ACCS
AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY CHILDREN'S SERVICES

In Action

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Inside this Issue

ACCS Riding the Waves of Change into an Election Countdown

Prue Warrilow, National Convenor

2010 is off to a big start. ACCS is advising on the new National Quality Framework and inside this newsletter you will find details of some of the key issues we need to be active around; in particular ACCS is lobbying against family groupings with a ratio of 1:7 including up to 2 children aged from birth to less than 2 years. We will be asking members to take action around this immediately as it forms part of the NQF that is under development.

National ACCS executive has commenced its consultation with State/Territory representatives to look at ways we can work with branches to support and strengthen ACCS throughout Australia. At the time of writing we have had a conversation with Western Australian and with Queensland representatives that identified some great opportunities. I am looking forward to setting up times to talk with all other States/Territories soon to share good ideas for ACCS.

The federal election will be some time this year. What are your views, ideas, opinions? We will be talking about what should be on the ACCS platform at the ACCS conference in Wollongong on 14/15 May 2010. Come along and have your say.

We will certainly be asking that all parties commit to the 2016 review of child:staff ratios which is part of the *National Partnership* Agreement with a view to improving the ratios.

ACCS Activities

Members of the ACCS National Executive attended the National Children's Services Forum in Canberra in March. Once again this was a good opportunity to talk with other national peak bodies about the hot issues in children's services, including the quality of pre-service training and Award modernisation. See the ACCS Representatives report elsewhere in this newsletter for details on the discussions with DEEWR.

ACCS met with the LHMU national office staff and committed to reviving our working partnership. LHMU apologised for the lack of contact in recent times and undertook to provide an update on the Award modernisation process for this newsletter. We have now set 3 teleconferences per year for ACCS to liaise with LHMU at the national level.

Prue has mentioned the teleconferences we are holding with ACCS state/territory branch delegates; we are finding this a valuable opportunity to put our heads together to devise new ways of supporting action and advocacy at the grassroots level and to ensure that every state/territory has a good mechanism to keep ACCS national advocacy relevant and well informed about what is happening in local communities.

By the time you read this the ACCS national conference will be underway in Wollongong. The theme of *The Waves of Change* enables us to sink our teeth into the many changes in the early childhood profession at present. It will be an important opportunity for to plan ACCS action in this election year. We will report on key outcomes in the next edition of this newsletter.

As soon as the federal election is announced ACCS will start work on producing campaign materials and lobby kits to help local people tell politicians of all parties what kind of policies we expect to support children, families and the communities in which they live.

Update on the Modern Award

New minimum rights at work for early childhood education and care

From LHMU- the childcare union

The Rudd Labor government promised Australian workers fair rights at work through the Fair Work Act. Nationally consistent minimum wages and conditions for each industry or occupational group have been finalised. There are now new modern awards for all parts of the Australian economy. For workers and employers in early childhood education and care there are now fewer awards and consistent standards across the country.

Fair Work Australia has collapsed around 15 state specific awards into 2 separate national modern awards - one for care and support staff and one for teachers. Within 5 years all staff employed in children's services will have a right to the minimum wages and conditions in the modern award.

The federal government said it wanted modern awards to leave no worker or employer worse off but with so many staff on different minimum wages and conditions this was difficult to achieve. To get the best result possible, LHMU childcare members spent much of last year working with various employer representatives to try and get agreement about what the modern award should look like. This was proven in other industries to get better results for employees.

New pay rates and new conditions

Because of the work of LHMU childcare members, childcare professionals did better from award modernisation than workers in many other industries. Childcare professionals won the following:

- All staff with programming responsibilities will get 2 hours of paid programming non- contact time.
- All compulsory meetings will be paid
- A single scale of junior rates to apply only until staff are 19 years old

For most childcare professionals in most states these are better rights than before.

Staff employed below level 3 in Western Australia and Tasmania and all staff in NSW will be paid their current rate plus annual wage review rises for at least the next 5 years.

Other award dependent employees (in children's services and other industries) who are currently paid more than the modern award rate (who don't have an agreement with their Union or their employer) will be paid this rate plus any annual wage review rise minus 20% until their pay equals the modern award rate.

In other industries all workers who were paid higher than the modern award will experience a 20% drop in their minimum rate of pay as there was no agreement between their Union and employer groups.

What can be done?

The Modern Award only affects employees who are on the award - that is those on minimum wages and conditions. Employers and LHMU members can still agree to pay higher and give better conditions than this.

