a revision of the Child Care Subsidy parameters so that all families qualify for 18 hours per week of subsidised access to early learning services, equivalent to meeting step 1 of the activity test.
- the provision of additional funding that supports the long day care sector in delivering kindergarten/preschool programs for 3 and 4 year olds, taking advantage of age-appropriate, developmentally-appropriate and culturally inclusive environments and pedagogy that are already established, therefore reducing the need for significant capital investment by government. This would allow parents the choice of early learning service type that best suits their work/life needs.

National Foundation for Australian Women

www.nfaw.org/page/election-policies-2018-19

Among other election commitments, the NFAW is seeking the following:

- Preschool/kindergarten for all children in the two years before they start school, for up to 18 hours each week (and more for children experiencing disadvantage)
- Access to at least 18 hours of subsidised early learning each week for every child (with more hours for children experiencing disadvantage), without parents having to meet any work or study requirements
- A new Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Strategy to support high-quality provision of education and care in the sector and fair and decent wages for carers, teachers and educators

We Are Counting On You - Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA)

elaa.org.au/election-campaign/

- A new National Partnership Agreement for Universal Access to ECEC for four year olds
- Extend the NPA to three year olds
- Renew the National Quality Agenda
- Improve regulation of Registered Training Organisations
- Develop and implement a workforce strategy to ensure early childhood education and care services are adequately staffed with well-trained early and middle childhood professionals who feel supported and whose skills are valued and recognised

ACCS GUIDES VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Proposed Certificate II in Children's Education and Care

Brian Newman, Chair, and ACCS Representative, Children's Education and Care Industry Reference Committee

As part of the current redrafting of the Children's Education and Care Training Package, the Industry Reference Committee was asked to consider introducing a Certificate II.

This was in response to the needs of remote services, particularly in Northern Territory and Western Australia. Many of these services do not operate under the NQF and so are not subject to the same staffing requirements. These include MACS but also playgroups and other provision in community centres. Some of those working in these services are not confident learners and reluctant to enrol in Certificate III qualifications, especially as this is not required for their work. The Certificate III requires placements in regulated services as well as workplace experience with babies, both of which are not always possible in remote communities.

The proposed Certificate II aims to provide entry level skills and education for these workers in order to develop their skills working with children, and also to build their learning confidence so that some may consider continuing to study.

These are strong arguments to introduce a Certificate II. There has been generally strong

support from the sector consultations for the proposal, but with a strong proviso that it is clearly and consistently acknowledged that it is not a recognised qualification under the National Regulations.

In the recent consultations around the second draft of the Training Package, there was strong support for the Certificate II also being offered in VET in Schools programs, in preference to the Certificate III, especially given the young age of many undertaking this program. It is unclear at this point as to whether state governments would fund the Certificate II.

The course is still in draft form and requires further refinement. One question that has emerged is whether or not to include an assessed work placement in the course. This is still being considered.

The IRC will have the final decision about whether to formally submit the Certificate II for approval, but I feel there are strong arguments for it to proceed. It meets a particular need in remote, mainly Aboriginal, communities in children's services that do not fall under the NQF. It must not be seen as a way to lower qualification requirements and I am sure the IRC would be unanimous in this view.



Have Your Say on the 2019 NQF Review now

An important national conversation about the future regulation of quality children's education and care in Australia is starting and families, communities, educators, education and care services are invited to join in to inform government decision making.

It's a big conversation that started a decade ago, and in 2019 over a million children currently attend education and care services across Australia.

It's been five years since the last review in 2014, and it's time to check back in and see what areas of the NQF can still be improved, including the National Law and National Regulations.

The NQF Review Have Your Say website is now live – you can find information, complete an online survey, and book into face-to-face consultations across Australia during May and June 2019.

The 2019 NQF Review aims to ensure that the NQF is current, fit-for-purpose and implemented through best practice regulation.

Terms of Reference and an Issues Paper have been compiled by all governments to guide this first consultation phase of the review.

Over the next two years there will be regular opportunities to find out more, provide feedback, and get updates on options being considered by governments.

All feedback is valued. As well as this first phase of consultation, there will be an additional opportunity to have your say in 2020.

The NQF Review aims to capture as many voices as possible by July 2019 during this first phase, and would like to hear about what's most important to you.

