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In Action

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NACBCS Convenor's Report

Lynne Wannan, NACBCS National Convenor

NACBCS is trying hard to remain relevant and on top of the many issues facing children's services in Australia, this requires lots of hard work and effort from many of our members and especially from our national executive.

Historically, NACBCS has not had much in the way of financial support for the many activities it undertakes. Member branches do contribute and Community Child Care Victoria, the Victorian Branch, has for many years made an additional substantial contribution to enable NACBCS to retain the leadership and high profile role it has at the national level in Australia. NACBCS is a truly voluntary organisation.

As national convenor I am aware of the potential for NACBCS to achieve even more by commissioning much needed research, convening think tanks, resourcing branches or providing more direct support to individual members operating our many community based children's services. To do more we do need some income and thus this year two very good arrangements have been made that provide direct benefit to our members while also providing an income to NACBCS. The NACBCS branches have agreed that these two initiatives are good ones for NACBCS as a whole and now we need you to take advantage of them.

One is an offer from ECA to give NACBCS a small contribution from sales of its excellent publication, the Early Learning Series and the other an offer from Educational Experience to give our members a 15% discount on any Educational Experience purchases and NACBCS a 2% share of all sales to our members.

The NACBCS executive is keen to promote these offers to you and should some income be generated for NACBCS we will endeavour to do even more as we advocate on your behalf for Governments to provide

better support for quality community children's services and better access for children to our quality model of care and education.

ECA Early Learning Series

NACBCS believes that the ECA Early Learning Series is a terrific resource and we encourage services to subscribe. Not only will their families have access to a great resource but their subscription will also support NACBCS. Visit http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/everyday_learning_series/special_offer_for_services.html for more information.

Educational Experience

Education Experience provides a great offer for all NACBCS members. All NACBCS members are entitled to a 15% discount on purchases from Educational Experience. For every purchase by a NACBCS member, 2% value of the sale will be given to NACBCS.

NACBCS National Secretariat Report

Barbara Romeril, National Secretary

NACBCS is campaigning to challenge the proposed changes to the QA system, particularly the shift from 'Quality' to 'Accreditation' and the loss of 'Improvement'. NACBCS has produced a fact sheet for members to use at the FaCSIA consultations, as well as an online survey to gather evidence of widespread support for a focus on Quality and Improvement.

Preparations are well underway for the celebration of 25 years of advocacy for community owned children's services in November, including the NACBCS National Conference, 25th Anniversary Dinner and commemorative publication.

NACBCS welcomed the increased affordability

measures in the Federal Budget, as well as the increased funding for indigenous child care, quality assurance and the inclusion support subsidy. However NACBCS continues to advocate for capital funding and for mechanisms to prevent government funds being channelled into private profit.

Our representatives and nominees continue to work hard at the moment with the multitude of government reference groups seeking advice and assistance with policy initiatives; see the updates elsewhere in this newsletter.

National Children's Services Forum

Once again, NACBCS delegates were active participants in the National Children's Services Forum meeting in March. The Forum discussed the plethora of changes and consultations occurring at present and found some agreement amongst the national peak bodies.

The NCSF agreed that the priority issues to raise with government and opposition are:

- the urgent need for sustainable funding for MACS, Mobile and Innovative Rural and Remote services and all services in rural areas
- the need for a long-term strategic plan for children's services for 0 to 12 year olds

NACBCS 25th Anniversary Conference – CHILDREN NOT FOR PROFIT - Community Ownership for a Better World!

The 25th anniversary of NACBCS this year. Don't forget the national conference:

Friday 16 and Saturday 17 November 2007

Melbourne Functions at Caulfield Racecourse

An exciting program has been prepared including a Keynote Address on "The Politics of Childcare in Aotearoa/New Zealand: The wins and compromises of successful advocacy for government investment by community early childhood" by Professor Helen May, Dean of the University of Otago College of Education, NZ.

There will also be pre-conference visits to integrated child & family services and services with innovative practice and governance, social events including a cocktail party and conference dinner, a lively debate on the topic 'Are children really too precious for profit?', a mix of workshops for experienced directors of children's services/social policy practitioners and workshops for child care practitioners and panel presentations on:

- Changing the World – Past, Present and Future
- Theory and practice of integrated children's services – what do we really mean?
- Practitioners Panel - what inspires children's services workers?

Registration details are now being distributed. For further information contact Lauren Matthews at lmattews@cccinc.org.au or ph: 03 9486 3455.

- support for families, including paid parental leave and flexible funding models to enable flexible service delivery

There was not consensus in the NCSF on whether integration of the QA systems was desirable. However there was consensus on the need for strong sanctions for repeat non-accreditation.

NCSF agreed to consider active support for the UNICEF campaign for health equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strain Islander peoples.

FaCSIA invited comment on its implementation of the Inclusion and Professional Support Program so it can learn for future policy initiatives. FaCSIA reported 30 warning letters have been issued to date in regard to Child Care Payments Compliance; sanctions include additional conditions on CCB approval, suspension of CCB approval and notification to parents. FaCSIA reported on a number of changes that have been made to the planned Child Care Management System as a result of sector advice – see elsewhere in this newsletter for details.

Federal Government

Indigenous Policy Announcement

26 June 2007

Open letter to The Hon. Mal Brough, Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

Dear Minister Brough

The undersigned organisations write this joint and open letter in order to convey our views on action required to stop the abuse of children in Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory, and our concerns about aspects of the Australian Government's response to this problem as outlined in your statement of 21 June 2007.

The safety and well-being of Indigenous children is paramount. We welcome your commitment to tackling violence and abuse in certain Indigenous communities. We are deeply concerned at the severity and widespread nature of the problems of child sexual abuse and community breakdown in Indigenous communities in the NT, catalogued in the Little Children are Sacred Report.

We wish to work collaboratively with Governments and the communities affected to ensure that children are protected. We would like to see greater investment in the services that support Indigenous families and communities, the active involvement of these communities in finding solutions to these problems and greater Federal Government engagement in delivering basic health, housing and education services to remote communities.

There is general agreement among the communities affected, Governments and service providers and in the wider Australian community that urgent action is required to address the abuse and neglect of children and to assist those affected by it.

We note that the services which most Australians take for granted are often not delivered to remote Indigenous communities, including adequately resourced schools, health services, child protection and family support services, as well as police who are trained to deal with domestic violence in the communities

affected. We endorse the call in the Little Children are Sacred Report for the Australian and Territory Governments to work together urgently to fill these gaps in services.

There is also a need for a longer term plan to address the underlying causes of the problem, including community breakdown, joblessness, overcrowding and low levels of education.

Successfully tackling these problems requires sustainable solutions, which must be worked out with the communities, not prescribed from Canberra.

We are committed to working with the Government to ensure that in developing and introducing the proposed measures, support is provided to Indigenous communities' efforts to resolve these problems. The proposals go well beyond an 'emergency response', and will have profound effects on people's incomes, land ownership, and their ability to decide the kind of medical treatment they receive. Some of the measures will weaken communities and families by taking from them the ability to make basic decisions about their lives, thus removing responsibility instead of empowering them.

