

ACCS In Action

July 2014

Productivity Commission – Draft report released

If there was ever a time to make sure as many services, educators and families have their say about education and care policy it is **NOW**.

The Productivity Commission has released its draft report on Childcare and Early Childhood Learning.

[Click here for a copy](#)

ACCS views the draft findings and recommendations as a mixed bag – some significant concerns and some welcome recommendations.

ACCS disagrees with the following recommendations and believes that their implementation would not be in the interests of children and their right to access quality community managed education and care

- Allowing services to temporarily operate with staffing levels below required ratios (by averaging over a day or a week)
- Requiring educators working with children under 3 to only hold a certificate III level qualification – no Diplomas required
- Simplifying the National Quality Standard and identifying standards or elements that can be removed or altered while maintaining quality
- Removal of preschools from the scope of the NQF
- Removal of eligibility of not for profit providers to payroll tax and Fringe Benefit Tax exemptions

ACCS welcomes the following recommendations which align with ACCS submission to the Productivity Commission

- Introduction of a single subsidy to replace CCB and CCR
- Diverting funding from the proposed new Paid Parental Leave scheme to early childhood education and care
- Increase investment in subsidies for low income families
- Funding of coordination activities in integrated services
- Ongoing funding by the Australian Government for universal access to 15 hours of preschool
- Extending the scope of the National Quality Framework to include all centre and home based services that receive Australian Government assistance
- Encouragement for employers to trial innovative approaches to flexible work and other family friendly arrangements
- Implementing a nationally recognised working with children check
- Viability assistance to providers in rural, regional and remote areas

While ACCS welcomes the recommendation that approved nannies have a Certificate III level qualification and will be required to meet the National

Quality Standards, ACCS has grave concerns about how approved nannies would be monitored for regulatory compliance. ACCS disagrees with a recommendation to remove the In Home Care Category of approved care.

If there was ever a time to make sure as many services, educators and families have their say about education and care policy it is NOW!

The Productivity Commission is inviting feedback - have your say by

- providing a [short comment](#)
- making a [public submission](#) due Friday 5 September
- presenting at a [public hearing](#) – dates as follows:

Perth

Thursday 7 August 2014
Mercure Perth
10 Irwin Street, Perth

Port Macquarie

Monday 11 August 2014
Mercure Centro Hotel
103 William Street, Port Macquarie

Sydney

Thursday 14 August 2014
The Grace Hotel
77 York Street, Sydney

Friday 15 August 2014
The Grace Hotel
77 York Street, Sydney

Melbourne

Monday 18 August 2014

Productivity Commission
Hearing Room
Level 12, 530 Collins Street, Melbourne

Tuesday 19 August 2014
Productivity Commission
Hearing Room
Level 12, 530 Collins Street, Melbourne

Canberra

Monday 25 August 2014
Productivity Commission
ANZ House, Level 2, 15 Moore Street, ACT

Tuesday 26 August 2014
Productivity Commission
ANZ House, Level 2, 15 Moore Street, ACT

ACCS will respond with a written submission and will appear at some of the public hearings. Can you provide feedback and/or examples to help inform the ACCS response? ACCS is holding a hot topic teleconference discussion about the draft report on Thursday 31 July at 11am - 12pm (AEST). Please [email](#) ACCS National Secretariat to register your interest.

National Convenor Report

Just when you think the NQF is starting to get well embedded in education and care services throughout Australia, we're confronted with a range of reviews that leave me with very mixed feelings about how we maintain and continue to grow quality early and middle childhood education and care services into the future.

By the time you receive this, the Productivity Commission's interim report will be out. It will be interesting to see what the Commissioners have gleaned from their extensive research and conversations throughout Australia. Remember, this is an interim report. ACCS will be providing a response

to this. It will be important if you have particular concerns to let your State and Territory delegates know about these so that this can be reflected in our national response.

Recently I attended the joint Early Childhood Education and Child Care & Schools and Youth Stakeholder forum, convened by the Australian Government Department of Education. This is part of a twice a year briefing provided to sector representatives looking at school and early childhood priorities for the next 12 months. The morning session included a briefing from departmental representatives from the various portfolio areas and the afternoon was made up of interactive sessions focused on more sector specific questions. I attended the session on the 2014 NQF review in the afternoon.

