



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

ACCS IN ACTION! June 2022

NATIONAL CONVENOR'S UPDATE

ACCS National Windup on our 40th anniversary

Prue Warrilow, National Convenor

ACCS is a unique organisation:

- We are the only children's services organisation that solely represents not-for-profit services of all types
- We are the only children's services organisation that has had a completely independent voice by relying on membership funding only for its work, with no government funding to control or confound our voice

The objectives of ACCS are to:

- advocate and assist the development of community owned children's services providing good quality care, where community is the environment in which people live and/or work
- initiate and co-ordinate public action to promote and defend community owned children's services throughout Australia
- co-ordinate national responses in relation to community owned children's services
- act and speak on behalf of community owned children's services in relation to Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments and to other bodies

And I have to say we've done that pretty well over the past 40 years. Something to be very proud of.

I and other ACCS members have had the privilege to speak with the power of the not-for-profit community children's services sector for 40 years

and we have made a significant difference to many, many children and families who may have otherwise not had access to quality, affordable children's services. It has been our advocacy and our lobbying that has directly informed much public policy and practice.

I would particularly like to acknowledge and thank my ACCS executive – Linda Davison from Vic, Kim Bertino from NSW, Sally Griffith from WA, and regular attendees Carrie Johnson from SA and Daniella Kavoukas from Vic. We have met every fortnight to strategise, ponder and plot about how we can best influence early childhood education and care public policy, and to great success. I also want to acknowledge and thank Barbara Romeril, our secretariat; without her support we would not have been able to do the great work we have done!

The ACCS National Executive recognises that new forms of networking and collaboration are replacing the ways that we have worked. With the growing number of paid early childhood education and care lobbyists taking the attention of policy makers it is becoming increasingly challenging to rely on a group of volunteer advocates in the National and State Executives to have strong engagement with governments or provide detailed policy analysis.

So it seem fitting that as we acknowledge the beginnings and the significant contribution ACCS has made to children and families over 40 years I am also talking to an end as well.

It is with a very heavy heart that I am announcing that ACCS National is winding up its operations and handing over to a new generation of advocates to speak for this vital not-for-profit service sector. Or quoting Don Chip and the Democrats – who else will keep the bastards honest?

Three branches will continue to operate after the windup of national operations:

- ACCS SA who will take on administration of the national website, act as the first point of contact for ACCS and coordinate communication and collaboration with the other branches
- Carewest – the WA branch of ACCS
- Community Child Care – the Victorian branch of ACCS

We are heartened by the election of an ALP government federally with its commitment to a broad review of the entire system of support for families with young children. And it is unprecedented and extremely reassuring to see the Victorian ALP government and the NSW Coalition government stand together to make the ambitious announcement to work towards universal free preschool/kindergarten for all 3 and 4 year olds.

We are proud to have seen this organisation through challenging times. And now we call on younger advocates to stand up and develop new ways to “advocate nationally for the right of Australia’s children to access quality, not for profit, community owned children’s services” in this exciting new policy context.

ACCS NATIONAL OPERATIONS IS WINDING UP AND ACCS SA IS STEPPING UP

Carrie Johnson, Convenor ACCS SA
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As previously communicated and confirmed at the recent 40th Anniversary celebration, ACCS National will cease to operate as of 30th June 2022.

Unfortunately, the organisation will not continue in its current form. However as Convenor of ACCS SA branch I am privileged to be able to continue to facilitate the ongoing collaboration between the three remaining branches.

ACCS SA intends to be a conduit for conversation between the branches and with ongoing relationships and support from the Labor Senators in South Australia, with whom ACCS National has

had a long history. We are endeavouring to continue to speak on behalf of the children, families and educators in the not-for-profit sector.