In their present form the proposals miss the mark and are unlikely to be effective. There is an over-reliance on top-down and punitive measures, and insufficient indication that additional resources will be mobilised where they are urgently needed; to improve housing, child protection and domestic violence supports, schools, health services, alcohol and drug rehab programs. These issues have been raised by many Indigenous leaders over many years.

We offer our support to Indigenous communities and the Government in:

- developing programs that will strengthen families and communities to empower them to confront the problems they face;
- consulting adequately with the communities and NT Government, and community service, health and education providers;
- developing a long term plan to address and resolve the causes of child abuse including joblessness, poor housing, education and commit the necessary resources to this.

Yours sincerely

Signed by over 100 community organisations, including NACBCS. Signatories can be viewed at <http://www.acoss.org.au/News.aspx?displayID=99&articleID=2683>.

Please listen to us, PM

Muriel Bamblett, The Age, June 27, 2007

Aborigines would be happy to try techniques used successfully in overseas aid, as long as they are consulted.

THE Prime Minister's national emergency response to protect Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory is a belated recognition that the situation of Aboriginal children today requires urgent action. The Prime Minister says his Government's national emergency measures arise out of a genuine concern for Aboriginal children.

We would like to believe you, Prime Minister. After all, Aboriginal

and Islander leaders, particularly in the fields of children's services, health and education, have been calling for action for decades. In fact, four years ago the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care produced a report on neglect and child abuse in the Northern Territory called State of Denial that called for a comprehensive framework and service response for Aboriginal child protection and family services.

Unfortunately, both the territory and the federal governments failed to respond. And now, instead of implementing the recommendations of the recent report Little Children are Sacred in co-operation with the indigenous community and the NT Government, your Government has announced measures that ride roughshod over the work of the inquiry.

The Prime Minister says the "old ways" have failed and the time for talk is over.

We would like to believe you, Prime Minister, but your own "old way" of dealing with Aboriginal people is to disregard our voices. We have been trying to talk with you for years about the lack of services for health, education and child protection. We have been giving you examples of Aboriginal communities that have begun to turn around the drug and alcohol abuse and poor health outcomes, communities that have succeeded because they were empowered and resourced to take action.

We have been talking about a human rights and culturally respectful social investment approach. But the approach by the Federal Government is a policy of disinvestment. It promotes mainstreaming and denies community control. It has no evidence base.

The evidence from overseas and in Australia points to the fact that when there is properly resourced indigenous community control and effective culturally based programs, social dysfunction indicators, such as poor health outcomes and youth suicide rates, decrease.

The Prime Minister says the measures he has announced will stabilise and protect communities. We would like to believe you, Prime Minister, but your measures are disempowering and punitive.

If we had been consulted, we would have given the Federal Government our professional advice that behaviour changes only when people are empowered and given positive encouragement. This punitive approach will have only a short-term impact — it doesn't address the underlying issues. Worse, you are taking control away from our communities. When you take people's rights away, you also take away their ability to act on their responsibilities. Such paternalism reinforces dependency; and isn't dependency the problem?

The Prime Minister says compulsory health checks for our children will stop the trauma. But as indigenous associate professor of child and adolescent psychiatry Helen Milroy, who herself has been working in the field of sexual abuse and has had experience conducting health checks, warns, "forcing children to submit to an intrusive examination without good evidence or parental consent is akin to abuse".

If the health checks are conducted with insensitivity, you will only

further abuse children.

The Prime Minister says education is critical and school attendance should be tied to welfare payments.

We would like to believe you, but where are the schools, where are the quality teachers and education facilities? The vast majority of our communities don't have secondary schools, so how are our parents to comply?

We would like to believe you, Prime Minister, so could you please consider working with us? How many indigenous child and family welfare service professionals are on your taskforce? Is there any process in mind to talk to the indigenous professionals who have been calling for action for years? If you really want to stop child abuse, please consider the following idea.

There are many examples of successful Aboriginal child and family services practice that are based on investing in cultural ways that strengthen, not weaken, families. Overseas aid and community development organisations talk about the importance of investing in "village wells" to support children. The development of local Aborigine-controlled child and family centres is just such a culturally embedded "village well", which will enable the redevelopment of communities of care for Aboriginal families. If they work for World Vision and Oxfam, they may work for Aboriginal communities.

The child-care secretariat is willing to co-operate with the work of the taskforce, but we would suggest that it is time for you to work with us, something your Government has neglected to do until now. Perhaps, Prime Minister, if you are serious that your concern is for children and not politics, you could start listening to us. Then we may start believing you.

Muriel Bamblett is chairwoman of the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, the main body for Aboriginal and Islander Children and Family Services.

NACBCS Letter to Editor, The Age

It is time the PM provided the funds for the schools and other services needed in aboriginal communities that aboriginal organisations, together with many community service organisations across Australia, have been calling for over the past decades. Protecting children must be a priority but providing supports and services for their families and for the children themselves is the only way to improve the outcomes for aboriginal children into the future. Muriel Bamblett's editorial, Please Listen to Us PM, June 27, is right - working with aboriginal people to deliver the services the rest of Australia takes for granted should be the first step for Government. Successful aboriginal services do exist, such as the Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services, but in spite of calls from the entire national child care sector the Federal Government will not fund them adequately nor provide funds for more. Hopefully the PM will take up Ms Bamblett's request for the Government to work with the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care and thus be better informed about what is working now and become better connected to the people the PM is striving to assist.

Lynne Wannan

Convenor, National Association of Community Based Children's Services

QA Campaign

URGENT

Child Care Quality Assurance: Be Alert & Be Alarmed!

The Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FACCSIA) is conducting public discussions on the proposal to change the Child Care Quality Assurance System into the Child Care Accreditation System.

Prue Warrilow, NACBCS Deputy Convenor, represents NACBCS on the QA National Advisory Group and below is her discussion on the consultation process.

"The review of the Child Care Accreditation System continues. Key considerations are:

- The public forums. NSW and National NACBCS have developed some NACBCS Facts Sheets that may assist you in discussion participation. Please try to attend at least one forum and have your voice heard. And if you can get some parents to attend that would be great! See http://www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/childcare/child_care_system.htm for forum dates and venues.
- The draft system framework should be on http://www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/childcare/child_care_system.htm.
- A group of academics are reviewing the draft standards for comment. Once this review is complete the amended standards should be released, hopefully prior to the public forums.

I'll keep circulating information to NACBCS branches as I receive it.

BUT MOST IMPORTANT – if you don't provide feedback and your comments then FaCSIA assume that this means you agree. No comment is tacit approval. My job is to represent your views via NACBCS, but I am one voice. Your individual responses are important."

NACBCS has developed the below information to help NACBCS members and key stakeholders critically assess the proposed Child Care Accreditation System.

Ask the questions below at the FACCSIA forums in July and August 2007, then government will get a clear message that we want **QUALITY!**

As well as thinking about the issues and asking the questions suggested in the NACBCS factsheet at the forums across Australia, NACBCS asks that you answer a short survey about the Quality Assurance system you want. NACBCS will use the responses to this survey in our advocacy for a strong system of genuine Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement! Visit www.cccinc.org.au/nacbc and follow the links to complete the online survey.