Highlights from the morning briefing included an overview of the budget announcements and how these are rolling out. Of particular note was the impact of the Commission of Audit report looking at government and departmental efficiencies. For the Department of Education one outcome of this will be downsizing with approximately 100 voluntary redundancies, 30 of these will come from the early childhood area. The Universal Access Review has been delayed - the interim report was anticipated to be provided in June 2014.

Unfortunately some states were late in providing data to Access Economics (who are doing the interim report) and this has delayed the draft report and any decisions pending from this.

During the afternoon, the interactive session focused on the 2014 NQF Review. Here is a quick summary of the review as at 24 June: There have been 48 public consultations, with over 1300 people attending, 213 comments, 275 sector survey responses, 74 family survey responses and six submissions received. Key themes and feedback that emerged from the initial stakeholder consultations included: maintaining a consistent framework, the importance of

professionalisation, perception of regulatory burden (with mixed views about this), tailoring of the NQS to different service types, assessment and ratings, and the scope of the NQF including consideration of out of scope services. The Department was interested in having an open conversation with forum participants and seemed to value the far ranging discussions that were held during this afternoon session. Stakeholder forum participants seem to have general consensus around maintaining the NQF and continuing to build to 2020; the biggest consideration was access and affordability for families to children's services.

Dr. Anne Kennedy, ACCS National Secretary and CCC Chair, and I attended the final National Children's Services Forum (NCSF) meeting in early July. The NCSF was made up of a group of children's services peaks that were funded to meet three times a year through Early Childhood Australia (ECA) secretariat funding, to discuss children's services policies and how these impacted on the sector, including departmental interaction and feedback. I was lucky enough to attend the very first of these meetings as a National ACCS representative and continued to attend until this last meeting. Unfortunately ECA will no longer be funded to convene the NCSF meetings. We used this last meeting to reflect on what we had achieved and gave consideration to ways of continuing open dialogue across the sector peaks moving forward. I'll keep you posted with any outcomes in future editions of ACCS In Action.

So... various Senate enquiries, the Productivity Commission Review, the 2014 NQF Review, the Australian National Audit Office Review of the Early Years Quality Fund, the Universal Access Review. It's all a bit overwhelming! This is a critical time for Australian children's services. We need to work hard to maintain the great quality steps forward that have been achieved since the commencement of the NQF in 2010. ACCS continues to advocate for full implementation of the NQS to 2020, with no watering down of the ratio and qualification requirements. We

are in challenging times with extensive media commentary around dramatically increasing costs of care and lack of access, particularly for families with infants.

ACCS advocacy and lobbying is only as good as the feedback, commentary and support we get from our membership – that's you! Be active in your State/Territory ACCS branch, provide feedback, continue to advocate and lobby. Remember, change occurs one conversation at a time; and that's a challenge I give to you as an ACCS member - think about the importance of each conversation you have about early and middle childhood children's services and how your words can make a difference, one conversation at a time.

Prue Warrilow

ACCS National Convenor

ACCS Standing Up for Quality Education and Care - Senate Education and Employment Standing Committee Inquiries

The Senate Education and Employment Standing Committee has just completed the two following inquiries:

- [Delivery of quality and affordable early childhood education and care services](#)
- [Immediate future of the childcare sector in Australia](#)

Earlier this year ACCS provided the Senate Committee with a written submission and Dr Anne Kennedy and Linda Davison presented evidence at public hearings on ACCS' behalf. The reports from the two Senate inquiries were released last week. Here are some quotes from these reports that highlight the strong messages ACCS is taking to every arena possible, on your behalf.

Extracts from *The Senate Education and Employment References Committee Delivery of quality and affordable early childhood education and care services*

2.9 Australian Community Children's Services (ACCS), the national peak body for the not-for-profit children's services sector, explained that, as a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Australia has an obligation to ensure that policies respect children's rights as enshrined in the UNCRC. This approach not only safeguards the best interests of the child, but also boosts workforce participation and economic growth. With the best interest of the child as a guiding principle, Dr Anne Kennedy, National Secretary of ACCS, described the NQF as a monumental reform:

ACCS believes that the COAG agreement of 2009 endorsing the national quality framework agenda is the most significant event in the history of education and care services in Australia. We are the first federated nation to achieve national reform on this scale.