These rights at work do not reflect the incredibly valuable role that childcare professionals play in a child's early years of development and allowing parents to work and study. The LHMU Big Steps in Childcare campaign is about childcare professionals getting together to win an appropriately funded, professionally recognised, quality childcare sector. If you are interested in winning respect and recognition for childcare professionals please contact the LHMU - the childcare union in your state or territory *[insert link to LHMU website].*

Reports from ACCS Representatives

ACCS Stands Up for Children at Risk of Abuse and Neglect

Barbara Romeril

ACCS is proud to be a member of the Coalition of Organisations Committed to the Safety and Wellbeing of Australia's Children. This highly successful coalition was formed a few years ago by Families Australia and has grown to 92 members. It can claim responsibility for the first ever National Framework for child protection in Australia as well as the initiative Communities For Children Plus.

ACCS members will also be aware that we have successfully lobbied through the National Framework for loosening of the purse strings on Special Child Care Benefit to remove the fee barrier for more children at risk of abuse and neglect to participate in universal early childhood education and care services – the new SCCB handbook is a much improved vehicle for this.

I represented ACCS at the Coalition meeting of 3 May at which the Minister for Families, Jenny Macklin spoke. It was interesting to hear her talk about the early childhood reform agenda that Minister Ellis is leading; she asserts that there is an agreement within the Rudd Government any change in child care will focus on children at risk. From my experience this isn't self evident, but it certainly gives ACCS members an opening to advocate for a stronger explicit focus on ensuring that vulnerable children and families benefit from the current improvements to the early childhood service system.

The Minister emphasised that the National Child Protection Framework is still very new, only about one year old, and the key issue remains the need for a skilled workforce; she announced $2m for a new Australian Centre for Child Protection which will build bridges between services and build capacity within services, including providing accredited training in 12 communities with high levels of disadvantage. She mentioned the 35 indigenous child and family services that the government is establishing, the first of which will be operational by the end of 2010, as well as the Communities for Children Plus initiative which sits along side the early childhood reform agenda.

It was also interesting to hear FaHCSIA staff informing the Coalition that their focus on children has increased despite the transfer of child care policy to DEEWR.

National Quality Framework Stakeholder Reference Group

Prue Warrilow, National Convenor

I attended the first of the Stakeholder Reference Group meetings for the National Quality Framework (NQF) on 31 March. You can find the DEEWR Powerpoint presentation to this meeting on the ACCS website www.ausccs.org.au This group has been tasked with:

- looking at implementation issues for the NQF;
- be one of the points of consultation during transition and implementation (there will be other opportunities for consultation throughout the process); and
- provide feedback to the DEEWR working group.

As you know the NFQ will have 7 quality areas, a new rating system, streamlined licensing and accreditation; and have a new national body. It will apply to long day care, Family Day Care, out of school hours services **and preschools**. No budget based services are included – this means that Multi-functional Aboriginal services (MACS), mobiles and occasional care services are excluded. And while DEEWR has indicated that they will be consulted after this initial implementation, I think this is a disappointing outcome as they do not get to inform the NQF from its inception. The important planning that may need to occur to support these budget based services, such as looking at recruitment and retention, and getting access to suitable training and resourcing needs to be built in from the beginning.

The first meeting was an overview of the COAG decision, identification of key milestones, transition discussions, some legislative considerations, operation and communication updates.

Key milestones are as follows.

- COAG announcement – 7 Dec 2009.
- Development of joint State/Territory/NCVAC strategies for quality assurance and licensing during the transition period – Feb-May 2010.
- Commence testing new assessment process with around 20 services of different type, location etc – from July 2010.
- Commence assessment – from July 2010.
- Legislation developed – winter/spring 2010.
- All legislation passed – mid 2011.
- Preparation for NCAC handover to new national body – from late 2011.
- New system commences and new national body fully operational – 1 Jan 2012.

As these meetings progress I'll keep you informed about what's happening. You should also be kept up to date with what is happening in each State/Territory through their consultation groups.

When 1:4 is not 1:4

Child:staff ratios are an important part of the NQF, and the COAG announcement in December 2009 of a minimum of 1 staff member for 4 children aged from birth to less than 2 years was a step in the right direction to improve quality outcomes for babies. But on closer reading of the *National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care, National Quality Standard*, p. 24 it is possible for a long day care service that operates with family grouping to have a ratio of 1:7 with a mixed age group that includes up to 2 children aged from birth to less than 2 years. The Ready Reckoner provides for the following "Proportion of education required (based on ratio".