Visit the FACCSIA Child Care Accreditation System site for the forum dates, as well as the Child Care Accreditation System Framework and Diagram. The revised standards will also be available on this site when they are finalised. <http://www.facsia>.

gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/childcare/child_care_system.htm

NOW is the time to ensure that children's services professionals and families get the Quality Assurance system we want and our children deserve. NACBCS encourages all NACBCS members to provide their feedback to this important review.

Child Care Change Anger

Carla Danaher, Herald Sun, June 16, 2007

CHILDCARE groups are outraged over proposed changes to the way centres are accredited, fearing quality will plummet.

Community Childcare Victoria says the reforms would make accreditation a pass or fail process, discouraging centres from striving for anything beyond the minimum.

CEO Barbara Romeril accused Families Minister Mal Brough of favouring private childcare operators, saying the reforms allow them to focus on being more profitable. Under current regulations, centres are required to display their accreditation results, including a rating from unsatisfactory to high quality. But Ms Romeril said she had been told that under the proposed changes, childcare centres would either be accredited or not.

Childcare Access convenor Rebecca Bartel said the Howard Government had let parents down on child care.

"The Federal Government is doing a shocking job on child care - they haven't helped access, they haven't helped on affordability and now they're making it harder for parents to assess quality," Ms Bartel said.

But Families Minister Mal Brough said the focus was on quality care.

"Changes to the accreditation system, far from lowering standards, are about strengthening the system and ensuring that appropriate quality standards are being met in all approved child care services," he said.

Opposition families spokeswoman Jenny Macklin said she would keep a close eye on any changes to accreditation.

Federal Budget

Summary of Federal Initiatives

Excerpts from Media Release

*Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
08/05/2007*

The Howard Government is investing a further \$2.1 billion in child care as part of the 2007-08 Budget, including a major boost to Child Care Benefit.

"In the 2007-08 Budget, I can announce that Child Care Benefit (CCB) will be increased by more than 13 per cent on 1 July this year. This will further assist families in meeting the cost of child care." Mr Brough said.

In another significant step to help working parents using approved child care, the Government will bring forward

payment of the 30% Child Care Tax Rebate (CCTR).

From this year, CCTR will be provided as a direct payment soon after the financial year in which the costs of child care are incurred. "The Government recognises that families would prefer to receive the rebate early. I am particularly pleased the Howard Government has been able to respond with this highly practical improvement."

"This means that later this year, parents will receive two years of rebate; their 2005 06 CCTR as part of their tax assessment this year and they will also receive their first new payment for 2006-07 rebate through Centrelink.

This is a total of up to \$8,000 per child that families may receive later this year, depending on the circumstances" Mr Brough said

Mr Brough said the Government was also making a substantial commitment to Australian families by investing \$169.5 million to increase parents' access to quality child care with a focus on regional and remote Australia, including children's services for Indigenous families; providing additional help for children with high support needs using child care; and further increasing support for parents entering the workforce.

"The Howard Government will commit an extra \$15.4 million for Jobs, Education and Training (JET) Child Care fee assistance. The extra funding will enable approximately 20,000 additional parents to undertake training, study, rehabilitation and work, which will help them find work and reduce dependency on welfare.

"In addition the Howard Government will commit an extra \$43.8 million to provide further financial support to child care services operating in areas of need, particularly rural and remote communities. This will help ensure quality child care is available where services may otherwise not be financially viable.

"We are also providing an additional \$71.3 million over five years for the Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS) programme which will allow 3,000 extra children with high support needs, particularly those with a disability to be included in high quality child care each year," Mr Brough said.

The Howard Government will commit \$10.7 million to integrate the three current child care Quality Assurance systems for long day care, family day care and outside school hours care into one system. The new system will reduce overlap and simplify the quality assurance process across the sector.

"The Howard Government will also invest \$23.5 million over four years to create 20 new Innovative Child Care Service Hubs in regional and remote communities with high Indigenous populations. Child Care Service Hubs provide child care, but also link with other local early childhood services to better bring together services, for the benefit of children and families. "The new Hubs will provide greater access to child care for 700 children living in rural and remote Australian communities.

"Further support will be provided for Indigenous families with \$13.8 million to expand access to quality early childhood development activities for vulnerable Indigenous children. Over 6,000 Indigenous children and their parents or carers will have access to improved and expanded playgroup services. Mr Brough said.

NACBCS Response to Federal Budget

Child Care Budget Initiatives Must Not Go to Private Profit

Media Release

8 May 2007

The National Association of Community Based Children's Services (NACBCS) welcomes the Federal Budget commitment of \$23.5m over 4 years for 20 Innovative Child Care Service Hubs in rural and remote communities with high Indigenous populations and the capital funding for 20 Long Day Care centres in rural areas to upgrade and expand existing facilities – but this funding must go to the not-for-profit community owned sector.

'These initiatives must not result in even more public funding being diverted to private profits – they must build communities for children and families' Lynne Wannan, NACBCS National Convenor said today.

The Government must also ensure that at least some of these new Hubs are owned and operated by Indigenous community organisations. 'Existing Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services are an excellent example of an integrated child and family hub – we need more of them' Ms Wannan said.

NACBCS also welcomes initiatives to allow existing Indigenous Children's Services, such as MACS, to choose to claim Child Care Benefit if they feel it would be more beneficial than the direct funding MACS currently receive from Government. Extending Sustainability Assistance to the commercial sector is not the best way to get high quality child care services into rural and remote communities – the Government should direct this investment into the community owned sector in order to develop public infrastructure which is here to serve families into the future.

NACBCS calls on the Howard Government direct its new Budget initiatives into doing something about the appalling reality of long waiting lists for community based care – the Government must invest capital to create additional child care places to give families a choice of not-for-profit community owned services.

NACBCS also welcomes increasing funding for Quality Assurance, Inclusion Support Subsidy and JET child care fee assistance. Families will welcome the more sensible approach to the rebate and the increase in Child Care Benefit.

But families who want the choice of community owned children's services will be deeply disappointed to see public funds diverted into private profit – it seems that comprehensive investment in a quality, sustainable publicly owned system is not part of this Government's future agenda for child care in Australia.

Watch out for NACBCS 25th anniversary publication!

Childcare groups applaud Budget sweetener

ABC Online, 6 May 2007

Childcare groups have welcomed a Federal Government decision to give parents the childcare rebate on a weekly basis.

Currently, the 30 per cent tax rebate is awarded to parents on an annual basis.

Treasurer Peter Costello has indicated the change will be part of Tuesday's Federal Budget.

Lynne Wannan from the Association of Community-based Children's Services says the change is necessary.

"It was ridiculous to have a rebate that families couldn't get for two years after they'd already paid for the child care," she said.

"So this is a bit better in that it means that they will virtually get it as they're needing to find the money to pay for child care."

Labor critical of child care fee hike

AAP, Sydney Morning Herald, June 14, 2007

The federal government should name and shame child care operators who hike up fees and swallow extra payments given in the budget to families, Labor says.

The government in the May budget announced \$2.1 billion in child care spending, including two key measures it said would help hundreds of thousands of families.

The child care benefit is being increased by an extra 10 per cent from July this year, and the child care tax rebate is being converted to a direct payment so families receive it more quickly.