2.22 Dr Anne Kennedy of ACCS called quality ECEC an 'incredibly powerful and protective feature', especially for children under three, Dr Kennedy added that quality education needs to occur in partnership with parents in order to assist with capacity building, pointing out that this principle of partnership was embedded in the NQF.

2.25 The committee also received compelling evidence from ACCS relating to the effects of familial or social neglect on vulnerable and at risk children's brain development:

Learning begins from birth and in the womb. Everything we can do to support that learning environment in utero and then from the moment the child is born will make a difference to that child... We all pay the price for that, because these are people who will not work, who are likely to end up in our

juvenile justice system and jail system and so forth. So that focus on learning is one of the biggest shifts in NQF reform.

3.7 Other witnesses, including Dr Anne Kennedy of Australian Community Children’s Services, added that remuneration in the sector needs urgent attention in order to attract the best qualified and skilled people. Dr Kennedy submitted:

...it is not something that the sector can do on its own; it is something that needs some government lifting to help it. Clever children need smart, bright, clever educators—that is the basic thing. It is not a cottage industry... This is not the kind of childcare sector that will give us the outcomes we want for a clever nation.

Extract from *The Senate Education and Employment References Committee Immediate future of the childcare sector in Australia*

2.31 *Australian Community Children’s Services (ACCS) submitted it was in agreement with business groups including the Business Council of Australia and numerous economists in relation to the benefits of affordable ECEC services and workforce participation.*

ACECQA Forum 4 July

Update from Dr Anne Kennedy ACCS National Secretary

The ACECQA Forum in Melbourne included an opening address by the Hon Sussan Ley, MP, Assistant Minister for Education; a focus on the 2014 COAG review; an update on the current Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) review; NQA ITS improvements and a panel presentation on cultural competence. To read a full report and Anne’s take on the day click [here](#).

This forum was more interactive than previous ones

and the [agenda](#) with key discussion questions was circulated prior to the day providing an opportunity for ACCS delegates to provide Anne with feedback on issues ahead of time. ACCS has been [corresponding](#) with ACECQA about the structure of these forums and valued the opportunities presented by these changes.

Dr Anne Kennedy

ACCS National Secretary

The Preschool Gender Gap Hurting Australian Girls

Have a read of another interesting article written by Lisa Bryant, Convenor ACCS NSW. This article, published by Women’s Agenda on 3 July 2014, is about gender disparity in early education. Lisa unpacks some NSW participation statistics and asks some curly questions ...

[Click here for the article](#)

Trends in Community Children’s Services Survey 3rd Wave

This survey has now closed and ACCS is in the process of analysing the data. Thank you to all who participated. This wave saw over 800 services nationally contribute significant data. Preliminary data was used to inform the ACCS submission to the NQF Review and will be used in our response to the Productivity Commission Inquiry.

Some of the interesting findings so far:

Quality areas that services have implemented positive changes in over the last 12 months	
Quality Area 1 Educational program and practice	86%
Quality Area 2 Children’s Health and Safety	52%
Quality Area 3 Physical environment	62%
Quality Area 4 Staffing arrangements	51%

Quality Area 5 Relationships with children	55%
Quality Area 6 Collaborative partnerships with families and communities	62%
Quality Area 7 Leadership and service management	56%

426 services responding to the 3rd wave of TICCSS had been through the assessment and ratings process. Of those 426 services,

- 80% indicated that the process had a positive or extremely positive impact on quality improvement at their service
- 73% rated the clarity of the process as positive or extremely positive
- 67% rated the usefulness of the assessment and ratings report as positive or extremely positive
- 86% of services rated the ease of the process and the impact on the running of the service as neutral (22%), positive (41%) or extremely positive (23%)

NQF Review

The scheduled review into the National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care is underway. The ACCS submission to the review highlights some of the progress the sector is making and draws on the preliminary TICCSS 3rd Wave data to demonstrate this. It is exciting to see that 86% of TICCSS respondents reported implementing positive changes in *Quality Area 1 Educational program and practice* in the last 12 months. Furthermore 68% of respondents identified *improved outcomes for children and / or services being more focused on meeting children's needs* as one of the top 3 highlights their service has experienced in the last 12 months.

A strength of the NQF is the development of 7 Quality Areas and accompanying standards and elements which work together to ensure quality service provision. All seven evidence-based quality areas are intrinsically linked and one area does not carry more weight than another. The 7 quality areas have been developed to consider all aspects of children's services delivery. Quality children's services are predicated on structural and process dimensions.