Age of child	Ratio under national standard	Number of children in group	Proportion of educator required
Birth to 24 months	1 to 4	2	50%
3 years to school age	1 to 11	5	45%
	total	**7**	**95%**

This is worse than what we have now! I have this image of all these centres suddenly changing to family grouping and employing less staff!

I raised this issue at the NQF Stakeholder meeting and was advised by DEEWR that this was part of the COAG agreement and could not be changed. DEEWR had envisaged that this would only occur at the beginning and end of the day in long day care when it is usual practice to have all children grouped together as there are less children on the premises. Early morning and later afternoon many centres only have two staff rostered on – so if one of the 7 children has an accident, needs their nappy changed, a bottle – anything that may require a staff member to leave the room for some time - 1 staff member is left in a room with 6 children that could include 2 babies and there is no one else on the premises to assist!!! So 1:4 is not actually 1:4.

When ACCS advocated for a better child:staff ratio for babies we wanted this ratio for any group of children that included babies. Not just part of the time, but all of the time. The current NSW regulation has a clause that deals with mixed age groups where the ratio of the youngest child in the mixed group applies to the whole group. This means that if the mixed group includes babies then the 1:4 ratio applies to the whole group.

ACCS will be asking you all for more information on this issue. We need to be taking action around this immediately as it forms part of the NQF that is under development.

National Children's Services Forum

Barbara Romeril, National Secretary

At the March meeting of the National Children's Services Forum the Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations took the opportunity to conduct two in-depth discussions with the national peak bodies for children's services. This was a highly effective means of dedicating sufficient time to the many key issues and initiatives for children at the present time.

Firstly we met with the Director of the Office for Early Childhood Education and Child Care and his senior staff to discuss the National Quality Agenda, the new National Standards and rating system and the implementation of the EYLF.

The new national quality agency will have similar functions to the NCAC and the intention is to employ NCAC staff where appropriate. When asked how the sector can influence the new agency we were informed that the Board of will have 13 members appointed by state and territory governments and the Commonwealth; this board can choose to set up advisory structures.

We were also informed that the new legislation will be a high level heads of agreement and the detail of the new standards will be in the regulations that come next, due by the end of 2010.

The new quality system will be rolled out progressively from July 2010 – where possible services will be assessed against the new National Standards and give some kind of rating but participation in this trial will be voluntary. The Stakeholder Reference Group for transition and implementation of the NQF (see elsewhere in this newsletter for a report from ACCS rep) is one key way for the sector to influence the new system; DEEWR is happy to organise focus groups and other mechanisms for sector input. NCSF has offered to facilitate participation by sector representatives.

A national register of courses recognised as qualifications will be developed; DEEWR expects that this will include recognition of exemplary courses and that the children's services sector would demand this.

DEEWR appears to be quietly optimistic about meeting the challenge of developing sufficient labour supply to meet the new standards; the historical trend is for the children's services workforce to grow faster than other sectors so 'we can't conclude that it can't be done'. A workforce strategy will go to COAG for approval later in 2010.

The NCSF members are concerned about the exclusion of budget based services from the NQF and at our next meeting in August we will have an in-depth discussion about this with DEEWR.

The second DEEWR consultation at the NCSF was with Anthony Parsons, of the Early Childhood Programs Group; as usual he presented some controversial discussion points about the Child Care Management System and the MyChild website. All CCMS software providers will be required to re-register their products to meet the updated specifications and where a software provider decides not to re-register DEEWR will facilitate transfer of child care services to a new package.

A new secure website for child care services is available through MyChild and it will be strengthened in June.

And good news – legislation will pass soon to change the requirement for 4 weekly statements to 'no less than quarterly'.

Keeping an Eye on Corporate Child Care

Groves set to explain ABC collapse to court

Liam Walsh, The Courier-Mail 15 Feb 2010

The whole board of ABC Learning Centres and Eddy Groves's brother-in-law have been issued summons for a courtroom examination into the childcare operator's collapse.

The names - including ex-ABC chairwoman Sallyanne Atkinson - were among a list in an Federal Court order published this month.

Brisbane-based ABC Learning Centres went into receivership in November 2008, and administrators Ferrier Hodgson have since December last year run a public examination into the company's collapse. The next hearings are due to take place in March and April.

Mr Groves and his co-founder and ex-wife Le Neve Groves, and former director Bill Bessemer, an ex-chairman of the once ABC-aligned stockbroker Austock, will be called.