Labor said it would support legislation that gives effect to the changes, which was being debated in parliament.

But opposition families spokeswoman Jenny Macklin said she was concerned the increase would not help families if it was swallowed up by child care operators raising their fees.

Her comments follow reports in the Courier Mail newspaper that at least one child care centre has already told parents to expect a 10 per cent increase, and more are set to follow.

The Logan pre-school wrote to parents that the government's increased child care benefit rate, from \$2.96 to \$3.37 an hour, would "make our fee increase a lot more affordable to families".

"Legislation is not even through the parliament and we've got a child care centre increasing their fees by 10 per cent - the same amount as the government's child care benefit bonus," Ms Macklin said.

"We on this side of the house are certainly concerned that families across the country will miss out on the benefits of this child care benefit increase because child care operators will use this one-off increase to net a windfall gain - and parents will be left with the bill."

Ms Macklin said she raised the issue with Family and Community

Services Minister Mal Brough on Wednesday night and was told he would publicise the fee increases “in an attempt, I suppose, to name and shame operators”.

Minister Brough’s Speech to the Commercial Child Care Sector

*Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
Hon Mal Brough MP*

Extract of Address to Child Care NSW Conference
28th April 2007, Sydney

... This is a very important year as the childcare industry. There’s a lot of thing happening and there’s a lot of misinformation being put around, which quite frankly can have the potential to damage your businesses. ...

FaCSIA made the information available to the industry. (child care access hotline data) ... we hope that it’s helped people like yourselves, investors in the industry to be able to have more information, better information, accurate information before you invest large sums of money into the childcare industry.

... we now have some information for you and other potential investors about what could be a good investment, a worthwhile investment and one, which is going to add to our childcare base.

...So far as the vacancy situation is concerned, what happens when people get on the air and say that there are widespread shortages, that there’s a crisis. ... You get branded as being completely full, without vacancies and therefore parents often will ...not take the opportunity to try and find a place.

That’s not good for your business. That’s not good for that family situation and that is not good for the Australian economy because those people could well have been looking to go back to work.

...I’d say two things about a risk to you in your sector. And that is the policy of the Opposition to put another 260 centres, which are somehow going to be subsidised into the Australian childcare sector. I’d like to know where they’re going to be. I have put that challenge out to the Opposition time and time again and not once have they been able to state where any one of those centres would be.

I do that for two reasons. One, I know that it’s a policy that was made for a news grab but I also do it on your behalf. I would hate to be the owner of a childcare centre who has to compete and work on every other accreditation and licensing arrangement equally and then find that a government subsidised centre was going to pop up two doors down the road when I already had 20 per cent vacancies. Who’s going to compensate me when I find that I can’t actually operate? ...

Choice is important. You’re not all going to survive because some of you will not provide the things that somebody wants. You’re not in the right location. That is business but when someone else

comes and intervenes in a false way, I think it’s very concerning.

Another part of the Opposition’s plan right now is to fund adequately, as they put it, the community based centre. Well let’s understand exactly what that means. It means that the advantages will be put into one sector, which has been unable to provide the places that Australia so desperately needed. Remember we have doubled the places in the last ten years. We have doubled the funding in the last ten years. The growth has been because entrepreneurs in this country have actually invested their money, ...taken a risk, run a business and provided a service to Australia. Well I don’t believe we should be pitching one sector against another sector. I believe that everyone should have the same quality of service and everyone should have the same opportunity. And if councils wish to run childcare centres, that is a very good thing and let them do so. But that is a decision they make on as level a playing field as you can get and I think that this is a very worrying development, that is now being enunciated by the Opposition.

Let’s move onto quality assurance. Recently I’ve been informed that the spot checks have not been working as I had anticipated. It’s important that the industry knows that they are doing the job that the Government requires them to do. I’m aware that they have been with their spot checks going right across beyond what we had requested them to do, to go in and to make a brief assessment as to whether or not these children were in a quality childcare centre, whether or not the parents could have assurance that the child was safe, that they were in a vibrant environment, that there were the toys available, that the carers were engaged, etc.

... They (the NCAC) will be redoing the spot check form. They will be giving you direct information as to what is required on that, as we work towards the new accreditation standards.

So what I’m trying to do is to prevent the horrendous amount of paper work that some centres have been required to do as a result of these spot checks. That is not what it’s about. The spot checks are about giving people comfort. It’s to make, hopefully, and I say that hopefully, a lie of the stories that have abounded over the years that when someone knows there’s going to be an accreditation check they get rid of the bad kids. They bring in the good teachers and they bring in the toys. I mean it’s like a truck that drives around and pulls up in front of the childcare centre and everybody goes and another lot comes in and they do and they go away. We haven’t actually uncovered any of that yet with the spot checks. We haven’t uncovered anything like that but these are the stories that abound and unless you can actually deal with them in a factual way, then they become something that people...believe it to be true.

The next thing is in regard to your game books, if you like, your own documentation, which determines how your centre runs. We are in the process at the moment with you in consultation, working up a template. So that when the Accreditation Council comes in you will be judged against that template, not judged against your own. You can go over and above that and that’s fantastic. What I’m interested in as a regulator and as a politician is to ensure that everyone meets a standard which is the right standard, is an acceptable standard, that that doesn’t prevent people from going over and above it. ...

So quality assurance is an extremely important part of giving people confidence about what we’re doing and to provide the sort

of standards that are required. But whenever these sort of things go over the top, they actually defeat their own purpose because you end up with too many people sitting there, filling out bits of forms trying to justify the work that they're already doing. ...

...preschools [are] not the responsibility of the childcare sector. It is good for you to be able to provide a preschool program but it is not your ultimate responsibility. And if we are going to have a debate about early childhood learning, we should have a debate about early childhood learning. Today childcare is about having a safe, secure, vibrant environment where children can grow and they can experience etc. But if we are going to go down the path of the Opposition of putting qualified preschool teachers in every childcare centre then I ask the question, who is going to pay for it? The Victorian Childcare Association ... parents came back with something north of 95 per cent said, they were not willing or interested in having an increase in their childcare fees as a result of there being an additional qualification being required.

I wanted you all to understand that there are two separate arguments or debates to be had here. One is early childhood education and I am a strong believer in early childhood education. I am the Minister for Childcare. At the moment there is a separation between the two. In the years to come there may not be but today there is. Today we have to ensure that the Accreditation Council and the standards that you apply are for childcare. That's not babysitting but it's also not an early childhood educational system where there is a syllabus that has to be attained and standards that have to be adhered to in regard to children attaining particular results.

We are now putting just on \$10,000 million every four years into the provision of that childcare. That is a massive investment. We're now introducing compliance, as you're aware to ensure that that investment is protected. We're improving the quality assurance, simplifying and streamlining it so it's not a burden on you but can deliver for parents. And that again is the way it should be.

So ladies and gentlemen, what you do is fundamental to the Australian economy and it's also fundamental to Australian families. If families are led to believe that there's no point looking for a childcare service then it does you harm and it does their family harm and ultimately it does the economy harm. If childcare becomes unaffordable for people, you end up with the same result. If we get our paperwork so horrendously out of balance, then we find that directors are no longer doing what they should be doing and that is overseeing the work of their childcare workers and ensuring the safety and the value of having a good centre operating and developing children.

