



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

ACCS IN ACTION!

Special Edition September 2017

NATIONAL CONVENOR'S UPDATE

Trends In Community Children's Services Survey Is Here!

Prue Warrilow, National Convenor

ACCS is calling for your voice in our unique nationwide survey of not-for-profit ECEC services collecting longitudinal data on the implementation of the National Quality Framework (NQF). To our knowledge, this is the first research in Australia to systematically track real time information at a grassroots service delivery level nationwide, on the implementation of significant ECEC reform in the community services sector.

In this fourth wave of the survey, ACCS is once again calling on Directors and Coordinators of all education and care services including outside school hours care, long day care, family day care, Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services, kindergartens, preschools, mobile and occasional care services to have a say on:

- The National Quality Framework
- Staff qualifications, recruitment and training
- Waiting lists and utilisation
- Fees
- Vulnerabilities in their community.

Since the introduction of the NQF in 2012, Australian Community Children's Services (ACCS) has conducted three previous waves of the Trends In Community Children's Services Survey (TICCSS), researching how the community sector has responded to the implementation of the NQF.

This research has provided invaluable data which has been used to support ACCS advocacy work on state and national levels. It has provided evidence about the high-quality practices of the community sector, which we have used with every level of government to advocate for all children and families to have access to affordable, quality education and care.

More information about ACCS and the national reports from previous waves are available at www.ausccs.org.au

Completing the [survey](#) is one way you can act now to support the community owned and not-for-profit sector.

As a thank you for completing the survey, you can choose to go into the prize draw to win one of six

\$100 vouchers from [Educational Experience](#), which can be used to purchase resources or equipment from their catalogue.

If you have any questions or require further information about the TICCSS survey, please contact Melalie Collie or Lynn Turner at reception@cccinc.org.au

Have your say, share this with friends and colleagues and ensure all our voices are heard!

TICCS Update

Lynn Turner, Community Child Care

It is exciting to see responses rolling in but we have still have a long way to go. You can complete the survey [here](#).

Thank you to ACCS members for your work to date distributing the [survey](#). It would be great if you could follow up with a reminder soon to your broader networks. You could do this by forwarding the information we emailed to you recently or feel free to use the information to create your own reminder tailored to your state or territory.

CCC and Families At Work is conducting this wave of research again for ACCS National. Please don't hesitate to get in touch with me or our Research Officer Melalie Collie, if you need more information or help distributing in your area.

THE DISTINCTIVE CONTRIBUTION OF ACCS – for more than 30 years

ACCS provides advocacy for children, families and communities in an increasingly crowded space, with multiple voices sometimes pulling in different directions. In order to promote the distinctive contribution that ACCS makes to these national policy debates, the ACCS National Executive has developed the following description of who we are and what we do.

Australian Community Children's Services (ACCS) is the peak body that advocates for the right of Australia's children to access quality not-for-profit, community-owned children's services.

ACCS is unique in its purpose, its capacity for advocacy, the way it operates and the benefits it offers its members.

ACCS Purpose

ACCS is the only national organisation which exclusively represents not-for-profit community

owned Early Childhood Education and Care services of all types.

ACCS Advocacy Capacity

- ACCS has an established [footprint](#) in all states and territories
- ACCS has a history of advocacy spanning over 30 years
- ACCS supports and advocates for:
 - all types of early and middle childhood education and care services
 - all types of community Early Childhood Education and Care service providers, from small stand-alone community run services to large state wide and national services
 - Early Childhood Education and Care services across all regions of Australia including rural and remote areas, regional and urban areas
- ACCS advocacy is informed by solid evidence gathered directly from the Early Childhood Education and Care service sector through regular consultation with members and through a multi-wave nationwide formal survey – [Trends in Community Children's Services](#)
- ACCS has well established and effective communications at all levels from grassroots communities to federal Members of Parliament
- Our current and recent sphere of influence includes participation in:
 - Federal and State Ministerial Advisory Councils
 - Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC) Children's Education and Care Industry Reference Committee
 - Advisory groups on Budget Based Funded and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Education and Care services
 - Early Learning Languages Australia (ELLA)
 - Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) Commissioner Reference Committee
 - Australian Children's Early Childhood Quality Authority (ACECQA) Reference Group
 - Influencing broad child and family policy including national child protection frameworks as Chair of Families Australia

ACCS Operations

ACCS national has no conflict of interest:

- its only focus is the best interests of children
- it has no commercial activities

- it is not a provider of training, professional development, resources or Early Childhood Education and Care services
- it does not represent one particular Early Childhood Education and Care service provider
- its advocates act as volunteers

Benefits to ACCS Members

- 20% discount on purchases from Educational Experience
- Opportunity to connect with fellow Early Childhood Education and Care professionals who share a commitment to children and communities over profit
- Access to current and relevant government policy – members are kept informed
- Direct input to an advocacy voice – opportunity to participate in setting the direction for advocacy for children and communities
- Support for state and territory advocacy
- An avenue to support leadership in the sector

ACCS PROPOSALS FOR MONITORING THE IMPACT OF THE NEW CHILD CARE PACKAGE ON VULNERABLE FAMILIES

Australian Community Children's Services (ACCS) welcomes the opportunity to assist the Australian Government to develop a new Child Care IT system. We will be sending the following suggestions to national decision-makers.

As the national peak body for community owned, not for profit children's services, we see an exciting opportunity to put in place right at the beginning of a new system the capacity to monitor its impact on children and families.

The following proposals have been developed with the intention to assist the Australian Government Department of Education and Training to gather clear evidence of the impact of the new Child Care support system on:

- women's workforce participation
- the participation of families experiencing vulnerability
- sustainability of the service system in communities where many families do not meet the new Activity Test.

Data on the impact of Child Care Package on increasing participation of women in the workforce

Proposed data to be collected:

- Trends in the proportion of women with young children in the workforce, by total number and by hours of work per week.
- Changes to the number of families/women accessing government income support after implementation of the Package ie women leaving the workforce
- Increase or decrease in permanent days, hours or sessions of enrolment in Early Childhood Education and Care
- Reasons for changes in enrolments

Proposed method of data collection:

- existing ABS Child Care Survey
- Centrelink data
- Families could be asked to indicate reasons when altering enrolment hours on line in the IT system, through a simple tick box survey eg

Please tick the main reason/s for changing your enrolment:

- *Changes in working hours*
- *Taking a second job*
- *Changes in informal family care arrangements*
- *Prohibitive cost of formal Early Childhood Education and Care*
- *Other*

Data on the impact of the changes on the participation of families experiencing vulnerability (eg. Changes to the activity test, to Priority of Access Guidelines, to Additional Child Care Subsidy – Child Wellbeing and to Additional Child Care Subsidy – Temporary Financial Hardship):

Proposed data to be collected:

- Track changes in participation in Early Childhood Education and Care by:
 - Indigenous families
 - Families with a person with a disability
 - Families who are on the maximum rate of CCB or who are in receipt of income support
 - Families from a non-English speaking background
 - Single parent families
 - Newly arrived families

Proposed method of data collection:

- Baseline data for enrolments by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and low income families – a snapshot of demographic data at

the closure of the Child Care Management System

- Build into the new IT system a capacity to track changes in enrolments of families with specified vulnerabilities eg number of families receiving 24 hours of Subsidy

Impact on capacity of the Early Childhood Education and Care services sector to sustain services in communities with a high percentage of families who do not meet the new activity test

Proposed method of data collection:

Build into IT system the capacity to track openings and closures of Early Childhood Education and Care services with a highest percentage of families:

- who do not meet the activity test
- on the highest level of Subsidy;
- on the lowest level of Subsidy
- debt levels carried by services

LOCAL ADVOCACY ON NATIONAL ISSUES

A note from a member of the ACCS National Council about her local advocacy on behalf of her community:

I have started some lobbying with our local federal MP for Oxley, Milton Dick, about the changes to the CCB system. It may be too little too late, but after the Government didn't listen to the peak groups, I thought I would put our local point of view across. Our Centre is in a low socio economic area with 90% of the children who attend our Centre from non English speaking backgrounds. The families will be affected by the changes as will the financial viability of our Centre.

Milton has listed to mention our Centre in Parliament and will speak to families at an information evening we have planned. Families, both those who will be affected and those who will benefit, have also signed a letter outlining the community's concerns about the Jobs for Families Legislation.

Just a drop in a big ocean. Regards, Kerrie Wilson

RECENT ACCS NATIONAL ADVOCACY

Department of Education IT System Working Group

Linda Davison, Deputy National Convenor

With the new Federal Government Child Care Package due to commence in July 2018, the Department of Education and Training has convened issue-specific Working Groups to support 'on the ground' implementation and to test key products for useability, practicability and fitness for purpose.