Matthew Horton, who heads the revamped entity after it was bought out by a non-profit consortium, has also been named. He had been ABC's company secretary and general counsel, and became a director in the operator's dying days.

Mr Groves's brother-in-law Frank Zullo, whose maintenance company won over $100 million in contracts with ABC, has been summonsed...

Other details from the seven ABC employees who were quizzed last year included anecdotes of tax authorities phoning ABC staff about unpaid bills and accounting systems being ad hoc...

ABC Learning 'reliant' on debt to cover cash shortfalls

Danny John, Sydney Morning Herald, March 19, 2010

The failed childcare operator ABC Learning almost certainly became insolvent in the first half of 2008, about six months before the directors appointed administrators to take control of the company, creditors have been told.

According to financial statements prepared by the administrators Ferrier Hodgson, the company went from a positive cash flow of $207 million from its operating activities in its 2007 full year accounts to a deficit of almost $20 million in the first half of 2008...

Mr Groves, who quit as chief executive in September 2008, has since lodged a claim that he is owed $3.3 million by the company...

Ferrier moved into ABC Learning on November 6 2008, days after its board concluded the company had insufficient cash to pay its debts. Its banks, owed nearly $1 billion, called in receivers immediately.

Ferrier put down ABC's failure to a combination of factors including:

''Inadequate focus'' on day-to-day practices and results of operations;

Lack of strategy to integrate businesses it bought over seven years;

A dependency on compensation payments, liquidated damages and fee guarantees from developers to provide revenue;

Too high a reliance on debt to fund acquisitions and to support a shortfall of cash from operations.

The administrator Greg Moloney said the company's business model became ''unsustainable''. ABC's former directors and management are under examination to help determine the detailed causes of the company's failure.

Creditors will be asked next week to decide whether to wind up the company and appoint a liquidator to consider claims of insolvent trading, breaches of directors' and auditors' duties, uncommercial transactions and unreasonable director-related deals.

45-day reprieve for ABC Learning administrators

Darren Cartwright, Sydney Morning Herald, 27 March 2010

Creditors have given administrators and receivers of ABC Learning a 45-day window to finalise the transfer of leases to not-for-profit venture GoodStart.

In a meeting in Brisbane yesterday that lasted less than 10 minutes, creditors agreed to a motion backed by receivers McGrathNicol and administrators Ferrier Hodgson to adjourn for 45 days a meeting convened to wind up the childcare giant.

Administrator Greg Moloney said the adjournment would give the receivers more time to "finalise the overall transaction".

He said getting landlords' approval for the transfer of about 550 outstanding leases would be the major issue to be sorted out in that period...

Receivers are negotiating with Austock and Orchard, which collectively own more than half the centres, to sign over leases to not-for-profit venture GoodStart...

There are 678 ABC Learning centres, however, the bulk of the leases have not yet been signed over to GoodStart.

Childcare workers' union spokeswoman Sue Lines said until the landlords signed over the outstanding leases, jobs and the future of the centres remain in doubt.

"It's time for the landlords to drop whatever their issues are and get on with the job," she said.

"If there was a push to liquidate that would put at risk workers' jobs.

"There's only a hundred-odd landlords that have signed over and if Austock and Orchard sign over, which is what we expect, it should be alright and the others should follow suit."...

That sinking feeling

Colin Kruger, Sydney Morning Herald, 1 May, 2010

The marathon autopsy of ABC Learning is over, as might be many high-profile reputations associated with the collapse...

Nothing spells corporate disaster quite like a $100,000 kitchen sink. The sink in question was no different to the many others installed in the thousand-odd ABC Learning childcare centres across Australia, but its price tag saw it plucked from obscurity during the marathon public examination into the childcare operator's collapse... How do you spend $100,000 on a sink?

It was one of many peculiar practices brought to the attention of the Federal Court hearing into the collapse.

An ABC contractor, Queensland Maintenance Services Ltd, would overcharge on capital items such as the sink and undercharge on cleaning expenses. The understated expenses would, of course, overstate earnings, while the inflated capital expense would overstate one of the few tangible assets propping up ABC's balance sheet.

All of this was allegedly conducted at ABC's insistence, or, more specifically that of its founder, Eddy Groves.

It was one of many not-so-subtle ways that ABC's financial facade was massaged into shape.