I know that your Association has a passion for improving your services and hence this conference. I want to thank them for the work that they are doing with the Government to ensure that we get the balance right, that we listen to the concerns, particularly around the childcare management system and I thank them very much, both the national body and the state body for the work that they are doing there....

NACBCS Response to Minister's Speech

3 May 2007

Dear Minister Brough,

I am writing to you to raise concerns the National Association of Community Based Children's Services (NACBCS) has about views expressed in your speech, 28th of April, at the Child Care NSW Conference. NACBCS is very worried about the implications of many points made in this speech. I hope our interpretation of your comments is wrong and that you will meet with me and other representatives of NACBCS to clarify your position on these important issues.

NACBCS is extremely disappointed with the policy framework you appear to be putting forward for the children's services system for Australia. NACBCS has advocated strongly for years for a children's services system in Australia that enables children to develop positively and provides families with the support they need to participate confidently in the paid work force. To hear you, as Minister responsible for child care at the national level, asserting your role is to protect commercial business operators and down playing the importance of educational or developmental programming and measures to improve the level of quality in Australia's child care system, is very disturbing.

We have come a long way through the past couple of decades in understanding how critical the early years of a child's life are. There is now world wide recognition of the linkages between a nation's economic growth and investment in early childhood development. There is now recognition that child care services have a key role to play in protecting children, enhancing their developmental outcomes, in building strong connections between parents and thus contributing to the social and economic outcomes that build strong and healthy communities and nations. Your speech appears to devalue the role of child care as a place where children begin their early education in a way that equips them for greater success at school and in their later development. Further, your negative attitude about quality assurance and the role of early childhood professionals in ensuring a high quality service, that can foster children's development, is delivered, is disturbing.

NACBCS members across Australia have been shocked by your dismissive views about the community based sector and your lack of understanding of the important role this sector has played in shaping Australia's children's services system. It was the community based sector that developed the foundation policies for Australia's child care system, many that you clearly seek to dismantle; the quality assurance and improvement system, the accountability for the expenditure of Government funds in priority areas and for priority needs groups as well as the contribution of millions of hours of volunteer effort that enabled the provision of child care throughout Australia. This volunteer contribution has been from parents committed to providing their children, but even more significantly, other peoples' children, with quality, well managed and engaging services. This is the very valuable volunteering your Government strives to garner in other sectors and yet you dismiss it as somehow so less needing of Government support and protection than the business operators who simply operate a child care centre to make money.

The community based sector, which has grown and strengthened



through the destructively competitive past two decades, has been sustained because of the support and contribution from families and others in the community who put in - with no expectation of personal financial gain.

NACBCS is shocked to read your glib accusation that the community based sector has failed to meet the growing demand for child care in Australia. If the Federal Government had invested the many millions of dollars now channelled into shareholder pockets into growing the community sector, a publicly owned system, Australia would now have a universally available system where every dollar of taxpayers funding went into service provision. We would not have had the useless and destructive competition, you refer to in Queensland, that has led to oversupply in some places. We would not have a system of provision vulnerable to the whims of the market. We could have maintained a proper planning system, a system for prioritising developments into high needs areas and a system that actively builds community through community ownership and being run by and for the community into the future. We would not have such a huge transfer of taxpayer funds into private pockets rather we would have so much more investment in quality outcomes for children.

In contrast to your apparent views about the community based sector, you applaud the profit takers of Australia's child care industry, 'entrepreneurs who have actually invested their money, taken a risk, run a business and provided a service to Australia.' Minister, entrepreneurs rarely invest their own money or take personal risks, they risk others funds, ones they borrow and yes, like the community sector, they do run a business. Parents managing child care centres are the real heroes, the ones Australia should thank. They actually invest their own energy and time and take on the responsibilities running businesses require - with no expectation of personal gain.

Like it or not Minister you have pitched one sector against another and NACBCS is disappointed that you've taken sides.

Your views about quality assurance are equally disappointing and show a surprising lack of awareness of contemporary understandings about child development.

Child care is about fostering children's early development, it is about putting in place the appropriate programs that assist children reach developmental milestones in the pre school years. It is today, in the light of the evidence we have about child development, beyond question that this requires qualified early childhood professionals and absolutely that every child care centre must have at least one qualified early childhood teacher who is informed about early childhood, child development and appropriate programming for a child care setting. The delivery of child care programs requires much more than simply 'having a passion for looking after children'.

In the real world where businesses want to make money, and the more the better, cutting costs is smart practice. When delivering human services cutting costs can be a dangerous exercise. This is why the Federal Government introduced the quality assurance and improvement system on top of the State and Territory regulatory systems - to temper the free market. Governments understand that unless standards are set then there is likely to be cutting of expenditure at the expense of safe, quality service delivery. The door is then open to not employ appropriately qualified staff, to not have an early childhood teacher in every centre and thus

have a service where staff do not interact productively with each other, the children or their parents. The protection of children from inappropriate cost cutting in child care delivery is critical.

Moves to water down the quality assurance and improvement system would be of huge concern to our sector. A quality assurance system that involves just 'a brief assessment as to whether or not the children were in a quality child care centre...' and aims 'to ensure everyone meets a standard which is the right standard, an acceptable standard, that doesn't prevent people from going over and above it', sounds like a very mediocre system not one that seriously aims to achieve good practice in the provision of services for children. NACBCS would be extremely disappointed if Australia goes backwards with its quality assurance system in order to ease the load on commercial business and make it easier to make profits at the expense of fostering children's development.

NACBCS believes that the very valuable funds provided by Government for child care should not be used to protect business providers but rather to protect children. We trust this would be your priority also.

NACBCS would value the opportunity to talk with you about these issues so that we can clear up any misinterpretations for our membership. Meanwhile the community based children's services sector will continue to provide the same high quality early childhood education and care that it always has and our sector will continue to lobby actively for improvement to the provision of early childhood services and to oppose any backward moves.

I trust that the Government does value the contribution thousands of parents have made as volunteers in managing services on behalf of the Australian community through the past many decades and the resultant high quality start in life that the community based sector has give to so many of Australia's children.

Yours sincerely,

Lynne Wannan
National Convenor
National Association of Community Based Children's Services

Did you know...

*NACBCS turns 25
in 2007!*

Update on CCMS

Child Care Management System (CCMS)

Karen Morley, member of National Reference Group

The CCMS is a national child care computer system to provide the best information on child care supply and usage that has ever been available across Australia for families, services and the government.

With the introduction of CCMS parents will be able to access an online statement from Centrelink to obtain details of the CCB payments made on their behalf to their child care service(s).

The CCMS will bring all approved child care services online. Services will provide information directly to FaCSIA via the Internet to allow calculation and payment of CCB fee reductions on behalf of children in their service. All services will be required to submit attendance data electronically on a weekly or fortnightly basis. Fee reductions will be paid to services within 48 hours of processing.

Eligibility for CCB remains unchanged for families. Families will continue to report any changes to their circumstances to Centrelink. The CCMS will improve the transfer of relevant and timely information to child care services about a family's eligibility. This information will be transferred electronically to the service from FaCSIA.