The strategies to facilitate the ongoing collaboration are currently in development, however the plan is for:

- ACCS state branches will continue to operate under their own constitutions
- ACCS SA branch will maintain the ACCS National website as a historic record up to the windup of national operations and also providing contact details for the state branches
- ACCS SA branch will co-ordinate communication and collaboration between the state branches
- ACCS SA branch will act as a central contact point for those seeking a national view from the community children’s services sector eg policy makers, researchers, other national bodies and will collaborate with the other branches in forming a national view
- Hard copy records of the work of NACBCS/ACCS will be donated to a national archive to ensure their availability to future researchers

It is disappointing that ACCS National is coming to the end of its long history of advocacy. However ACCS SA branch has taken on this new role to support an alternate structure moving forward to continue the work of our founders.

The current Secretariat role will cease after the winding up of ACCS National operations. ACCS SA will facilitate a discussion between the branches as to how they wish to work together to provide a national voice for not-for-profit community children’s services.

Together the ACCS branches will continue to advocate for the uniqueness of community owned children’s services providing good quality care, promote and defend community owned children’s services and act and speak on behalf of community owned children’s services.

ACCS GUIDES VOCATIONAL TRAINING

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

As ACCS representative and Chair of the IRC I continue to advocate for robust and comprehensive VET courses for our sector. The last government set in train the abolition of the current system of IRCs but it remains to be seen

how the new government will reframe the changes. In the interim I have worked with a number of other IRC Chairs in related sectors to prepare a bid to become one of the proposed industry cluster organisations. Central to the bid is the explicit inclusion of unions as well as employer groups as a true reflection of the 'views of industry'.

I also contributed to the development of ACECQA's workforce strategy in 2021, arguing strongly for a greater focus on pay and conditions as the central issue that needed to be addressed. Unfortunately, the final document only presented this as one issue amongst many. In my view, this was an opportunity missed to articulate possible ways of addressing the poor pay and conditions endured across the sector. The current staffing crisis is clear evidence of a workforce burnt out, disillusioned, and moving into work with higher pay and less responsibility. This has to be addressed by our new government.

The community owned children's services sector has always led in the many dimensions of quality – professional staff, decent pay, excellent programs, community engagement, family support, embracing diversity in all its forms – and it is important for our voice to continue to be loud and clear.

In the new political climate, tinged with some optimism, it is even more important for us to be at the table, and driving the policy agenda, for the children we work with.

ACCS CELEBRATES 40 YEARS OF ADVOCACY

ACCS held a nationwide celebration on 18 May 2022 to mark the 40th anniversary of our advocacy for community children's services.

Past and present members and supporters gathered in person in Sydney and Adelaide and connected to online gatherings with people in Perth and Melbourne.

A slide presentation reminded us of the first national conference in 1983, the many federal election campaigns, national conferences and research publications.

A panel of speakers filled in the detail with their recollections from each decade. Professor Deborah Brennan spoke about the formation in 1982 by a group of young women, many still students (and Deb was the inaugural National

Convenor of the fledgling national advocacy body). Celia Haddock spoke about the challenges and successes in the 1990s including negotiating relationships with other national peak bodies at the National Children's Services Forum. Barbara Romeril spoke about rising to the challenge of corporate child care giant, ABC Learning in the 2000s and Dr Anne Kennedy spoke about the ground breaking Trends in Community Children's Services Survey research conducted throughout the 2010s.

The National Convenor Prue Warrilow completed the program with her recollections of facing unfriendly Senate Committees and the many other courageous acts of advocacy. She acknowledged the many people who have contributed to the success of ACCS over the last 40 years.

Prue welcomed the incoming federal ALP Government.

Sadly she also announced the winding up of the national operations of ACCS and thanked the SA Branch for taking up the role of supporting communication and collaboration between state branches of ACCS to advocate into the future.

A slide show and a video of the 40th anniversary celebration is available on the [ACCS website](#).

ACCS NATIONAL MEETING

The final meeting of the ACCS National Council was held on 15 June. It voted on how any remaining funds after all debts of the national operations are paid will be disbursed in keeping with the requirements of the ACCS Constitution.

The meeting also discussed the exciting announcements about free preschool/kindergarten for three and four year old children.

Contact ACCS

ACCS can be contacted for national comment through the ACCS SA branch:

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