Structural dimensions relate to:

- Staff to child ratios
- The qualifications of staff
- Group size; that is, the number of children in a room or defined space

Process dimensions relates to:

- The quality and nature of the adult - child interactions and the relationships within a service
- The curricula; that is, the activities and learning opportunities provided to children as a service

These two elements are intrinsically linked. The quality of any children's service is a product of the interplay between these structural and process dimensions; this interplay is made more effective when there is constructive and supportive leadership of the service and engagement with families and local community, underpinned by local cultural contexts.

Services and governments have invested huge amounts of time and resources into implementing the NQF with impressive results in a short time – let's hope these gains aren't hijacked by a political agenda.

Click [here](#) to read the ACCS National submission to the review.

Click [here](#) to read the ACCS NSW branch submission

Click [here](#) to read the Community Child Care submission (ACCS Victorian branch)

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

Kim Bertino (ACCS NSW Branch) has been representing ACCS in meetings with ASQA about this strategic review process. The process so far has included audits of Registered Training Organisation's (RTOs), surveying of RTOs and stakeholder consultations. A draft report is due for release mid to late August.

Click [here](#) to read the latest update from Kim.

Department of Education - Advisory Network for the new Early Learning Languages Australia Trial.

Liz Rouse (Community Child Care, ACCS Victorian Branch) will be representing ACCS on this newly formed advisory group and will report back to ACCS members after she participates in the first teleconference.

As announced in the federal budget, the Australian Government is providing \$9.8 million for the Early Learning Languages Australia (ELLA) trial in 2015. The trial will test the effectiveness of providing preschool children with early exposure to a language other than English through online learning programs. It will involve the use of innovative online software with minimal reliance on access to proficient foreign language speakers. The trial will be underpinned by feedback and advice on the different aspects of delivery and factors that would contribute to the successful uptake of the programme.

More information about the trial can be found [here](#)

Community Services & Health Industry Skills Council Joint Training Package Advisory Committee

Diane Lewis is the ACCS representative on this advisory committee.

The Community Services & Health Industry Skills Council (CS&HISC) develops and maintains the Community Services and Health Training Packages. The CS&HISC is responsible for ensuring qualifications endorsed within these training packages respond to changing work roles and reflect industry needs via stakeholder consultation. The role of the Joint Training Package Advisory Committee (TPAC) is to govern the continuous improvement of each training package in the context of the increasing integration of roles across the community services and health industries

ACCS NSW Branch Update

Click [here](#) for the latest update from Lisa Bryant Convenor ACCS NSW Branch.

Community Child Care (ACCS Victorian Branch) Update

With a State election expected in November CCC is gearing up for our campaign. CCC invited responses from the major parties to questions about some of the key education and care issues. Click [here](#) to read what they had to say.

Keeping an Eye on Corporate Child Care

Well what do you know ... according to the Sydney Morning Herald:

"The banks did a sneaky thing as Eddy Groves' childcare empire was teetering at the precipice of collapse in 2008Led by Commonwealth Bank, the syndicate took a charge over \$1.25 billion in ABC Learning debt. This was no normal charge though. It was granted orally and apparently in haste, by Eddy Groves. Its effect was to catapult the banks ahead of ABC's other creditors and leave taxpayers footing the bill for childcare workers and suppliers when the company fell into administration a few months later"

Michael West Sydney Morning Herald 7 July 2014

Our trusty researcher and investigator Lisa Bryant

noticed that the day after the Commonwealth and other banks reached a settlement to reimburse this money taken as a preferred creditor to ABC Learning, the [Commonwealth Bank](#) was busy funding another corporate child care service provider's expansion.

ACCS National Executive

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

National Convenor

Prue Warrilow, ACCS NSW Branch

Deputy National Convenor

Verity Bierenboim, ACCS SA Branch

National Secretary

Anne Kennedy, ACCS Victoria Branch

National Treasurer

Linda Davison, ACCS Victoria Branch

ACCS Branch Delegates

Western Australia

Josique Lynch, Sally Griffiths, Alisha Berry

South Australia

Verity Bierenboim, Robyn Geisler

Queensland

Bev Book, Marisa Phillips

Tasmania

Zoe Manning

NSW

Prue Warrilow, Lisa Bryant

Victoria

Anne Kennedy, Linda Davison

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