The choice for families to receive their CCB payments via fee reductions or as a lump sum after the end of the financial year will continue to be available.

Child care services will continue to ask parents to advise the number of children in the family using care in a given week.

Child care services will provide information to support Child Care Benefit payments-Information will be provided (including attendance details, hours charged and hours used) for all families, including lump sum claimants, over the Internet to FaCSIA.

FaCSIA will pay CCB fee reductions to services and become the contact point for all service child care services.

Services will no longer have a direct relationship with Centrelink/FAO.

The Child Care Management System will go on line from January 2007. Long Day Care services will be the first within the sector to go on line. Services will be able to nominate the timing of the change from the current system to the new CCMS system.

Each service across Australia will receive a one off grant from FaCSIA to assist with the cost of transition. Further assistance will be available to those services who met the funding criteria.

Funds have been allocated to assist with training. FaCSIA is currently developing its training package and how services will

assess training.

The next edition of CCMS News will be forwarded to all services during July 2007.

The responsibility for the management of the CCB programme is currently split between FaCSIA, Centrelink and the Family Assistance Office (FAO). Child care services also currently bear a large proportion of the CCB administration and calculation effort. The new system will simplify and streamline the administration of CCB. Child care services will no longer need to calculate fee reductions and will be able to submit information to government on-line.

Key Changes Under CCMS

The CCMS reference group has been actively involved in the CCMS process. FaCSIA has been very responsive in their approach which has been demonstrated in the changes made to the CCMS. The key changes have been:

- A change in the reporting process the option of one or two weeks reporting cycle is available.
- Services can opt not to receive the enrolment deposit.
- After much discussion services will no longer need to record both enrolments and time used. They will now provide this information for a period of four weeks over the year. Each service will have a different window for reporting. There is no commitment that this will continue from year to year.
- Extending the time frame for services before having to refund the enrolment deposit

Currently the reference group is discussing the best approach for training and support for services.

Absences – CCB will be paid for up to 42 absence days per child without reasons or documentation.

Once these first 42 days are used, any further absences will only be paid for permitted circumstances where evidence is supplied by parents. Child care services will need to identify the reason for the absence and hold documentation to support them.

Cumulative absences totals will be available to parents through the online statement, and will also be made available to child care services.

Enrolment Advances - This is a new payment. Child care services will receive a one off advance payment for each eligible enrolment. This payment will be available to the service for the duration of the child's enrolment in that service. It will be recovered once the child leaves the service.

Due to the nature of Occasional Care, CCB Enrolment Advances will not apply to this service type. FaCSIA will consult with the Occasional Care Sector on possible arrangements.

Calculation of CCB Fee Reductions - Centrelink will calculate fee reductions for each child based on the weekly attendance information from the service and the latest family entitlement information held by Centrelink.

Child care services will no longer be required to calculate CCB fee reduction amounts.

FaCSIA will pay CCB fee reductions to each service.

CCB will still be paid based on sessions of care.

Families must report to Centrelink/FAO changes in circumstances that affect their CCB entitlement, Centrelink will apply these to fee reduction calculations from point of notification.

JET - Jet funding will be paid by FaCSIA under the CCMS. Centrelink/FAO will remain the contact point for families regarding

JET eligibility.

Multiple Child Percentage - Child care services will record a multiple child count, as advised by the families, which will be used by Centrelink when calculating fee reductions.

Review of Training Packages

Update

Bruce Hurst, member of Industry Reference Group

NACBCS is currently participating in the review of the Community Services Training Package CHC02. CHC02 incorporates the Certificate and Diploma level courses in Children's Services. The Community Services and Health Industry Training Board has now released Draft 1 and is accepting feedback on Draft 1 until July 31 2007.

There are many proposed changes to qualifications in Draft 1 which have the potential to impact significantly on Children's Services. Some of the key issues for discussion from Draft 1 include:

- The discontinuation of the Certificate IV in OSHC which is to be absorbed into the Certificate IV in Children's Services
- Whether the Diploma of OSHC can also be absorbed into the Diploma of Children's Services
- Whether a generic Children's Services qualification is more or less effective than separate qualifications for different sectors
- Whether the term "Children's Services" should be dropped and replaced by another term
- Whether the proposed competencies for an Inclusion Support Facilitator are consistent with the role of an ISF

NACBCS will be submitting a response to the Draft and wants to ensure that the points of view of members are considered. All comments should be sent to Bruce Hurst, Community Child Victoria at bhurst@cccinc.org.au or you can call Bruce on 03 9486 3455. Copies of the Draft 1 materials can be downloaded from the Industry Skills Council website <http://www.cshisc.com.au>

Keeping An Eye on Corporate Child Care The Australian Experience

ABC loses appeal over missing toddler

Peter Gregory, The Age, June 29, 2007

Child care company ABC Developmental Learning Centres has failed in a bid to overturn a \$200 fine imposed after a two-year-old boy went missing from one of its centres.

The Court of Appeal today upheld findings by a magistrate and Supreme Court judge that inadequate supervision by two staff members at the suburban centre was a failure of the company.

ABC was fined \$200, without conviction, after the child escaped from the Hoppers Crossing centre on April 17, 2003. The boy had climbed on a blue foam cube and over a fence, when one of three staff members - supervising 12 children - went to the toilet.

Today, three judges said in a published judgement that supervision of children at such a centre would be wholly or largely the responsibility of staff, rather than management. They said the court's view of a proprietor's duty would determine whether a lapse in supervision by a staff member would amount to inadequate supervision by the owner.

"No issue of that kind arises in the present case, since ABC conceded that there had not been adequate supervision," the judges said.

They said ABC argued that previous court rulings amounted to imposing vicarious liability on the company, but they found the question did not arise.

"The duty to ensure adequate supervision is imposed on the proprietor itself. If that duty is breached, the proprietor itself is directly liable," the court said.

*Visit NACBCS on
www.nacbcs.org.au*



NACBCS NATIONAL CONFERENCE

CHILDREN NOT FOR PROFIT COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP FOR A BETTER WORLD!

Friday 16 and Saturday 17 November 2007
Melbourne Functions at Caulfield Racecourse
CCC Members - \$250 one day, \$350 two days (non-members \$270 & \$400)

PRE-CONFERENCE VISITS TO CHILDREN'S SERVICES Thursday 15 November

Tour no. 1: Integrated Child & Family Services

- Bannockburn Family Centre, Bannockburn
- Quantin Binnah Community Centre, Werribee
- Laverton Children's Centre

Tour no. 2: Innovative Practice & Governance for Survival of Stand Alone Services

- Eildon Road Children's Centre, St Kilda
 - Program based on use of natural materials, Family groupings and Formal links with family support services – places reserved for children in protective system
- Lady Gowrie Child Centre, Carlton
 - Program based on use of learning stories
- Other destinations to be confirmed.