Want to build strong, positive relationships with your families and support their parenting? Early Childhood Australia's Everyday Learning Series was developed by early childhood experts specifically to provide information to parents. When ordering the Everyday Learning Services tell Early Childhood Australia that you are a member of ACCS. For every purchase, 2% of the value of the sale will be given to ACCS to support its work of advocating nationally for the right of Australia's children to access quality not for profit, community children's services.

To find out more information about the Everyday Learning Series, or to obtain a subscription for your families visit: http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/everyday_learning_series/special_offer_for_services.html.

The more controversial developer payments made to ABC was another. According to the ABC chairman, David Ryan, this facade remained intact until Groves was ejected from the company at the end of September, 2008. It then collapsed, to reveal - much to everyone's surprise - a company that administrators now believe may have been insolvent for many months.

This is the story that ABC's banks, and board members, no doubt hope will be accepted as the corporate regulator, and ABC's administrators, decide who will have the proverbial kitchen sink thrown at them over the mess...

(I)f ABC is put into liquidation next month, as expected, potential legal action against its banks, auditors, and directors is among the only potential assets the liquidator can hope for unsecured creditors.

The Australian Securities and Investments Commission, for its part, may be conscious that it has little to show so far from a raft of corporate collapses, and one shaggy blond scalp may not be enough.

As for the pied piper who allegedly lead this blue-chip corporate army on a merry dance, Groves insists he was just an entrepreneur who relied on expert advice which ultimately failed him. It is a point he emphasised in an interview soon after appearing before the court earlier this month.

''I never claimed to be a corporate guru or corporate governance expert or a finance expert. The opportunities presented themselves, and I followed that dream and passion,'' he told *The Australian*.

For Ryan, who was head-hunted to ABC's board precisely because of his corporate and financial expertise, there is no such excuse. Especially since he chaired the audit committee which oversaw the financial reports that were still being restated when ABC collapsed.

But Ryan has his story too. Apparently there were two ABCs. One was behind the facade. It was a ''broken'' business model, as Ryan describes it, reliant on a high-volume pipeline of centres developed with closely related parties which became corrupted over time.

In interviews with regulators, Ryan says he later found out payments to developers exceeded what the board was told, as were the prices ABC paid for the centres.

The second ABC, the childcare fantasy that the directors were aware of, was a far healthier operation which needed to sell assets and de-leverage to appease the market gods in the wake of the global financial crisis.

But amid the hazy recollections regurgitated over four weeks of examinations, enough evidence emerged that alarming information was making its way past Groves and to the other members of ABC's board.

In the early weeks of the examination, ABC underlings described a company being run with a wild abandon that would not have been tolerated in its childcare centres.

All roads lead to Groves, who was depicted as the only one who actually knew how the business worked - or, as it was later proven, didn't work.

Cash constraints were apparent as early as April 2008 with creditor bills going past their due date. This included tax payments which opened ABC to the prospect of audits, ''which is the last thing we need'', as ABC's acting finance chief, John Gadsby, told Groves by email in mid-May.

Groves denies there were any cash constraints and says he didn't think the late tax payments were ''an extreme situation''.

Ryan was also included in on the email and obviously disagreed. ''I agree, John, it's a real worry,'' said Ryan, who directed Groves to make the payment. It may not have escaped Ryan's attention that ASIC regards overdue taxes as an indication that a company is at risk of insolvency.

What the banks were aware of at this stage is literally the billion-dollar question, given the syndicate - dominated by Australia's big four - received security over the entire childcare business from ABC's board in June that year. They also insisted the agreement include the direction of hundreds of millions of dollars from the asset sales to pay back debt the banks had raised for ABC just six months earlier.

The administrators are expected to attempt to overturn the transaction if ABC is put into liquidation, and may also seek the return of the loan repayments.

For the board itself, the awarding of security is one of many deals they approved during that tumultuous year that are under a cloud as questions are raised about when exactly ABC was insolvent and who knew exactly how much trouble it was in, and when. The who, what and when could determine whether certain directors face criminal charges, and personal liability for company debts...

The impact of ABC Learning's collapse is still being felt in the child care sector in Australia...

Gillard blames ABC Learning collapse for broken childcare promises

ABC Online Feb 19, 2010

Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard says the collapse of ABC Learning Centres was to blame for the Federal Government breaking its promise to build 260 childcare centres at schools.

During the election campaign Labor said the centres would help end the "double drop-off" for parents taking different aged children to various places.

Ms Gillard says the Government is building 38 childcare centres at schools.

But she has told Channel Nine the Government has not built the other 222 centres because of the unexpected change in the childcare market.