Visit www.nqfreview.com.au and **Have Your Say now!**

ACCS BRANCH UPDATES

South Australia

Carrie Johnson, Convenor, ACCS South Australia

The AGM for ACCS SA was held on 6th November 2018 where I was elected as the new Convenor, Robyn Geisler will continue as secretary/treasurer. We now have several new members on the committee who we believe will enable us to have a stronger voice.

My focus so far in this role has been to gain a greater understanding of the ACCS advocacy role, and how South Australia can support changes at both a State and Federal level. I played a small part in the TICCS survey development which I found interesting and useful in understanding the importance of the information collected.

For this reason, I circulated emails to the CCCSA membership imploring the services to complete the

survey. Members of ACCS SA Executive also volunteered to contact services who were local to them, or they had connections with, to encourage them to complete the survey as well.

I am also looking at ways to increase our membership and increase the sector's awareness of the important role that ACCS plays in advocating for change for the sector.

Many of the advisory and reference groups at the State level have not met for extended periods of time, or they have ceased to exist, which lessens the opportunities for the sector to have a strong voice. This remains an item on our agenda to seek opportunities to raise the profile of long day care in the broader field of Early Childhood Education and Care.

Future actions:

- Organise a face to face meeting with the Minister for Education to discuss our concerns.
- Identify our two to three main concerns that could be addressed on a state level not just nationally.
- Investigate further opportunities to raise the profile of ECEC.
- Provide an opportunity for a face -to -face for ACCS National to meet here in Adelaide.

Victoria

The Victorian Government has announced funding for 15 hours of universal 3 year old kindergarten to be progressively rolled out from 2020. This initiative has implications for both long day care and stand-alone kindergarten services and will include focus on four key areas: infrastructure, workforce, high quality service delivery and engagement & communication. Early consultations have highlighted the importance of meeting the workforce requirements and ensuring that the learning needs of 3 year olds are properly provided for.

Outside School Hours Care services continue to need assistance with human resources issues, financial management and quality improvement. Advice has been provided to the Department about the importance of supporting school-managed OSHC services. The state government has made a commitment for every new school to have a kindergarten but there is no similar commitment to ensure that new schools have co-located OSHC and long day care services.

Victorian Institute of Teachers has confirmed that hours teaching children of any age (not just 4 year old children) are recognised by VIT for the purposes of Early Childhood Teacher registration.

Western Australia

Carewest, the WA branch of ACCS has noted an issue specific to that state – Assessment and Rating visits are supported by a preliminary visit by the Assessor.

There is concern that WA may not be able to meet the 2020 requirement for an additional early childhood teacher in larger services. There are also issues noted with the new Child Care Subsidy system including the timing of subsidies and

access to support for families experiencing vulnerability. The issue of the quality of RTO training is continuing.

New South Wales

ACCS NSW is planning a series of forums focussing on issues that are not being addressed by other peak organisations. The first will focus on the Child Safety Standards.

The branch is actively reaching out to engage Outside School Hours Care services.

It has employed a secretariat to support membership engagement.



Federal election early learning scorecard

Check out how the major parties stack up on giving every child in Australia the best chance to flourish.

| | Labor | Liberal / Nat Party | Greens |
|--|-------|---------------------|--------|
| Give all children access to two years of early learning before school in the setting that suits family needs | ✓ | ? | ✓ |
| Better support children experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage to fully participate in early learning | ✓ | 1/4 | ✓ |
| A national strategy to build a stable, quality early years workforce | ✓ | ✗ | ? |
| Continued support to raise the quality of early learning and early childhood policies | ✓ | 1/2 | ✓ |
| Improve the Child Care Subsidy to support all children's access to early learning | 3/4 | ✗ | ✓ |





ACCS NATIONAL COUNCIL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

At the AGM on 2 May 2019 the National Executive was returned unopposed:

National Convenor – Prue Warrilow

Deputy National Convenor – Linda Davison

National Secretary – Kim Bertino

National Treasurer – Sally Griffiths

The meeting noted the ACCS position on funding for Universal Access to Early Childhood Education and Care to be provided in all ECEC settings.

Delegates reported the impact of the new Child Care Subsidy. In particular the decrease in the number of children receiving Additional Child Care Subsidy was noted by all.

It was agreed to pursue a national face to face meeting in South Australia later in 2019.

It was noted that there has been considerable work achieved by the branches and national ACCS. Given the limited resources this was only achievable by the significant contributions of the ACCS National Council members.

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