COCKTAIL PARTY Thursday 15 November 6-7pm (Novotel St Kilda)

CONFERENCE DINNER Friday 16 November - Birthday bash for NACBCS (Novotel St Kilda)

CONFERENCE 16 – 17 NOVEMBER

Keynote Address: Professor Helen May, Dean of the University of Otago College of Education, NZ
"The Politics of Childcare in Aotearoa/New Zealand: The wins and compromises of successful advocacy for government investment by community early childhood"

Panels

- Changing the World – Past, Present and Future
- Theory and practice of integrated children's services – what do we really mean?
- Practitioners Panel - what inspires children's services workers?

Debate 'Are children really too precious for profit?'

Workshops

Mix of workshops for experienced directors of children's services/social policy practitioners and workshops for child care practitioners. Topics include:

- Globalisation & ethics in children's services
- Doing Social Justice in Programming – the sky is not the limit
- Advocating locally / defining the difference / selling the message
- Integrated Service Models
- Workforce Issues
- Childcare Funding Models
- Expanding the Community Childcare Sector
- Role of Local Government in Children's Services
- Models of Community Ownership

Groves out to expand empire

AAP, Sunday Herald Sun, June 03, 2007

CHILDCARE entrepreneur Eddy Groves, the ABC Learning Centres Ltd chief executive, is eyeing US targets, armed with billions of dollars. After raising more than \$1 billion last week, he confirmed his rapidly growing company was looking to expand in the United States.

“We think we could make a substantial acquisition in the United States or a multitude of smaller acquisitions,” Mr Groves told the ABC’s Inside Business program today.

The company he founded with his wife in the late 1990s as global provider in all forms of education has centres in 39 of the 50 US states and is looking to spread its imprint.

“Throughout Asia, India, Australia, United States, the UK there’s many opportunities,” he said.

But the company would focus in on the United States for now, he said.

He denied investors were getting annoyed with the childcare giant for diluting their shares and for raising too much capital rather than giving some of it back to shareholders.

He also dismissed criticism the company’s return on equity (ROE) of near six per cent was no better than that provided by banks.

The International Experience - Aotearoa/ New Zealand

Childcare centres warned not to profit from subsidy

By RUTH LAUGESON - Sunday Star Times, 6 May 2007

Education minister Steve Maharey has issued a blunt warning to the country’s two main commercial childcare chains, telling them they cannot expect to continue to make profits in coming years on the back of heavy government subsidies for childcare.

Maharey said his officials had told the management of ABC Learning Centres and Kidicorp to begin adjusting to a new environment as the government continues unrolling a series of reforms in the early childhood sector over the next five years aimed at lifting quality.

Maharey said with the growing emphasis on quality care, there would be little or no scope for private operators to use government funding to deliver a return to shareholders. While it was desirable for the country’s 4000-plus early childhood operations to deliver a surplus at the end of the year, that surplus should be reinvested to deliver quality care and education.

The ABC and Kidicorp chains respectively own 77 and 75 centres in New Zealand. Government subsidies range from between \$3 and \$10.50 per hour per child, depending on the age of the child and the number of qualified teachers employed by a centre. Fifty-six percent of the country’s 1800 daycare centres are operated

on a for-profit basis.

Maharey said his officials had told them that “the chances of making a profit of the kind your shareholders would expect” as early childhood reforms unrolled up to the year 2012 were “very, very low”.

This is “simply because the sector will over time become more like the compulsory schooling sector and the chances of making a profit will be almost nil.

“Both chains are thinking about how they adjust to that,” he said.

Maharey said Kidicorp was considering whether to move to trust status. His officials had told both chains that if the government saw a line in their annual reports showing a return to shareholders, that would make the government question whether it was paying those chains too much in subsidies.

Kidicorp chief executive Wayne Wright said he was bemused by Maharey’s comments.

“Kidicorp has never paid a dividend - we don’t make enough money to do that,” he said.

Any surpluses were ploughed back into developing centres and paying teachers. This was a declared policy of the company.

Wright also said Kidicorp had no issues with known government policy in the early childcare field.

Kidicorp had publicly supported the government initiative to give 20 free hours of early childhood education for three and four-year-olds.

Another provider pulls out of childcare scheme

ARWEN HANN and COLIN ESPINER, The Press, Thursday, 14 June 2007

Another major childcare provider has pulled out of the Government’s controversial 20 hours free scheme, saying it would reduce the quality of education.

ABC Learning Centres sent a letter to parents this week saying it had reluctantly decided not to offer the scheme in its 90 centres.

It said the funding rate offered by the Government would not cover basics such as wages, rent and power costs.

That would lead to a reduction in the quality of learning provided by its centres.

The decision came as Education Minister Steve Maharey conceded some early childhood centres are “confused” about the Government’s flagship 20 hours free childcare scheme.

From next month, the parents of every three and four-year-old will be entitled to 20 hours free early childhood education, implementing a major election promise by Labour.

But some childcare centres have opted out of the scheme,

claiming they will lose money by implementing it, while others say they will struggle to cope with increases in demand.

ABC Learning Centres' letter said the company did not feel optional charges, which the Government has said centres can charge for extra services or higher standards of care, were a viable option because the income could not be guaranteed.

Nor did it feel it was fair to charge parents of one and two-year-old children higher fees – a strategy chosen by some centres opting into the scheme – to balance their books.

The company said it would reconsider its position if the Government changed the policy to allow centres to enforce a mandatory additional charge to cover any shortfall.

National yesterday highlighted Tauranga early childhood centre The Treehouse, which has announced a 20-hours-free scheme with a top-up “quality education surcharge” of \$20 per day.

The surcharge, it said, was to cover “interesting and educational guests”, “a beautiful and aesthetic learning environment”, the “provision of a nutritional and sumptuous morning tea”, and an “excellent, rich teaching programme”.

The Government has maintained childhood centres can levy an “optional charge” as long as it is for additional enhancements and parents are told in advance and agree.

Under questioning in Parliament yesterday Maharey argued the scheme was still “free” even with the surcharges.

But he accepted some childcare centres may be confused about the scheme.

Want to build strong, positive relationships with your families and support their parenting?

Early Childhood Australia is offering, in conjunction with NACBCS, a special deal on the Everyday Learning Series, where part of the purchase price is returned to NACBCS.

Early Childhood Australia also knows that parents want information that is up to date, dependable, credible and easy to read. Early Childhood Australia's Everyday Learning Series was developed by early childhood experts specifically to meet these needs. Each year the four books in the series cover topics of real interest to parents such as: brothers and sisters, making friends, maths, imagination and talking.

Having strong relationships with our families is crucial to the quality of a childcare service and to its success. Supporting parents in their parenting is an essential part of that relationship.

‘The majority of parents are concerned about the level of confidence in their parenting and the community pressure to get parenting right.’
Australian Childhood Foundation.

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.

When ordering the Everyday Learning Services please make sure that you alert Early Childhood Australia that you are a member of NACBCS.

Branch Reports

Victoria

Community Child Care/ Victorian Branch

Barbara Romeril, Executive Director

Victorian members have been active in the Government's consultations on the new children's services regulations; we worked in collaboration with the LHMU in advocating for increased staff:child ratios, minimum Certificate III for all and limits on maximum group sizes. We are now working on a public statement on improving standards in child care with a number of other peak bodies and statewide agencies. We look forward with optimism to the draft regulations later this year.