"We didn't anticipate in 2007 that we would be a government that saw Australia's biggest childcare provider start banging its doors shut with parents on the other side of the doors, and we've managed our way through that," she said.

And in New Zealand...

ABC centres to stay open until sold

Catherine Harris - The Dominion Post 22 Feb 2010

Childcare company ABC Learning Centres will be kept running till a suitable buyer is found, its Australian parent firm's receiver says.

Chris Cowan of McGrathNicol said talks with a prospective buyer had fallen through but the business was trading profitably and starting a "significant" upgrade of its centres.

"We are looking to improve the business performance and to obviously ensure that there's a smooth transition to a new buyer," he said.

"We are 30 per cent up on last year's figures so it's an extremely viable business."

About $5.3m had been invested in the company's 127 centres during 2009 and it was on track to invest another $4m during 2010.

Mr Cowan said no profits were going towards the failed ABC business in Australia, though it still remained the shareholder...

ABC Learning Centres NZ cares for 8000 children and also runs the New Zealand College of Early Childhood Education.

Australian Community Children's Services –

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

ACCS Branch Reports

New South Wales Branch Report

The NSW Branch has been pouring lots of energy into organising the 2010 ACCS National conference. Many wonderful speakers have agreed to speak for free. ACCS NSW was pleased with its successful application to DEEWR for conference funding.

A decision was made to trade as ACCS NSW, so what was formerly NACBCS NSW now has an official new name: Australian Community Children's Services NSW (ACCS NSW)

ACCS NSW is pleased that State and Federal Reference groups have been set up for National Quality Framework. Although ACCS has representation on the national group whose first meeting was at the end of March, ACCS NSW does not have a representative in the NSW Group which has discussed amendments to NSW Children's Services Regulation.

NSW Family Day Care Association is running a campaign to change the COAG National Quality Standards decision to reduce the numbers of under school aged children a family day carer can care for from 5 to 4. Anita Jovanovski (CEO NSWFDCA) addressed the last ACCS NSW meeting and explained that this will reduce the number of children who can access FDC by 20%, reduce carer's incomes by 20% and reduce network funding to co-ordination units by 20%. ACCS NSW decided to give support around maintaining network funding.

There are still a lot of concerns about the new child protection system in NSW Keep Them Safe (KTS). Several people from ACCS NSW attended training for peak organisations run by TAFE. Concerns include lack of suitability of the Mandatory Reporter Guide online tool for FDC Carers and services without computer access, possible reduction in reporting from children's services, reports of NCAC expecting services to have KTS-compliant policies in place, lack of notice of training for children's services (75 sessions to be rolled out from March), unsuitability of training of sector by TAFE and presumption that peaks will now help train the sector because of attendance at the training day for peaks.

People are still concerned about State licence fees for children's services (between $700 and $1100 per annum) and concerned about value for money! Invoices being sent from Community Services do not look like invoices and services are not realising that these are invoices.

Some worrying new information to light on the National Quality Framework via: www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Policy_Agenda/Quality/Documents/NQSStandardChildEdu.pdf

- In mixed age groups ratios could mean that 1 worker is responsible for up to 7 children including 5 preschoolers, 1 toddler and 1 baby
- Under 18 year old staff can now be counted as primary contact staff
- Group sizes can be 3 times ratio size eg–group size of 12 for babies, toddlers group size

Victorian Branch Report

Barbara Romeril, Executive Director, Community Child Care

In gearing up for a federal election and a state election this year CCC is working on ideas for new ways for all levels of government to fund the outcomes they want from children's services. We are thinking about things like direct grants to children's services that demonstrate the kinds of outcomes the government wants conditional on high quality (larger than minimum staff numbers and qualifications) and inclusiveness, with flexible service provision that reaches out to meet the needs of vulnerable families and children at risk of abuse and neglect.

As the Victorian branch of ACCS, CCC continues to work in collaboration with a wide range of other like minded organisations to:

- support integrated child and family centres
- develop models to support universal children's services to reach out to meet the needs of children at risk of abuse and neglect
- deliver training to universal children's services to meet the needs of children at risk of abuse and neglect
- support the community sector to adapt to the new Modern Award for Children's Services
- sponsor good initiatives in the sector

Our long standing partnership with FKA Children's Services enabled us to deliver an exciting seminar on research and practice learnings about integrated models of child and family services with internationally renowned speaker Professor Iram Siraj-Blatchford of UK.

ACCS website!

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

www.ausccs.org.au

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