



Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Your Ref
Our Ref

MC08-013726

Ms Marianne Fenech
Social Justice in Early Childhood
PO Box 202
NEWTOWN NSW 2042

Dear Ms Fenech

Thank you for your letters of 16 April and 27 May 2008 to the Hon Maxine McKew MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Early Childhood Education and Child Care on behalf of the Social Justice in Early Childhood group about the Government's early childhood education and child care policies. The Parliamentary Secretary has asked me to reply on her behalf.

Your recent correspondence articulates the Social Justice in Early Childhood group's interest in the Government's early childhood education and child care agenda, with a particular emphasis on equity and social justice for children.

The Australian Government's Social Inclusion Agenda provides a policy framework to build a strong and inclusive economy by giving every Australian the opportunity to secure a job, access services, connect with family, friends, work and local community, deal with crises and have their voices heard. The Agenda follows a whole-of Government approach that brings together all levels of Government and the business and the community sectors to build a strong and inclusive community.

The Australian Social Inclusion Board has been established to champion the Social Inclusion Agenda and pursue specific goals. It will consult widely and provide advice and input on major aspects of the Social Inclusion Agenda including the use of evidence, innovative solutions and whole of government strategies. The Board is supported by a Social Inclusion Unit in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. There is also a Social Inclusion Committee of Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister.

The Australian Government has also set itself ambitious goals in the area of early childhood development and has committed to invest in the integration of early childhood education and child care as part of its broader productivity and participation agenda. The 2008-09 Budget demonstrates this commitment by making a significant investment in early childhood across the Australian Government.

You would also be aware that the Early Childhood Agenda is a priority of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and you may wish to visit the COAG website at www.coag.gov.au if you have not already done so.

As further evidence of the Government's commitment to deliver on the broad early childhood agenda, the Office of Early Childhood Education and Child Care has been established within the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. The Office brings together the child care functions of the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the early childhood education functions from



the former Department of Education, Science and Training. The Office provides the national leadership to achieve a nationally consistent system of quality, accessible and affordable early childhood education and child care that will benefit all Australian families and the Australian economy into the future.

The initial focus for the Office will necessarily be on implementing the Government's early childhood election commitments and relevant budget measures. Many of these are being implemented collaboratively with State and Territory Governments under the auspice of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG).

Your earlier correspondence refers to your concerns about the development of an Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF). The EYLF is an integral component of the Government's early childhood reforms. It will underpin universal access to early childhood education and be linked to National Quality Standards for Child Care and Preschool to ensure delivery of nationally-consistent and quality early childhood education across sectors and jurisdictions.

The EYLF will describe the capabilities which demonstrate the continuum of development for young children, with a focus on play-based learning, the role of teachers in facilitating children's learning, the development of early literacy and numeracy skills and successful transition to formal schooling.

The EYLF is being developed in consultation with State and Territory Governments and early childhood experts and educators. A group of prominent Australian early childhood academics is also guiding the development of the EYLF to provide an evidence-base to ensure the EYLF is locally valid, nationally embraced and internationally respected.

A consultant, with expertise in early childhood learning and curriculum development will be employed to draft the EYLF, through an open tender process, which will take place in mid 2008.

A draft EYLF will be provided to jurisdictions for comment and agreement in late 2008. Consultation with key early childhood stakeholders, and the refinement of the EYLF based on this consultation will occur in November and December 2008. The EYLF will be tested and validated from February to April 2009, with the final endorsement of the EYLF to occur in early July 2009. The implementation of the EYLF will occur from July 2009 onwards.

Once again, thank you for writing. I appreciate your interest in the early childhood education and child care agenda.

Yours sincerely

Justin Mein
Office Secretariat Branch
Office of Early Childhood Education and Child Care

11 July 2008