The State Budget funded all of the election commitments to invest in community children's services and the state submission to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Human Capital working party took this further. The new Minister for Children, Lisa Neville is committed to continuing the Victorian Government's reform process for communities, families and children.

CCC is re-launching the Community Ownership Endorsement Scheme, which now encompasses long day care, family day care, occasional care and outside school hours care. We look forward to piloting this in Wollongong in preparation for taking it national later this year.

We are planning a forum on integrated service models, to be held mid year to really look at the current experience of integrating early childhood education and care with other child and family supports – the learnings from this forum will be carried forward into the NACBCS national conference to be held in Melbourne in November.

Queensland

Things in Queensland have been fairly quite over the last few months. The AGM was held and a new committee was elected. Members have been actively involved in responding to and providing information to the National office. Also, members participated in the May Day March with LHMU.

New South Wales

The NACBCS NSW executive held a planning day in May at which a new strategic plan was adopted for the branch. All executive members are now busily implementing the decisions from this planning day. Shortly after the planning day the NSW Branch AGM was held at the beginning of June.

New office bearers were elected at the meeting as follows:

Convenor	Carol Lymbery
National Representative	Prue Warrilow
Deputy Convenor	Gerard Moon
Secretary	Tracey Kirk-Downey
Treasurer	Trish Brown

A vote of thanks was given to outgoing office bearers including Tonia Godhard the outgoing treasurer who has worked at improving our financial position over the last year.

The NSW Branch is working on three major issues at the moment: Child Care Quality Assurance, preschool funding and the implementation of a 1:4 ratio for babies in NSW.

Members are very concerned about the impact a combined Quality Assurance process may have on the Accreditation system. We have circulated the "Be Alert and Alarmed" letter to all community based services in NSW (not just NACBCS members) and are encouraging services to attend Community Child Care's information meetings being held before FaCSIA's forums on the issues. We also want to remind all our members to complete the accreditation survey at <http://www.cccinc.org.au/nacbc.htm>

NACBCS NSW is very pleased to have joined with a range of peak organisations, major child care providers, educational institutions and unions in NSW in our fight to get the NSW state Government to implement a 1:4 ratio for babies in NSW. We believe through working together we can definitely make this happen. We intend this to be a loud and successful campaign after many years of trying to get this change to happen.

In an attempt to get more member involvement in NACBCS we have made a decision to reduce our meetings to 4 a year and to adopt new communication protocols to ensure the widest and easiest dissemination of information to and between members.

Obviously this is already having the desired results because our branch membership has doubled in the last three months! Anybody who is considering joining should contact Deb on our new dedicated NACBCS number on 02 8922 6434.

We also have a new postal address: PO Box 221 Summer Hill 2130

Western Australia

Carewest WA

Regulations / Licensing : The Child Care Consultative Review Committee has been meeting monthly to discuss issues identified and to assist the Departmental Officers to write a Discussion Paper. Individuals and groups were invited to send in information and express their views on any issue they wanted included in the Discussion Paper. Since then 2 drafts have been produced for the Committee's consideration and feedback. The final version for distribution to the sector and the community at large will be launched on 16 July, by the new Minister, Sue Ellery.

Each licensed service as well as a variety of groups and individuals will be sent a copy of the paper. There will be a 3 month consultation period. A consultative process has also been developed and one of the Committee's responsibilities is to promote a high level of public participation, and consult widely with the community and the children's sector. A facilitator has been appointed to conduct forums in the metropolitan and regional areas. There will be on line surveys available and both services and organisations will be encouraged to consult with

their members and provide feedback.

After a somewhat confusing introduction to the requirement for a Working with Children Check, it appears that for Managerial Officers of Community Based services and students the issues have been resolved for the time being. The definition of a Managerial Officer will be discussed in the Regulations Review.

As a result of the Ford Review, The Department of Community Development will be split into 2 departments: The Department for Communities and the Department for Child Protection. The Licensing & Standards Unit will transfer into the new Department for Communities. The Unit has recently boosted its staff numbers which will assist in implementing the monitoring strategy announced by the Minister that all services will be visited at least once a year.

Strategic Plan: At the April meeting of Carewest, the plan was reviewed and evaluated. Members were then asked to prioritise the areas they felt we needed to focus on for the next 3 months. The Constitution has been reviewed and we plan to launch and adopt the new one at the AGM scheduled for 18 September.

TRAINING: The Diploma Traineeship has now been established in WA, yet some RTO's are still unsure about delivering it.

Carewest has been invited as an Industry representative on the Board of the ITAB.

Children's Services Industry Development Council (C.S.I.D.C.). This group continues to be proactive in its advocacy for children's services and its staff, meeting every 6 weeks and comprising of individuals and organisations' representatives from the sector.

NIFTeY WA: Along with a number of associated organisations, including Carewest, NIFTeY WA held a half a day Conference, The Early Years Partnerships and Prevention, on 15 June. The presenters were Professor Deborah Phillips from Washington DC, the co-editor of the book, "From Neurons to Neighbourhoods", Sherry Thompson, Executive Director Early Childhood and Statewide Services in South Australia and Professor Dorothy Scott, also of South Australia. Their presentation was thought provoking. For anyone interested their papers are available on the RUCSN's website: www.rucsn.org.au

Retirees etc: A farewell lunch was held for a number of Directors who have retired or have sadly left the field. Angela Miller, Gina Newland (Mc Culloch), and Pat Hassett, have retired this year and throughout their careers have been NACBCS delegates and worked tirelessly as advocates of Community Based Child Care. Sadly we also farewellled Sally Whitaker, who resigned from Billabong Community Centre, and was Carewest's secretary and representative on the CSIDC, among numerous other committees. Next month Annette Shilcock will be leaving Willetton after 17 plus years of service.

Kwinana CCC will be closing its doors and RUCSN is now sponsoring Busselton CCC in the South West.

A State Children's Services Conference will be held in the last week of August 2007.

ABOUT NACBCS

The objective of NACBCS is to advocate and assist the development of community owned children’s services providing good quality care, to initiate public action to promote and defend community owned children’s services throughout Australia and to act on behalf of community owned children’s services in relation to governments and other bodies.

NACBCS is the peak representative body for all Australian community owned children’s services including Long Day Care and Out of School Hours Care services. NACBCS is an unincorporated association, which operates as a non-profit organisation. The Association is democratic in structure and relies on participatory and inclusive processes to achieve our goals.

Each state and territory has a NACBCS Branch, which brings together individuals and organisations at a regional level to work toward achieving our goals. Each Branch nominates delegates to the National Executive, which in turn nominates Office Bearers.

Community Child Care Victoria manages the National Secretariat function for the Association from its offices in Melbourne. To facilitate the maintenance of strong working relationships NACBCS holds two national meetings a year for the executive and interested members. Other discussion and communication occurs through electronic processes.

For information about our national activities contact the NACBCS Secretariat on e-mail: recept@cccinc.org.au

There is no individual membership of NACBCS at the national level. To join NACBCS, contact the branch in your state or territory.

How to contact NACBCS

State and Territory Branches:

VICTORIA	Barbara Romeril:	bromeril@cccinc.org.au
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