The IT Working Group met for the first time on August 23rd and has three more meetings scheduled before the end of this year. Members of this working group include representatives from a wide range of service providers and peak bodies, as well as personnel from DET. At this initial meeting, members discussed:

- current progress of the IT system which is being designed to support the implementation of the new child care package;
- the proposed transition approach for service providers, including timelines and individual/organisational registration requirements;
- new legislative requirements (for families and providers) around child enrolments;
- new legislative requirements for reporting child attendances;
- data sharing limitations across federal, state and territory governments that result in duplication of notifications/information;
- Child Care Subsidy (CCS) payments.

Future meetings will continue these discussions and, in addition, members will participate in user experience and user testing work in relation to the new Child Care IT System.

Response to draft guidelines for Community Child Care Fund

See our website for details of our response to the draft guidelines for the CCC Fund. ACCS is particularly pleased with the eligibility criteria requiring not-for-profit status for the recipient agencies. However we believe that the goals of the Community Child Care Fund would be better served if the Guidelines recognised that some services will not be able to transition to a model of operation that is self-sustaining. Entrenched poverty, long-term unemployment and disadvantage make sustainability without additional government funding impossible in many communities.

Response to ALP ECEC Future Directions consultation

ACCS encouraged the Labor Party to think big. We ask that Labor considers a national policy framework that works towards the well-being of all Australia's children that includes ECEC.

FACT SHEETS ON THE NEW CHILD CARE IT SYSTEM

At the information sessions on the new child care system held earlier this year across Australia, it was suggested by stakeholders that a factsheet on the new Integrated Child Care IT system would be useful. The department has developed a factsheet and it is now published on the department's [website](#).

ACCS GUIDES VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Brian Newman (ACCS Vic), Chair, Children's Education and Care Industry Reference Committee

The Curse Of Unduly Short Training In Children's Services

Prue Warrilow and Brian Newman

A recent report from the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) - *A review of issues relating to unduly short training* - included information about training in early childhood education and care. ACCS, informed by our members, has been concerned about the quality of graduates from Certificate III and Diplomas from RTOs for several years. We've been actively advocating to look at not only the content of these courses but also the duration of these courses to ensure that graduates have suitable skills to be employable in the sector. So, sadly, you won't be surprised to know that this report found the following about Certificate III graduates in our sector.

Certificate III courses should be 1 to 2 years duration (AQF guidelines); this represents about 1,200 hours of delivery. A 2015 ASQA review found that:

- 70% of these courses are less than one year's duration
- 20% of courses were 26 weeks or less
- almost 75% of delivery was 750 hours or less

In 2015 57 RTOs enrolled 4,386 Certificate III students. Only 15 of these RTOs had courses that went for the mandatory period of 1 to 2 years, and only 40% (1753) of students were enrolled in these complying courses.

Diploma courses fared much better. In 2015 52 RTOs enrolled 6,908 Diploma students. Only six of these RTO's had course durations below the minimum AQF requirements and only 3% of students were enrolled in these courses. Pleasingly the majority of RTOs (88%, 46) exceeded the minimum requirement.

The 2015 ASQA review resulted in a revision of the CHC Community Services Training Package including mandating minimum work placement hours of 120 and 240 hours respectively for Certificate III and Diploma students. ACCS representative Brian Newman has been actively involved and guiding this work as Chair of the Children's Education and Care Industry Reference Committee. The training package review is almost complete.

As part of the revision of the Training Package, the IRC is establishing Technical Advisory Committees (TAC) to bring professional knowledge to the task. It is expected that the group will meet several times over the next six months, sometimes by telephone conference. There is still room for more people to join the TAC.

The skills needed are a good knowledge of the current training package, an understanding of the early and middle childhood children's services sector, and ideas to contribute to strengthening the quality of the training and education provided for our workforce.

If you would like to contribute to this important job, or have any questions, please contact either Brian Newman (b.newman@unimelb.edu.au) or Melinda Brown (melinda.brown@skillsiq.com.au) in the first instance. Ideally it would be great to have enough people to establish a separate Out of School Hours TAC to ensure that we address issues specific to that part of the sector.

See https://www.asqa.gov.au/sites/g/files/net2166/f/strategic_review_report_2017_course_duration.pdf for more detail. The early childhood education care case study is located on page 144 of the report.

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